

## WATCH OUT FOR THAT PAPER AVALANCHE!

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You are facing a deadline: the article is overdue; your gallery needs five more paintings; the biggest client wants an entirely new advertising plan next week!

And yet you cannot focus. You fidget, daydream and come up with one false start after another.

Could it be the stacks of junk on the floor and piles of paper covering your desk? Each piece of paper is constantly nagging at you. **READ ME! FILE ME! FIX MY PROBLEM! ANSWER THIS CALL!**

No wonder concentrating on the project at hand is difficult.

These thoughts (from Clearing the Clutter for Good Feng Shui, by Mary Lambert) may help explain just why clutter is counterproductive:

"The room you work in should nurture you and your abilities... If your desk is cluttered with numerous items and the floor is covered with boxes, reports, and files, chi will get stuck and your creativity and decision-making skills will be blocked, causing you to work in a confused, disorganized way. Even file cabinets stuffed with redundant projects or information about bad clients will create negative space in the work area." And do not forget electronic storage: "Leaving old material on your machine will hold you back from progressing with new projects."

Perhaps 'chi' and 'feng shui' aren't your bag. Nevertheless, junk and excess paper do block creativity. Because some part of your brain and psyche are

always 'worrying' about all those things you have not completed, represented by piles and mounds of stuff and just plain paper clutter.

Paper, for better or worse, is here to stay. It is: portable, easy to read, easy to edit, quick to page through. Unfortunately, paper clutter is denser than other kinds of clutter. **There are more pieces per pile.** A large pile of paper can contain **hundreds** of items; each one requiring **YOU to take ACTION!**

When you are ready to deal with your paper mess, try this method:

- Remove all the big stuff: notebooks, magazines, books, newsletters
- Put financial papers, bills, bank statements, receipts, invoices to send, in a special place. You should deal with these promptly and consistently.
- Quickly glance at remaining paper, tossing anything outdated or of marginal interest.
- Create places for items requiring action; File, Respond, Read
- Make decisions quickly. **DO NOT** stop and read the aging news clippings or old advertisements and catalogs.
- To prevent piles from building up: open and deal with your incoming mail **EVERY DAY**. Cancel subscriptions which you don't truly need and enjoy. **TOSS** ads and junk immediately upon receipt. Do **NOT** print every joke, email or interesting web site you see; pretend that each minute and each sheet of paper is very costly. As it is when it becomes junk on your office floor!

**HAPPY DECLUTTERING!!**