Spring Cleaning

This is the time of the year when you pull out the short sleeve shirts, shorts and sandals because the temperature is getting warmer - actually very hot these days in Socorro. This is also an opportunity to go through all your winter clothes, shoes and accessories to see if it’s time to give some away to the local shelter or thrift store. While you are at it, you can determine if some of the spring/summer clothes are still needed as well.

Spring often feels like a great time to declutter and reorganize your life. Just the thought of the freedom you will have once you get rid of items you have stored for some time is very attractive. Often times, people get tripped up when they begin because they don’t know where to start. There is an overwhelmed feeling that takes place and they either put it off or leave it as is.

I was faced with this dilemma recently. I was unable to file away current paperwork in my office because my files were so full. I had put this task aside for years but here it was again, staring me in the face. It was time to do something about it. I knew I would feel lighter and happier once I finished the project and I thought to myself, “How can I make this task fun and enjoyable, or at least less overwhelming?”. The tip I started with was choosing only one drawer each day for a week. I went through every single folder and shredded the papers I didn’t need or I put them in the recycled paper stack. I repaired old folders so I didn’t make too much trash and I recycled the others, I relabeled all my folders with colorful tabs because colors make me happy and doing this made the task much more enjoyable.

Another approach I used was to change my perspective. I stood at my door and looked into my office. This is the view people see when they come in. I immediately felt embarrassed - this was not the image I wanted to project. I made the appropriate changes: papers went to their appropriate folders, books got filed away, trash was thrown, and some knick knacks were removed. Another tip I have stuck with so far is to take a few minutes at the end of my day to clear my desk so I start off with a clear workspace every day.

I was happy with my accomplishment so I decided to bring the same attitude to my home space. A tip I read to help with decluttering your space is to have four boxes or bags and designate one to keep, one to sell, one to get rid of and a maybe box. I am one of those individuals who needs a maybe box because I often find it difficult to part with items I have had for many years. For me, I
Spring Cleaning continued....

think I may need these items in the future. The trick for the maybe box is to put it in the garage for six months. The “experts” say the items in the maybe box usually won’t be needed and we will be able to donate or trash the items we have kept for the six months.....we’ll see.

Now that I have my boxes or bags, I am setting aside only 5 minutes to declutter a certain space in my house each day. We ALL can find 5 minutes to declutter a certain space in our house. It’s actually amazing to see how far the decluttering has come just by adding those 5 minutes (sometimes I extend it to 10). I have to admit, at first, it seemed like I was making more of a mess but as the days go by or the more time I give myself to declutter, my space is looking better and I am feeling lighter.

Here are some additional tips to help get you started on your spring cleaning journey.

- **Make a list of places/areas** in your home to declutter beginning with the easiest, and when you are done with the one area, stop. You can make the list as easy or difficult as you desire based upon what areas of your home make up the list. This tip can easily fit into any schedule.

- **Fill one trash bag** - Grab a trash bag and see how quickly you can fill it. You might collect a bag of trash or a bag to go to Goodwill, but the point is you got rid of items in your home.

- **Take the 12-12-12 Challenge** - This can be a fun competition at home with your family members. Locate 12 items you can throw away, 12 items you can donate and 12 items to be returned to their proper home. You have quickly organized 36 items in your home!

- **Spend a few minutes visualizing the room** - Look at your space and think about how you want it to look. What are the most essential pieces of furniture? What doesn’t belong in the room but has just gravitated there? What is on the floor (hint: only furniture and rugs belong there) and what is on the other flat surfaces? Once you visualize how the room will look

**Set up some simple folders.** Sometimes our papers pile up high because we don’t have good places to put them. Create some simple folders with labels for your major bills and similar paperwork. Put them in one spot. Your system doesn’t have to be complete, so keep some extra folders and labels in case you need to quickly create a new file.

**Learn to file quickly.** Once you have created a simple filing system, you just need to learn to use it regularly. Take a handful of papers from your pile, or your inbox, and go through them one at a time, starting from the top paper and working down. Make quick decisions: trash them, file them immediately, or make a note of the action required and put them in an “action” file. Don’t put anything back on the pile, and don’t put them anywhere but in a folder (and no cheating “to be filed” folders!) or in the trash/recycling bin.

**Closet Hanger Experiment** - If you are anything like me, you have two or three closets full of clothes. Why does one person need so much clothing?! This is an experiment I am going to try. Hang all of your clothes with the hangers in the reverse direction. After you wear it, return it to the closet with the hanger facing in the correct direction. After a few months, you will have a good picture of which articles of clothing you can discard.

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“Three rules of work: Out of clutter find simplicity; From discord find harmony; In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity”

Albert Einstein
Freedom From Clutter
Clearly there are many ways to declutter your home and office, I have only shared a handful. But no matter which one you choose to get started, the goal is to take your first step with excitement behind it. Once you have gotten an area decluttered, take the time to enjoy the look. Make this your standard! A decluttered life is a beautiful world of freedom and breath of fresh air.

If you are looking to simplify your life and focus on what really matters, subscribe to this website bemorewithless to get monthly newsletters. “The more you have, the more you are occupied. The less you have, the more free you are.” ~ Mother Teresa

Simple Stir-fry
At the end of a long day of decluttering your office or house, you don’t want to spend a lot of time in the kitchen making dinner. This recipe is quick, simple, healthy and delicious! Not a bad combination 😊

Cashew Chicken with Cauliflower Rice
Ingredients:
1 head cauliflower, cut into florets
1 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
1 lb boneless skinless chicken breasts cut into cubes
½ cup raw cashews
Scallions for garnish
1 tbsp sriracha (if you like it spicy)
1 clove garlic, minced
Juice of 1 lime
1 tbsp sesame oil
2 red bell peppers, sliced
1 large zucchini, sliced into half moons

1. In a food processor with the blade attachment, add cauliflower. Pulse several times until florets resemble rice.
2. In a large skillet over medium heat, heat olive oil. Add cauliflower rice and season with salt. Cook until soft, 5 minutes. Transfer to a large bowl and return skillet to stove.
3. Meanwhile make sauce: in a medium bowl, combine sweet chili sauce, soy sauce, Sriracha, garlic, and lime juice.
4. Add sesame oil to skillet and heat over medium-high heat. Add peppers and zucchini and cook 3 minutes, then add chicken and sauce and cook until golden and no longer pink, 10 minutes more. Stir in cashews until coated in sauce.
5. Garnish with scallions and serve over cauliflower rice.

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