

What Does Your Stuff Say About You?

By Sherry Borsheim

Have you noticed the growing trend of new storage facilities in your area lately? I sure have and I'm not surprised when I think of all the stuff people have accumulated over the years with quick fixes and disposable gadgets. In fact, storage is a fifteen billion dollar industry and retail stores are carrying more organizing products than ever before. With the state of the economy, people are thinking twice about their purchases, getting back to basics and asking themselves, what's important in their life? Do they really need all this stuff?

Emotional Clutter

People's stuff says a lot about them. Their stuff is a reflection of what's going on inside of them emotionally. I often say a "cluttered mind is a cluttered space." They have unresolved issues that they're not dealing with and so things pile up and they say I'll get to it some day. Guess what, someday may not come. Also, their identity is wrapped up in their stuff and they tend to live in the past. Their stuff can make them tired, lethargic and a tendency to procrastinate. Often times they are late for appointments because they couldn't find their car keys or their meeting notes. Sometimes their stuff even affects their finances. Simply put, their stuff runs their life! Their stuff can also affect their quality of life and/or the lives of others,

Unfinished Projects

Another kind of emotional clutter is unfinished projects. Honestly ask yourself, how many unfinished projects do you have lurking in your office and in your home? Are you too embarrassed to have people come into your office? Do you have photos to print, piles of reading material you want to read, magazines with great articles you want to refer to, business cards with leads to follow-up on, taxes to file, a broken file drawer that needs fixing, errands to do, scheduling a dental appointment, and so on? I'd invite you to take out a piece of paper or use your computer to list every single unfinished project that comes to mind. It may take you several hours to do this exercise. Also, as you write down your list of unfinished projects, you may feel like the mountain is just too big to tackle and your stress levels may rise? I'll let you in on a little secret, you're not alone.

80/20 Rule

Unfinished projects slow a person down and often their life is in stuck mode. When they're stuck, they tend to live in the past and often miss out on the new opportunities that could come their way if they just created the space to allow it to come to them. Purging the stuff is a necessary step. Only keeping what they love and use. A general rule to follow is the 80/20 rule – 80% of the time we use 20% of our favourite things. So what are the 20% of the projects that are going to give you 80% results?

Important Tasks

After you've completed your list of unfinished projects, use your highlighter to highlight only the projects that are important to complete and that will enhance your life in a positive way. Think of quadrant two type activities like relationships, planning and preparation – stuff that's important and not urgent.

Schedule Tasks

Next schedule time to complete these important and not urgent projects. Also take into consideration what your goals are for this year and make sure that these projects are worth your time and effort. As you finish these projects, the heavy weight you may have been feeling will begin to feel lighter and then watch your energy soar!

What's Your Stuff Costing You?

Now let's look at the cost of your stuff. When a space is filled with too much stuff it causes the person to be distracted and unfocused. What does the distraction cost you on a daily basis in time and lost revenue? What is your stuff costing you financially? There are insurance costs, storing costs,

cleaning costs, space allocation costs, and cost to containing your stuff. Then there's the time you spend maintaining your stuff. Take a moment to assess what your stuff is costing you and write that down on your piece of paper. My stuff is costing me this much in wasted time, in storing costs, in maintenance, and so on.

Stuff can also affect someone's health because the piles of stuff collect dust and grime and if it's not cleaned regularly the room becomes dusty and musty. What's the next action step you're going to take to make your office or room more inspiring? Are you going to paint the walls, get rid of all the paper and magazines you rarely refer to, buy a shredder, or hang inspiring artwork? Write down the first action step you are going to take to get rid of the dust and make your space more inspiring?

Calendar Clutter

Now let's look at what's cluttering your calendar. What commitments have you made that you said yes to when you really wanted to say no? Do you have a tendency to please everyone and say yes a lot? Learn to set boundaries around your time. Get clear on your values and what's important to you. Make sure you schedule the important stuff first, like relationships, time for yourself to exercise and getting enough sleep. Then fill in the rest of your life. At the end of the day, for the majority of people, relationships are most important.

What Do You Value Most?

These questions haven't been easy, but they are important questions to consider. If your stuff has side-tracked you, all there is to do is get back on track. So, take time to answer these questions and then take action. When we leave this place, and we all eventually will, you won't be taking your stuff with you. All your precious stuff will remain exactly where you left it. So do yourself a favour and those you love and get rid of all the unimportant stuff. It will save you and your loved ones a lot of time and money!