

5th Annual Michael Golds Memorial AD/HD Conference

Help! My Piles Have Piles!

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Clutter weighs us down, both physically and emotionally. It squanders our time, our space, our money, and saps our precious energy.

What is clutter?

Things you do not use or love
Things that are untidy or disorganized.
Too many things in too small a place
Anything unfinished

Types of Clutter:

Stuff and space
Paper
Time or schedule
Brain

Types of “collectors” (or why is it so hard to let go of all this stuff?)

Environmentalist
Paper mystic
Archivist
Touchy-feely person
Artisan
Perfectionist
Procrastinator

Where does it all come from?!?!?

1. Habits of acquiring and keeping stuff:
 - a. Shopping
 - b. Hoarding
 - c. Can't part with or throw anything away
 - i. Might need it someday
 - ii. Has sentimental attachment
 - d. Other family members bring things into house
2. Items and paper have no home.
3. Procrastination: "Clutter is postponed decisions." TM Barbara Hemphill
4. Don't know where to start to clear the clutter.
5. Things don't get put away after use
6. Things are not stored at point of use or conveniently

ADHD Challenges to Overcoming Clutter

1. Organizing can be boring
2. Distractibility – organizing requires sustained attentiveness
3. Trouble with activation, i.e. not hearing and heeding the "Go" voice or unable to get started.
4. Don't know where to start: Task is overwhelming; unable to prioritize and breakdown task into do-able pieces.
5. Perfectionism

Emotions and Clutter

1. Depression
2. Sense of failure
3. Overwhelmed and overloaded
4. Stress
5. Loss of energy / emotionally draining
6. Fear and embarrassment
(C.H.A.O.S.-"Can't Have Anybody Over Syndrome" TM www.flylady.net)
7. Discouragement

Strategies for Overcoming Clutter:
Get real about your belongings and clutter

1. **Commit** to a daily decluttering effort.
 - a. At least 15 minutes at a time—set a timer. “Salami” technique
 - b. Start with “baby steps” and set realistic goals
 - c. Use the 80/20 rule
 - d. Give it the one hour test
 - e. Keep a log of every item you use for the next two weeks
 - f. Use a “six month box”
2. **Assess** your situation: Make a written list of the specific problem areas, i.e. “coffee table has 3 piles of paper on it” or “Laundry room has five loads of wash that need to be done and put away.”
3. **Focus:** Choose the problem area that bothers you the most, and then focus your time and effort on that one area. Once that area is taken care of, you can then move on to your next focus area (while maintaining those areas already decluttered!)
4. **Reward** yourself: Promise yourself a nice lunch out, or a visit to a movie you’ve been meaning to see—WHEN you’re done attacking the clutter.
5. **Have a Plan** of Attack: Read organizing books from the experts. Visit organizing forums. Hire someone to help, or ask a family member, friend or associate to assist you. Break your organizing project up into small pieces. For instance, if you want to organize a table full of paper, mentally break that table up into 4 sections (upper right, upper left, lower right, lower left) and focus on one section at a time.
6. **Make an appointment** with yourself for major decluttering sessions. Set a specific date, mark it on your calendar, and wake up prepared and ready to fight the clutter bug. By the way, if you attack your clutter first thing in the morning, before anything else, there’s less chance it will multiply!
7. **“Attack”** date. When your scheduled date arrives, play some motivational music, grab all your weapons (trash bags, donation boxes, cleaning supplies, etc.), eliminate distractions (ask someone to watch the kids for you, screen your calls with an answering machine, etc.) and charge right into attacking your clutter with all your might. With a little bit of effort and determination, you should be able to overcome. To avoid getting distracted and doing “zig-zag” organizing, be sure to have a box to collect items that belong in another room or location. DO NOT leave the area you are organizing until you’re done! Use the “four boxes and list” technique.
8. **“Letting Go”** Letting go of stuff can truly set you free! Walk around your house and visually inventory all of your stuff. Look in your cabinets, closets, bookshelves, storage containers, and garage. When making a decision about

whether or not to let go of something, ask yourself the following questions: “Do I love it?” “Do I need or use it?” “Do I have things I haven’t used in a year or more? If so, ask yourself “When will I use it again?” If the answer is “**someday,**” lose it! Give to a charity, recycle it, pass it on to a neighbor or loved one who can use it NOW.

9. **CELEBRATE!!!** Every time you overcome clutter in any area of your life, it’s time to celebrate! Reward yourself for all of your efforts, no matter how large or small. Take time to enjoy each decluttered area.
10. **MAINTAIN!** Once your home or office is decluttered, set a timer and spend 15 minutes a day decluttering to maintain the order. Clutter attracts clutter....get rid of that pile, find the surface underneath and stop this Hot Spot from becoming a raging clutter inferno! Using a timer is helpful in budgeting your time... both in getting started and avoiding hyperfocusing!

Daily organizing strategies to maintain order:

Choose the action to get the desired result
Change your perspective of the decluttering process
Have a clutter buddy
Do daily duties (4-5 must do’s)
Ten-minute tidy--set a timer and attack a spot with a vengeance
Bring tasks to completion
Focus on your goal(s)
Maintain an inspiration point
Get visual--post a photo of what an area or room should look like organized
Do things in a timely fashion
Wherever you are, be there!
Never underestimate the inevitability of gradualness

Why hire a professional organizer or coach?

1. Strategize plan of attack.
2. Help prioritize organizing effort.
3. Breakdown organizing project into manageable chunks.
4. Assist with decisions making, i.e. what to keep/toss/store elsewhere/donate.
5. Source of ideas for storage, i.e. use of space and containerizing
6. Can act as “body double.” A body double functions as a non-judgmental anchor and focuses another person to make it possible for them to ignore distractions.
7. Keeps person “on task”
8. Provides support and encouragement
9. Saves you time and money in the long run

In the end, ridding ourselves of the material things which no longer serve us, gives us room, time, and energy to truly enjoy the things that are most important in life.

Helpful Resources

Books

- Aslett, Don *Clutter Free!*
- Felton, Sandra *The Messies Manual*
- Felton, Sandra *Messie No More*
- Felton, Sandra *The Messies Superguide*
- Glovinsky, Cindy *Making Peace with the Things in Your Life*
- Hallowell, Edward *Driven to Distraction*
& Ratey, John
- Kelly, Kate *You Mean I'm Not Lazy, Stupid, or Crazy?*
& Ramundo, Peggy
- Koehnline, Caroline *Confronting Your Clutter*
- Kolberg, Judith *Conquering Chronic Disorganization*
- Kolberg, Judith *Surviving Chronic Disorganization*
- Morgenstern, Julie *Organizing from the Inside Out*
- Nadeau, Kathleen *Adventures in Fast Forward*
- Nadeau, Kathleen *ADD-Friendly Ways to Organize your Life*
& Kohlberg, Judith
- Ratey, John *A User's Guide to the Brain*
- Schechter, Harriet *Let Go of Clutter*
- Solden, Sari *Women with Attention Deficit Disorder*
- Young, Pam *Get Your Act Together*
& Jones, Peggy
- Mayer, Jeffrey J. *If you haven't got the time to do it right, when will you find the
Time to do it over?*

Organizations and Web sites:

National Association of Professional Organizers

Phone: (770) 325-3440

Web site: www.napo.net

Can refer you to a professional organizer in your area

American Coaching Association

Phone: (610) 825-8572

Web site: www.quicksitemaker.com/members/americoach/

Can refer you to a ADHD coach in your area

Messies Anonymous

Phone: (916) 962-6227

Web site: www.messies.org

Support group for people with clutter issues / offers daily email reminders

Clutterers Anonymous

Web site: www.clutterersanonymous.net

Support group for people with clutter issues

The FlyLady

Web site: www.flylady.net

Online support group for people with clutter issues / offers daily email reminders

Thank you for attending the 5th Annual Michael Golds Memorial Conference.

Brought to you by:

Oakland Community College

The Michael Golds Memorial Fund

CHADD of Michigan

We hope you'll join us again next year!!!

Information on the 2005 Michael Golds Memorial Conference

Should be available by mid-Summer 2005 at www.chaddmi.com.

Keep up on what's new in the Michigan Area World of AD/HD:

Join the addmichigan@yahoo e-mail group.