

LIVING A LIFE LESS **CLUTTERED...**

one step at a time



Do you think you may be **collecting** and **saving** too many things? Is **clutter** affecting your ability to live the life you want? Do you feel **overwhelmed** and not know where to start? Are you unsure where to find **help**?

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We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the traditional custodians of the land, and we offer our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

DO YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT CLUTTER?

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MEET
SUSAN...
60 years old
mother and
grandmother
living with
clutter

DO YOU HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT CLUTTER?

If you answered 'yes' to the questions on the cover of this booklet, it is important you know **you are not alone**. Many people have the same challenge. There is help available and **it can get better**.

It is estimated 1 in every 20 people worldwide live with a tendency to collect more items than they intend and struggle to let them go. It is a lot more common than you may think.

We use the word 'clutter' to mean belongings that can't be stored easily and get in the way of using a space like a living room. What one person considers clutter may not be a problem for another. So, when asking yourself these questions, think about what you consider to be clutter.

I'M SO OVERWHELMED.
I NEED HELP, BUT I'M SCARED
TO TELL ANYONE ABOUT
WHAT'S GOING ON. IT'S BAD,
I COULD LOSE MY FAMILY.



Does my level of clutter **affect the way I use my home?**

- Can I use each of my rooms for the purpose they are intended?
- Can I find what I need when I need it?
- Do I have room to do the things I enjoy?

Does my level of clutter **affect my relationships?**

- Can I invite people over whenever I want to, or do I avoid having visitors?
- Do my family or friends get worried or annoyed at the number of things I have in my home?
- Have my family stopped calling or coming to see me?

Does my level of clutter **impact how I feel?**

- Do I feel anxious about the idea of discarding my things?
- Do I feel overwhelmed?
- Am I embarrassed about my home?

Does my level of clutter **impact my safety?**

- Am I at risk of tripping or injuring myself because I can't move around my home easily?
- Could an emergency service worker locate me in the case of an emergency?
- Could I easily escape from my home if a fire was to start?

IF YOU ANSWERED 'YES' TO SOME OF THESE
QUESTIONS AND WOULD LIKE TO MAKE SOME CHANGES,
THIS BOOKLET HAS BEEN WRITTEN FOR YOU.

The first step is to think about these two important questions...

HOW DID I GET HERE?

Not everyone who has accumulated lots of belongings has arrived in this situation for the same reason - but being aware of these reasons can be an important part of making changes.

Here are some common reasons people identify...

- You love the feeling of finding or buying things. You cannot resist online shopping, opportunity shops, garage sales or curb-side waste collections.
- You acquire lots of items from others. You find it hard to say 'no' when family or friends want you to give you things or store something for them.
- You see the potential in every item to be useful and creative.
- You have strong sentimental attachment to many of your possessions.
- You feel responsible for possessions you discard. You are concerned about the environmental impact of discarding unwanted items and want to see them go to a 'good home'.
- Your possessions are a big part of who you are and holding on to them makes you feel safe.

I USED TO BE AN EFFICIENT PERSONAL ASSISTANT — SUPER ORGANISED AND ALWAYS ON TOP OF THINGS. BUT NOW I AM NOT COPING. THE HOUSE IS A MESS. IT'S REALLY CLUTTERED, I CAN'T FIND ANYTHING, AND I'M SO EMBARRASSED. I DON'T LET ANYONE COME INTO THE HOUSE.



AM I READY TO WORK ON THIS?

It's very normal to have mixed feelings about starting the process of decluttering. For many people this uncertainty comes from a feeling of it being 'all too hard'.

If you are in two minds take some time to **think about whether your reasons for making change, outweigh your reasons for staying the same.** To help you weigh it up, consider writing a list of pros and cons to making a change. Or you may like to talk it through with a trusted friend, family member or health professional.

If you still feel unsure, it might help to take a step back and reflect on some of the questions below. *These questions can be confronting to ask yourself, but they may offer extra clarity for you...*

- If you fast forward to two years from now, how would you feel if you were still in the same situation?
- Would making changes improve your relationship with others close to you?
- If you became unwell and someone needed to come in to your home, would you feel ok letting them in?
- Will it be harder to start the decluttering process today or a month from now?
- If you passed away unexpectedly would you feel comfortable leaving your home as it is for your family to sort?



Pros

Cons

OK... I'VE DECIDED I AM READY NOW WHAT?

Once you have committed to the process of decluttering it can be difficult to know how and where to start. It is important to take it one step at a time...



- Ensure smoke alarms are installed and working in every room you can access including your sleeping area/bedroom. The interconnected type is ideal so if one goes off they all go off.
- Fire prevention is crucial – reduce all possible ignition sources such as:
 - use of open flames (candles/incense),
 - overloaded power-boards, double adaptors and extension leads,
 - keep cooking areas and heaters clear of items that burn,
 - if you smoke, only smoke outside and dispose of cigarettes safely – never smoke in bed!
- Create a fire escape plan and practice it with family members and carers.
- Clear the passageways so they are wide enough to easily walk through.



2 VISUALISE THE CHANGE

- Spend some time visualising your home with less clutter and hold on to this image in your mind's eye. Make a list of all the things you will be able to do in your space once it is less cluttered and refer to this often. Try listing at least one thing that you could do each week, each month and each year once you have more space to move.

- Reducing the number of unnecessary items coming into your home is vital. If there are more items going out of your house than coming in – eventually you will have more space to move.
- Make a list of all the things that come in to your home over the course of a week like brochures, letters and shopping.... you may be surprised! Think about ways to reduce these items.

3 REVIEW WHAT'S COMING IN





- To start, choose an area that will make a real difference to have clear. Perhaps your kitchen bench or dining table. If this feels overwhelming, start smaller – maybe one drawer or one section of a table.
- Stay with this area until it is cleared and don't be tempted to move to other areas. Your mind might suddenly argue that it would be better to start somewhere else. Gently tell your mind that you will get to other areas later and refocus your attention on your chosen starting place.
- Organise 4 buckets, boxes or bags to use for your sorting:
 1. Items to keep
 2. Items to put in rubbish or recycling,
 3. Items for donation
 4. Items for sale
- Try and work up to at least 30 minutes of sorting per day – practice makes progress...
- At the end of each sorting session try to deal with what is in your sorting buckets straight away:
 - place 'rubbish' in the bin or recycling,
 - take items for donation to the Op Shop,
 - put items up for sale,
 - put items you have chosen to keep where you intend to keep them if possible.
- Once an area is cleared – make a rule that it stays that way.



Donations



THIS IS NOT EASY...

WHY DOES IT FEEL SO DIFFICULT
TO MAKE THESE CHANGES?

Declutter

SOME TIPS TO STAY ON TRACK...

Reducing the amount of clutter in your home will take time, especially if it has taken many years to build up. Remember that this work will be more of a marathon than a sprint.

- Pace yourself and always keep your end goal in mind.
- Try to get into a routine of spending time on your sorting sessions every day so they become a habit that you don't think twice about – just like brushing your teeth!
- Sometimes it can be hard to get going until you feel 'motivated'. But the work you do on the days you 'can't be bothered' can be the difference between reaching your goal and not. On these days, try sorting for 'just 5 minutes' to see what's possible. You'll likely discover that motivation isn't as necessary as you thought, and persistence and consistency are the key!
- Remember – the more you do this work, the easier it will become.
- Be kind to yourself throughout the journey, reward yourself along the way and don't be too hard on yourself if you lose focus sometimes.
- Consider enlisting the help of a friend or family member to be your 'support buddy'. That is, someone who takes an interest in your progress and helps you stick to your goals – without taking over!
- Make a list of activities you enjoy that have nothing to do with collecting or sorting and set aside time to do one of these at least once a week.

IT WAS REALLY HARD TO GET STARTED AND STAY MOTIVATED... IT HAS TAKEN TIME, BUT NOW I CAN USE MY DINING TABLE FOR THE FIRST TIME IN AGES.




WHERE CAN I FIND EXTRA HELP?

For some, this journey will be best taken with friends, family or other sources of support. Some people hesitate to reach out for help for fear of others 'taking over' and forcing them to declutter before they are ready, or for fear of being judged.

If this applies to you, rest assured that there is support available from people who understand and reaching out for help can be a very positive step. Here are some suggestions...

- Talk to your doctor or health professional.
- Consider psychology or counselling sessions – your GP can provide options for this.
- If you are over 65, contact My Aged Care to enquire about government support available – ph 1800 200 422 **www.myagedcare.gov.au**
- If you're a younger person with a disability, speak to your doctor or health professional regarding NDIS support.
- Contact your local council who may be able to help.
- Visit Fire Rescue Victoria website for information on Basic Home Fire Safety **www.frv.vic.gov.au/**
- Consider attending a 'Buried in Treasures' self-help program or a community support group – find out more details at **www.hoardingsqualormarondah.org.au/self-help/** or lodge an enquiry regarding other support available at **www.hoardingsqualormarondah.org.au/contact-us/**



DOING THE BURIED IN TREASURES
COURSE HAS BEEN GREAT — IT
REALLY HELPED ME UNDERSTAND
WHAT WAS HAPPENING AND TAKE
STEPS TO MAKE CHANGES THAT
WILL LAST.

Susan

