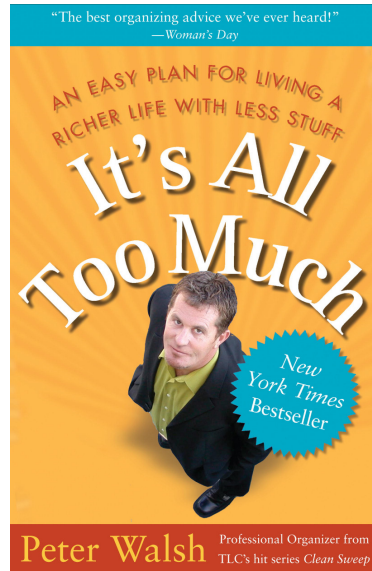


It's All Too Much

An Easy Plan For Living A Richer Life
With Less Stuff



Author: Peter Walsh
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■ The Big Idea

When Peter Walsh, organizational guru of TLC's hit show *Clean Sweep* and a regular contributor to *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, appeared on national television shows and told people how they could reclaim their lives from the suffocating burden of their clutter, the response was overwhelming. People flooded Peter's website with success stories about how his book had changed their lives.

Peter's unique approach helped people everywhere learn to let go of the emotional and psychological clutter that was literally and figuratively choking the life out of their homes.

With this good humor and reassuring advice, Peter shows you how to face the really big question: What is the vision for the life you want to live? He then offers simple

techniques and a step-by-step plan to assess the state of your home, prioritize your possessions, and let go of the clutter you have been holding on to that has kept you from living the life you imagine. The result is freed-up space, less stress, and more energy for living a happier, richer life every day.

▪ **Why You Need This Book**

This book will help you look around your home and see only things that you truly want and need to have in your living space. Changing it changes your life.

SAYING GOOD-BYE... FOREVER

America has a problem with over accumulation. It's abundantly clear if you spend one minute noticing how many self-storage facilities have sprung up in your neighborhood.

What's so bad about renting storage space, is that it's not a way of dealing with your clutter and people just tend to accumulate more knowing that there is room to keep them. You're saving things you don't need or want by dumping them in a black hole that you'll probably never unpack, and you're spending extra money every month to store them.

Think about it from a money standpoint. You're increasing your housing costs without increasing your standard of living. Is it worth it? Think about it from a psychological perspective. You're hiding away stuff you really should deal with, postponing the issue to some undetermined future date. You need to deal with the change now and head-on.

Remember that you are beginning a process that will help you change the way you see your stuff.

Get started.

EXCUSES, EXCUSES

Here are some of the excuses that stand in your way of putting organization back into your life:

Excuse # 1: "I might need it one day."

Some of us are afraid of the mysteries that the future holds. Life can take some pretty scary turns. You want to be prepared. This is the "I might need it one day" clutter.

Excuse # 2: "It's too important to let go."

We hold on to our possessions because we believe they're important – to ourselves, to others, to our family, to our dreams, or to our own personal story. We define this importance in lots of different ways like family history and sentimental value.

Excuse # 3: "I can't get rid of it – it's worth a lot of money."

The hardest clutter to get rid of is that which has the greatest perceived value.

Excuse # 4: "My house is too small."

There's nothing wrong with hoping to better your circumstances. It's part of the American dream – always planning to upgrade our standard of living.

Excuse # 5: "I don't have the time."

You'd love to clean up if you just had a day off.

Excuse # 6: "I don't know how it got like this."

It's easy to accumulate things, but hard to let go. If you always add and never subtract, you will eventually bury yourself.

Excuse # 7: "It's not a problem – my husband/wife/partner/child just thinks it is."

If this is your excuse, then you are probably reading this just because someone's making you do so. You'd rather live your life than become a maid.

Excuse # 8: "It isn't mine."

You would never take the liberty of throwing away someone else's valued possession. But maybe you should if it is becoming a burden to your quality of life.

Excuse # 9: "It's too overwhelming."

You look at the amount of stuff in your life and feel sickened by it.

PUTTING CLUTTER IN ITS PLACE

STEP 1: KICK START – TACKLING THE SURFACE CLUTTER

The first step is to:

Fix a time.

Then concentrate on three types of clutter in your living spaces:

Anything not used for twelve months – if it hasn't been used in a year, it's time to go.

Someone else's stuff – if it doesn't belong to you, it's time to go.

Trash – unusable items and garbage definitely have to go.

When it comes to scheduling your Kick Start, you have a choice. You can set aside a Saturday or Sunday (or other day off) for your Kick Start. Or, if that idea is overwhelming, you can do a little every day. Just pick a day and definitely jump right in.

STEP 2: HASH IT OUT!

As you work through the process of decluttering your home, you must remember that compromise is important. Decisions about shared spaces need to be made on the basis of what is best for the whole family.

This can be difficult, but if the whole family is involved, there is a greater chance of everyone accepting the outcome. And remember – just because you're the parent doesn't mean what you say automatically goes!

Stay focused and remember that rooms have specific functions. Life is lived in the present, not in the future or past. If you are keeping the things you have because of the sentimental past or the hope for a future, then maybe you don't really need them at all. Keep asking yourself: What is most important to me? How do I want to spend my time? How will I live in this house? For this to work, everyone must participate in this process and sign off on the plan.

STEP 3: CONQUER YOUR HOME

For every room you approach, there are three critical steps:

1. Think it through. For each room, think about what's particular to that room in terms of the stuff that needs to be in it, the stuff that tends to accumulate in it, and how you're going to approach the task.
2. Set it up. The set-up is the same for every room. Refer to your room function chart and have everyone sign on. Establish zones for the different activities that take place in the room. Figure out what doesn't belong in the room.
3. Make it happen. This is the action plan that will help you make your vision for the space a reality.

STEP 4: MAINTENANCE

There's no point in putting all this effort into reading this, much less cleaning and maintaining up your space, if you're not going to enjoy and take advantage of the change.

Emotional benefits. When your space is neat, clear and free from clutter, you'll notice a change in the way you feel about your life and your relationships. Your rooms fulfill the functions you've chosen for them. Gathering places are comfortable for friends and family. Your bedroom is a romantic oasis. Enjoy the peace, pride and satisfaction that come with living life that you've chosen for yourself.

Financial benefits. When you organize your papers, your financial life improves. You can work toward paying off debt. Bills are paid on time. Not only that, when you start looking at all the stuff you own but don't use or appreciate it, it should help you buy fewer items and spend less money. When you spend less time shopping, you spend more time finding new interests, being active in the outdoors, being with your family and friends.

Time benefits. Gone are the minutes and hours spent cursing yourself or blaming the dog for eating your homework. When everything has a place, getting ready in the morning takes less time. You won't be late. You won't forget important dates or arrive at a meeting without critical papers. Tax time is a breeze. You will feel more relaxed, confident, and in control. Your time belongs to you, not your stuff.

Space benefits. The less clutter you have in your house, the more you can reap the benefits of free space. Now your family can sit down at the dining room table and enjoy a meal together. Now your family room is a comfortable place to relax. Now you can have friends over or host a spontaneous party. Gone is the shame and embarrassment of having a home that bears no resemblance to the person you want to present to the world. Revel in your space. Host parties. Show off! You've earned it.

STEP 5: CLEANUP CHECKUP

Decluttering and getting organized takes commitment, focus, and initially, a significant time commitment. By now you should be seeing some major changes in your home, your sense of well-being, and your attitude toward the things you have decided to keep. You know if you're winning the battle – you see the clear surfaces, feel the open space, have new, efficient routines, and experience the sense that anything is possible.

Either that, or you're still stuck in place, overly attached to stuff that doesn't bring you happiness, and deluding yourself about how much change you've actually made.

Just because you've decluttered does not mean you are done. Vigilance is key. Clutter creeps back in.

STEP 6: NEW RITUALS

The secret to staying organized and maintaining a clutter-free home is to make organization a natural part of your life. Everything has a place. When you use something, you put it away. After you wear something, return it to the closet or put it in the laundry. When you open a letter that requires action, discard the used envelope and put the letter into the mail tray. These small steps all help to create the home and the life that you want.

- January – Start Afresh
- February – Shred Mania
- March – Reinvent Spring Cleaning
- April – Explore the Black Hole
- May – Discover the Great Outdoors
- June – Teach Your Children Well
- July – Have a Yard Sale
- August – Prepare for Back-to-School
- September – Make the Season Switch
- October – Brace yourself for Winter
- November – Gear Up for the Holidays
- December – Relax and Enjoy

Keeping your home clutter-free takes more than small steps. Things fall into disrepair. New hobbies fall by the wayside. You outgrow clothes. Stuff accumulates. Even the best intentions can get sidetracked, and your weekly bag-in-hand clutter control may have slipped a bit. The best way to manage the never-ending clutter creep is to establish an annual cycle of organization.

Let this be the first step toward the life you really want.

Free yourself from the clutter that suffocates your life and your space.

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