

The emotional toll of clutter

Aside from taking up your living space, clutter can take an emotional toll as well. Lori Radun is a Certified Life Coach and owner of True to You Life Coaching. Radun presents programs on a variety of life management skills in Chicago's suburbs, and her *Take Time to Declutter* program focuses not only on how clutter affects your physical space, but how it can also affect your mental space.

"Everything is made of energy," Radun said. "When our energy is blocked, we get tired and run down. Clutter is both a symptom and a cause of blocked energy."

"Your environment and your space is a reflection of, and can affect, your physical and emotional well-being," said Radun.

She added that clutter can affect you even if it is "hidden" in a closet or seldom-used corner of the basement. "Even when it's behind closed doors, it gets stored up in your brain as clutter, a mess, that needs to be taken care of."

There are many reasons we avoid decluttering, including:

- Holding on to items we don't use due to sentimental or monetary value
- Fearing "what if I throw this away and then I need it?"
- The task seems overwhelming or tedious; difficult to get organized
- Not having the time; not making it a priority
- Not understanding the benefits of decluttering

"You need to understand the benefits of decluttering before you can get motivated to do it," said Radun. "When we get rid of clutter, we are lifting up our energy and our mood."

Once you've decluttered, Radun suggests the following

- Stop bringing unnecessary items into the house. If you bring in a new item, ask what *two* items you will get rid of. (A common piece of advice is to get rid of one old item for every new one, but Radun advised that by getting rid of two, you are actively decluttering rather than simply making an even exchange.)
- Think twice before saving items you don't use. Ask yourself if you *really* need them.
- Try to touch everything only once. Handle it, throw it out, or put it away.
- Get in the habit of doing some decluttering at the end of every season.

When your home is clutter-free, it can be your sanctuary rather than an additional source of stress. Radun added, "When you come home, you want to be nourished by your space, not drained by your space."