

Simplify your Life (Your living space is a reflection of your mind)

There are a few times each year that I feel the need to really clean my house. I am starting to see a natural cycle in my cleaning. Sometimes the motivation manifests itself as a need to get rid of clothes I haven't worn in too long and take them to the local women's shelter, other times the need is directed at removing the stringy cobwebs populating the ceiling... Over time, if not also tied to moving, I've also noticed that I tend to rearrange the furniture in a room every couple years, which always helps uncover old "treasures." Interestingly, as we get older we can start to see these patterns; one reason I'm grateful to age.

In my recent "spring clean" (in the dead of winter, at the early point of a continual 2 weeks of sub-zero temps), I thought of something I wanted to share. I've often thought of the state of my desk as a reflection of my mind. I've had moments when I look in dismay at all the papers stacked, interspersed among a pile of books, my laptop, and bills to pay, among uncapped pens, floating post-it notes, receipts, and who knows what else waiting to be put in its place. At these times, I usually look at my desk and say to myself, "How am I ever going to get out of this mess?" If I have some presence of mind, I can see that at these times I am usually scatterbrained and not as effective as usual.

It is hard to stop for a moment, especially when you are under a deadline or have multiple demands, to tidy up a bit. But really it is so simple... just take a few moments each day to clean up the mess. Just like any other good habit. Sometimes when I recognize the messiness of my desk (if I can even function, because truth be told, because sometimes the mess

just shuts me down!)... I give myself a 10 minute break. I step away, take a few moments to breathe and take in the disarray. Before I get back into the sometimes overlapping deadlines, I recognize that the mess will not subside and I take even just 2-4 minutes to sort through some of the mess. If I don't challenge myself to clean up the whole mess, I find that I can make just enough calm in the storm to be more effective as I tackle the next impending project. But as soon as a deadline passes, I see my relief in getting down to the bottom of the stack... knowing all the bills are paid, and forms are filled out and filed. Then when I tackle my next task I do it with a much clearer head and tend to work more efficiently. Amazing how decluttering can help bring on a sense of calm and even greater production. Embrace the organization and time it takes to achieve it.

Don't allow the external mess to drive you to what you perceive as an ensuing internal chaos. Just take a few minutes to put things in the proper pile. The small bits add up and especially if you can make it a habit. The key is to see it and know that you will get it, and do your best to not let it distract you until you have some moments to make a dent. I find for me it helps to remove unnecessary distractions. Books tend to pile up on my desk (wow, there is so much knowledge out there, am I right?!) so from time to time I have to put them back on the bookshelf. I love to be surrounded by all that great information, but sometimes it gets to be too much.