

## Life Lessons

Free your mind and body by de-cluttering



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# Free your mind and body by de-cluttering

By **Mitra Malek** | October 23, 2019

“More” is deceiving. It tricks you into a state of scarcity, feeling empty and thinking you have voids to fill. You might not even have voids. And if you do, voids can be good: The absence of something means the presence of space.

Space is good. It frees your mind and body. Clutter slows you down: so much to get through, whether emails or crammed drawers, before you can get things done. The clutter-to-slow-action relationship works in the other direction too: A [2018 study](#) showed those who procrastinate tend to have more clutter, and it noted “clutter problems led to a significant decrease in satisfaction with life among older adults.”

Having less offers another perk: money in your wallet. If you’re not buying, you’re not spending. You also can pocket moolah by selling your superfluous stuff.

Here are four strategies for cutting back on clutter and filling your life with only what works:

- 1. If you can do it today, do it.**

Procrastination is the mental form of hoarding: You’re accumulating stuff in your mind. If you’re able to cross something off your list, do it sooner than later so you can create mental space.

## 2. **Weigh the pros and cons.**

This one takes a little work but can save you lots of time (and money) in the long run.

Consider whether you *need* or *want* the item you're contemplating buying. "Need" means exactly what it says: It's a necessity, so you literally can't live without it. "Want" means you think it will enhance your life.

If you need it, get it. If you want it, ask yourself why. It's perfectly fine to acquire something you want, but the best gauge of whether it'll burden or bolster you is to consider its positives and negatives. This can be incredibly personal: for example, buying a couch. You might think everyone needs a couch, yet I own a fairly large house filled with hardwood and ceramic floors, and I don't have one (or a futon or anything else along those lines). My family is a relax-on-the-rug-and-throw-pillows clan. I also don't entertain often.

So here is the positive if I buy a couch: Guests will have somewhere proper to sit. The negatives: I'll spend money on something I could just as well do without (and, really, so could my guests). I'll have to navigate around and under the couch to clean my floors or rugs. Eventually, I'll have to either move the couch to a new home (not fun), discard it (even less fun) or to try to sell it (takes time I'd rather spend on other pursuits). Not buying a couch.

## 3. **Honor the environment.**

No matter what you buy, natural resources contributed to creating it. Pollution might have too. In turn, the less you acquire, the cleaner the planet's air and the healthier its plants and animals — which makes you healthier, too.

## 4. **Set yourself free.**

There are lots of methods for figuring out whether to get rid of stuff you already own: Put it in a box and if you forget about it after a year, give it away. Or part with things once you've thought about doing so five times.

Go through your goods with a friend who can encourage you to think critically about what to keep.

But the best method harks back to step #2: If you need it, keep it. If you don't need it, consider the pros and cons of keeping it. Do so in terms of how keeping something makes you feel. After all, we want what we see and interact with to be forces for the better, not bog us down.

*Mitra Malek is a contributing editor for Yoga Journal and often writes and edits content related to healthy living. She's a minimalist who has never owned a couch.*

**TAGS: CLUTTER | DE-CLUTTER | LESS IS MORE | PROCRASTINATING | PROCRASTINATION**

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