



ready, set, refresh

Get your home organized for the New Year

by Jesseca Whalen

It's a new year – a time to renew, recharge and reshape our outlook on life. It's also a time to emerge, like a butterfly, from the cocoon of clutter in your home. Getting organized isn't just important for keeping a clean house, it's also important for keeping a sane mind.

"Having an organized home saves you time and stress – time in being able to find things quickly and stress in being able to locate things quickly when you need them," says Julie Bertram, professional organizer and owner of The Organizing Pro (www.theorganizingpro.com).

So stop the "I'll get to it in the

spring" and "It looks messy, but I know where everything is" excuses. Unless you have a minion (if so, let me know because I want one) that miscellaneous drawer is going to need a helping hand. Here are some tips to kick off your year with a clean slate:

OUT WITH THE OLD

Are you really going to use that incense burner? How about that pasta maker? Most of us aren't hoarders, but all of us hang on to stuff we don't really need. A collection of less-than-useful items can grow until it really weighs down a space, especially around the holidays. Use this time of

renewal to cleanse your home the same way you would cleanse your body, and cut out all the extra junk from your life.

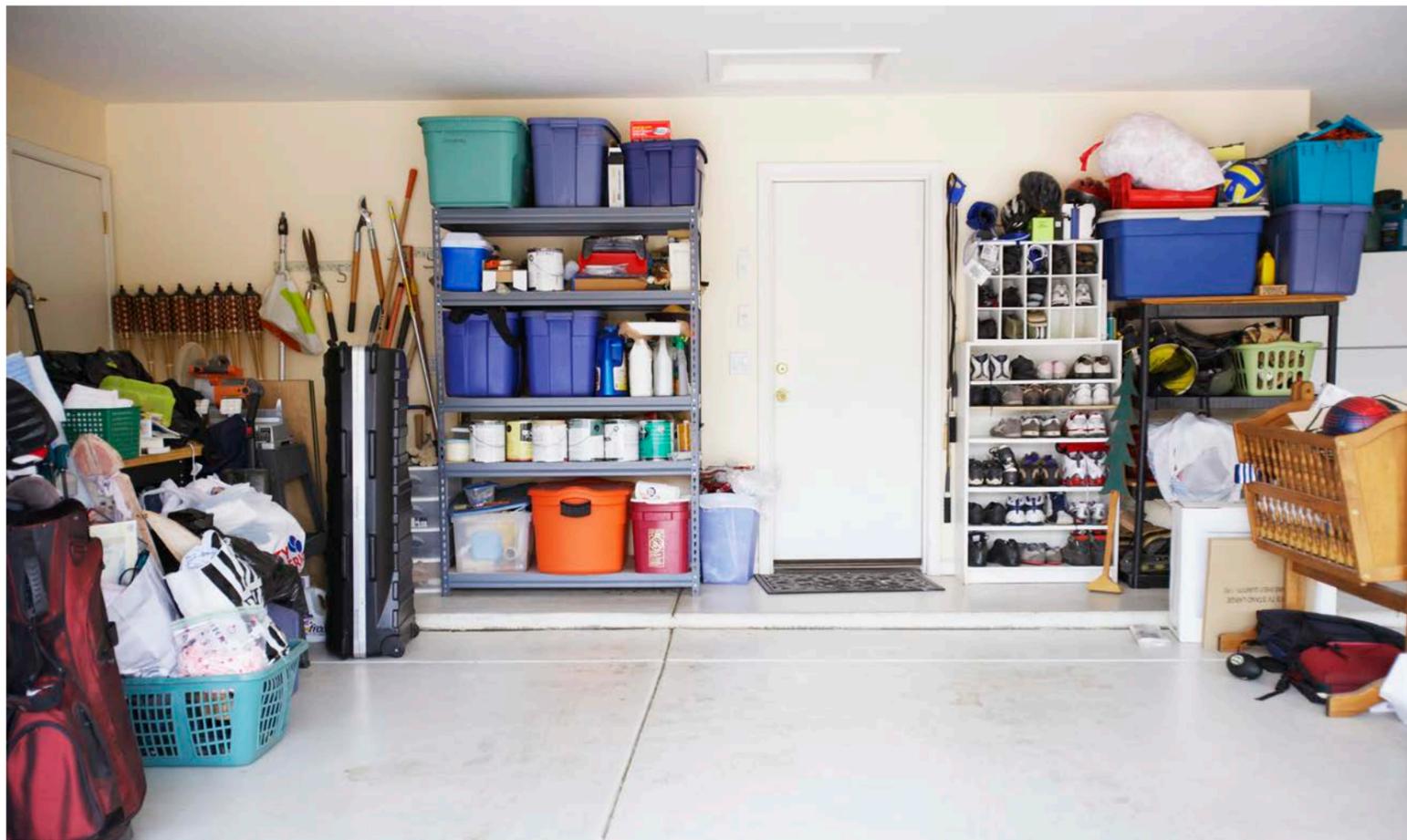
"You're suddenly inundated with all these new things and you have to decide where to put them," says Bertram. "This is the perfect time to go through your house and make homes for the new things. For example, if you are putting away games and your game closet is full, either relocate all of them to a bigger closet or whittle some down to make room for the new ones. Maybe some of the games the kids have outgrown or pieces are missing. Now is the time to weed those out so you have space for the new ones."

TAKE IT ONE ROOM AT A TIME

Take baby steps. It's easy to feel overwhelmed when you overthink something, so don't. Tell yourself, "Ok, today I'm just going to focus on the kitchen." Then the next day or week, organize the living room, and so on. Breaking any project down makes it much more achievable. Plus, once you start, you might find yourself on a roll and able to finish it all in one go.

"Success breeds success," explains Laurie Martin, professional organizer at Simplicity Organizers (www.simplicity-organizers.com). "So build on that momentum throughout the year. Organizing becomes a domino effect. Start by organizing





CINDY BARNES
 SIZE 3X9.75
 Ad #0002181771-02



one small room of your home and let the other areas follow.”

EVERYTHING IN ITS PLACE

Just like us, stuff needs a home too. “You have to have a place for everything and everything needs to go back into its place,” says Bertram. “It sounds simple, but it’s the critical piece missing from so many organizing systems in our homes today. You have to develop a new routine where every time you’re tempted to just set something down and think you’ll put it away later you stop yourself and put it away now.”

GET THE FAMILY INVOLVED

This is 2016, not the 1950s. You don’t have to clean your house alone in pearls and heels. Assign everyone a task or two, even the kids. Not only will

the work go faster, but, when the whole family helps make the house sparkle, they will be much more inclined to keep it that way.

“Maintenance is typically the hardest part of the organizational process, therefore it’s crucial to involve the entire family,” says Martin. “Though organization comes naturally to some people, it is often a learned skill. It’s important to investigate what systems are working well and what organizational systems need improvement. Allow children to be a part of the brainstorming and implementing process. Children must take ownership of creating their own systems.”

MAKE IT FUN

Crank up the tunes, pour a drink, wear footie pajamas so you can laugh at yourself while cleaning the bath-

room; whatever you need to do to get the job done and make it time well spent. And don’t forget to reward yourself for all your hard work. Go out to dinner at your favorite restaurant when the task is complete, or allow yourself an hour of Netflix for every two hours of cleaning.

DON’T BE AFRAID TO ASK FOR HELP

“People hire housekeepers, yard companies and treat themselves to spa days... hiring an organizer is no different,” says Martin. “It’s important to recognize when it’s time to ask for help.”

Bertram agrees. “It takes time to get organized. It took a lot of time to get things cluttered and it will take time to get it uncluttered. If

you’re spinning your wheels when you attempt to do it, hire a professional. I’ve had so many clients comment, ‘Why didn’t I do this years ago?’”

Want some extra motivation to get organized – and stay that way – all year long? Beginning in April, Simplicity Organizers and green living experts Spunky Avocado will be launching the Spunky Simplicity Suburban Smackdown, a movement to prevent over-consumption and educate people about living life more simply. For more information, visit www.spunkyavocado.com.

“The more organized you are, the more time you have to enjoy the things you love to do,” says Martin. “That’s the ultimate goal.”  