





It's the start of another year and you're likely brimming with resolutions, not to mention tons of more "stuff" acquired as gifts over the past holiday season. So how's this for a goal—get your house in order, both figuratively and literally. To help you do just that, BC managing editor Nayda Rondon talked to redesign and organizational consultants Susan Corbo and Bernadette Flaim, who are partners in Attention 2 Detail Organizational Solutions. Using a specific client's home design predicament—turning a space that was more junk room than spare bedroom into a welcoming, organized and attractive guest room—the two design divas reveal their top tips for getting rid of clutter... the stylish way.

Identify your design/organizational challenge.

Begin by identifying areas of your home that cause chaos and disorder in your life and, at the same time, need refreshing. Evaluate the space and determine how best to maximize its use.

"Our client's challenge was to develop adequate storage for off-season clothing and infrequently used items such as luggage, holiday decorations, bedding, and at the same time, to create a warm and inviting guest room," explains Corbo.

Take "baby steps" to avoid "big-picture anxiety."

Start with a small project like organizing your medicine cabinet or junk

drawer. A tiny goal successfully completed will give you the motivation to keep going and eventually organize everything. In this instance, the client, Joanne Brandmaier, a Bergen County resident, had already successfully completed several small organizational projects.

"This gave her the motivation and confidence to take on this bigger, more complicated task," notes Flaim.

With the help and encouragement of Flaim and Corbo, Brandmaier was able to embrace a plan of action, starting with renovations to the adjacent attic area. It was decided that all "vintage" furniture items would be used in the "redesigned" space along with some new pieces for additional storage.

Time was spent editing and eliminating those items that were no longer needed or didn't belong. Once the attic construction was complete, seasonal and infrequently used items (luggage, extra bedding, holiday decorations) were moved into this space, which was now easy to access through newly constructed stairs and door.

After a wardrobe system was purchased and assembled, all clothing was completely organized. Additional bedding and decorative accessories were purchased and arranged.

Find out why you may be having trouble getting motivated.

There usually is an underlying reason or benefit, according to Corbo and Flaim. They urge clients to ask

continued on page xxx

Nice & Neat

When it comes to places in need of serious clutter control, closets and kitchens rank high on most people's list. Don't despair. You can turn household eyesores into visual oases. Here are some design-savvy ideas on how to create chic out of chaos.

At the Carlstadt-based Closets by Design, there's a collection to accommodate every need and want. "The Everyday Collection is an easy answer to closet clutter. Its basic yet useful design will give your closet a fresh look at a sensible price," says Nadine Holtz, who along with husband, Norman, owns Closets by Design. "Our Classic Collection combines simplicity and style to create the practical closet you've been looking for. The Regency Collection represents excellence in closet design. Its progressive details and refined beauty not only create a closet, but complete area of organization that's sure to satisfy even the most extravagant tastes."

The couple and their design team put all their years of experience to work in helping clients design dream closets such as the one shown in Photo A. Among their suggestions for clients: When designing your closet, designate a majority of the space for hanging as most people have more hanging items than anything else. When designing for a couple, they recommend that each person maintain his or her own separate section. Incorporate cubbies, which work well for accessory items, such as pocket books, hats and folded shirts. Edit ruthlessly. "If you haven't worn the item within the last two years, give it away or donate it to a charity," Nadine advises. "Chances are you won't wear it for the next two years either."

"A kitchen is a very functional room," says Amir Ilin, owner and president of Küche+Cucina in Paramus, which provides clients with customized designs and personalized services. "Our designs, which feature top-of-the-line products from places like Denmark, Canada and France, are not only beautiful, they're also efficient, making the best use of space and function." According to Ilin, he and his staff work with clients to ensure that their kitchens are logically and conveniently organized so that everything is where you need it, readily at hand and easily out of sight when not in use. Some of the clever organizational features they offer include drawers with round pegs and slots to safely and snugly store varying sizes of dishes, bowls, and pots and pans (Photo B); space-saving ideas like placing storage cabinets underneath a top that does double duty as an eating countertop (Photo C); and customized cabinets that follow the philosophy of form and function in beautiful style (Photos D and E).



Photo A



Photo B

continued on opposite page



themselves important questions such as "What purpose is my clutter serving?" Thinking about the individual reasons why we allow ourselves to be overwhelmed with material goods often provides interesting and very self-revealing insights. For instance, for some an accumulation of "stuff" may represent safety; for others, certain objects might help us to stay connected to someone or something lost, while for still others material goods might signify protection, or a distraction from life's difficulties.

After you have a clearer sense of the reasons behind your clutter, the next pivotal question becomes "Do you still need your clutter, or can you substitute it with something else?" In some cases, Carbo and Flaim have discovered that simply taking a photo of objects and saving that—and the memories of emotions, people or places these images evoke—is enough; clients no longer have to hold on to the actual item, and can de-clutter not only their physical space, but their psychic one as well.

Adjust your thinking.

Some people work best in an atmosphere of chaos. Yet, what if your disorganization begins to affect other people? Is your home an inviting place, or one that your friends and family can't feel comfortable in because of the disorder?

Determine your own "clutter" comfort level. While your office space may appear to be chaotic to



most people, you yourself might feel totally comfortable and confident in this environment, and know where everything is in your “piles” of work. However, you simply won’t tolerate any piles or disorder in your bedroom where you seek a nurturing, soothing environment. This latter was the effect Carbo and Flaim’s client was after when she requested the pair help her in creating a warm and tranquil environment in her home’s spare bedroom so that overnight guests could feel welcome.

Make a total commitment.

It is important to get the entire family to buy into an “organized” way of life.

Eliminate.

Once you have made the commitment, it’s time to take the next step. Before design and organizational changes can be made, it is necessary to edit by identifying the essentials vs. those things you can live without. Carbo and Flaim note: “Remember that the memories that “things” invoke are not in the “stuff” itself, but in your heart. Letting go is sometimes hard, but necessary.”

Their client made hard decisions about what should stay and what should go. She was able to get rid of the “stuff” while maintaining the memories.

Situate.

Always group by category and/or activity (i.e. cleaning supplies, crafts, sports equipment, etc.). For

continued on page xxx

continued from opposite page



Photo C



Photo D



Photo E

Photo A courtesy of Closets by Design;
Photos B-E courtesy of Kitchie + Cucina.

Proud owners of Kitchens by Turano in Nutley, the Turano family has been in business for 27 years, and if it has to do with building a better kitchen, they’re certainly ones to know how it’s done. “When we design a kitchen it’s not just about bells and whistles for the mere sake of bells and whistles,” says Frank Turano, Jr. “All of our designs and features have a reason and specific purpose. We design each and every element with an eye toward making it work for the person who is using it. Most of our customers know what they want; eight out of ten have been thinking about doing their kitchen for about a year before they come to us. By the time they do come in, they bring with them style books and specific requests of what they want.

“Right now, people seem to want lots of big and deep drawers to store all their many kitchen goods. We work with them, reviewing the clippings from magazines and catalogs they bring in, showing them some of our own past projects and asking them questions about their lifestyle needs and habits to arrive at the best, most functional kitchen for them.”

According to Frank, placement is key. “Organization is mostly a matter of having everything in its place. To help our customers keep everything tidy, easy to find and organized, we use logic, ergonomic principles and space-saving devices and designs.



Two above photos courtesy of
Kitchens by Turano.



Resources

Attention 2 Detail
Organizational Solutions
(201) 363-1254
(phone/fax)
www.a2donline.com

Closets By Design
40 Veterans Blvd.
Carlstadt, NJ 07072
(201) 964-9600
www.closetsbydesign.com

Kitchens by Turano
428 Franklin Avenue
Nutley, NJ 07110
(973) 235-0011

Küche+Cucina
489 Route 17 South
Paramus, NJ 07652
(201) 261-5221
www.kuche-cucina.com

this particular client, Carbo and Flaim advised using an existing dresser to organize the family's winter accessories. Each family member had his or her own drawer (see photo above left).

Locate.

Find the necessary tools to get organized (containers, racks, shelves, etc.). Never buy until you know exactly what you need to store and where, the two organizing experts counsel. In keeping with this philosophy, they ensured that, wherever possible, all of their client's existing furniture pieces were used. In addition, a new wardrobe system was purchased to provide additional storage.

Think outside of the "box" and be creative about storage container possibilities.

When purchasing furniture, always think "storage" and maximize the space you have. "Go up, down, under and over," urges Flaim.

Popular options favored by Flaim and Carbo include decorative storage boxes and baskets such as the ones shown in the photo at above right.

"We added these for our client," Carbo explains. "They were great for infrequently used items and we placed them on top of the wardrobe system and under a sewing machine, which also doubled as a nightstand in the room.

Realize that organization is whatever works for you.

"A monetary investment may be necessary, but well worth your sanity in the long run," Carbo insists.

"It is up to you to be creative and find the best ways to make use of your space," adds Flaim. "It can be very utilitarian, design worthy, or just plain wonderful!"

The pair note: "Since we are interior redesign specialists as well as organizers, we believe that design and organization go hand in hand. We have an equation for it: form + function x finishing = fabulous!"

Nayda Rondon, a Bergen County resident, writes frequently on beauty, travel and home design. She can be reached at naydabc@earthlink.net.