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SIMPLIFIED®

BY EMILY LEY

THE THIRD ANNUAL

Ruthless Declutter Challenge

Clear the clutter. Simplify your home.
Make space for the good stuff.





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Hi friends! I'm so excited for you to embark on the Third Annual Ruthless Declutter Challenge with us! We all want to live simpler, easier lives but so many of us are distracted by, if not drowning in, clutter. Use this week to evaluate your home — no matter the shape or size — and decide what you want your home to feel like. Do you want it to be a space for rest? A place where friends and family can gather and enjoy each other? Or a place that inspires you and supports the imaginations of little ones? Every room in your home has the power to fill you up or drain you. We use the word “ruthless” in the title of this exercise because this is not your run-of-the-mill cleanup. We are ripping the band-aids off the emotions attached to our stuff and fearlessly making space for what's most important. You deserve a space that makes you feel at home. Whether you're embarking on the one-week challenge or extending it into the four-week challenge, I'm thrilled to do this with you. Join my team and me on Instagram (@Simplified and @EmilyLey) as we clear the clutter and get back to the good stuff.

XO,
Emily



You may not be able to control the world, but you can control what happens inside the walls of your home. Make time for this. Home matters.



GETTING STARTED

- **Step 1** - Follow along with thousands of friends on Instagram who are doing the Ruthless Declutter Challenge!
- **Step 2** - Set yourself up with a great playlist.
- **Step 3** - Make sure you have a box of trash bags for donations, recycling, and trash.
- **Step 4** - Don't spend any money. You never know what kind of box or bin you may find during this process.
- **Step 5** - Take everything out of each space, handle each item, and make a decision before placing it back.
- **Step 6** - Touch every. Single. Item.
- **Step 7** - Decide between keep, donate, or trash / recycle.
- **Step 8** - Keep only the best, favorite, and necessary.
- **Step 9** - Take before and after photos to stay motivated!
- **Step 10** - Keep that energy up! It'll be worth it in the end.



JOIN THE FUN

- Share before and after photos on Instagram with hashtag [#RuthlessDeclutterChallenge19](#).
- Join our Simplified Sisterhood Facebook Group to become part of our community.
- Follow along with [@Simplified](#) and [@EmilyLey](#).



Carefully consider every item you own.
Is it the best, your favorite, or necessary? Keep it.
Or is it just taking up space? Declutter it.



THE ONE-WEEK PLAN

DAY	DETAILS	X
DAY 1: KITCHEN	We're beginning with one of the (typically) most cluttered spaces in any given home. Begin by designating a "sorting space" and going drawer by drawer. Empty the drawer, handle each item, and make a decision. Onward!	<input type="radio"/>
DAY 2: CLOSETS & CLOTHES	We have serious emotional attachments to clothing; clothes that used to fit, clothes we "may" wear one day, clothes we spent too much on. Rip the band-aid and keep the best, favorite, and necessary. Less is more.	<input type="radio"/>
DAY 3: BEDROOMS	Give yourself the gift of a sleeping space that inspires rest, tranquility, and rejuvenation. Set out special photographs, clean out your nightstand, and make this special space really work for you.	<input type="radio"/>
DAY 4: BATHROOMS	Our bathrooms tend to be landing spaces for lots of clutter. Consider which shampoo, conditioner, and other products you actually use. Consider simplifying your "getting ready" routine. Store like items together.	<input type="radio"/>
DAY 5: LIVING & LAUNDRY SPACES	Begin with your laundry space, if you have one. Remove trash and clutter. Then move on to your living space(s). Make room on your shelves for meaningful decor. Bring out items that are special and put away others.	<input type="radio"/>
DAY 6: GARAGE	If you have a garage or other outdoor spaces, spend this day focusing on these areas. Remember to remove all items from the space, make a decision while handling each one, then put back only what you will use.	<input type="radio"/>
DAY 7: OTHER / CATCH UP	Use this day to catch up on any rooms you still need to work on and to address any other spaces you haven't decluttered during the last six days. Give yourself a big pat on the back and take those donation bags away!	<input type="radio"/>



THE FOUR-WEEK PLAN

WEEK

DETAILS

X

WEEK 1:
KITCHEN &
LAUNDRY

Whether you're doing your decluttering at night after work or a little each day, give yourself the gift of total focus every single day of this four-week version of the challenge. In your kitchen and laundry space, empty one drawer or cabinet at a time, carefully handle and consider each item, then move on to the next. Create "zones" so that you can focus on one zone per day. Your progress will add up every day!



WEEK 2:
BEDROOMS &
CLOSETS

Bedrooms and closets hold a lot of emotional decisions. We're emotionally tied to the items that live here: clothes and photos, for example. Before you begin on your closet, know that you will need to be ruthless in this quest. Make decisions about clothes quickly. Laboring too long over each decision will throw you off course and drain you of necessary mental energy. Imagine a closet that contains only clothes that fit and that you enjoy wearing. Less is more.



WEEK 3:
LIVING &
BATH SPACES

This part of the challenge is where true home transformation takes place. Going space by space, shelf by shelf, and cabinet by cabinet, carefully consider each piece of decor, every book, and every framed photo. Keep the best, favorite, and necessary. Give yourself the gift of a decluttered space you can truly live in. Make space for your kids to play. Clear seating areas for conversation. Display items that bring a smile to your face.



WEEK 4:
GARAGE &
OTHER

The hardest and most emotional parts are behind you! These spaces that remain are often extremely cluttered, so be sure to give yourself time to completely clear them out, then piece-by-piece put back only what you really need to keep. Make it easy for your children to pull bikes and toys out. If you garden often, put your gardening equipment in an easily accessible place. Create an area for snow shovels and boots. Make these spaces work for you and your specific lifestyle.



KITCHEN & LAUNDRY TIPS

Throw out anything expired.
Wipe all of the shelves and drawers.
Dump all your kids' snacks into a bin,
so you can easily grab one on the go!
Donate items you have multiples of.
Start a donation pile of items you haven't
used in the last 6 months.
Only keep Tupperware you have lids for.

CLOTHES & CLOSET TIPS

Ask yourself, "Do I love and absolutely need
this item, and have I worn it in the last year?"
If not, add it to the donate pile.
Store your family's jackets together,
if they've been worn in the last 12 months.
Donate old sets of sheets and blankets
you haven't used in the last 12 months.

BEDROOM TIPS

Have a keepsake box in your closet for
your child to store art projects and mementos
they create. Gather them throughout the year.
Before you start organizing your
nightstand, take everything out and only
put back the items you truly need.

BATHROOM TIPS

Only keep a few staples on your countertop.
Gather items for guests in a small box or bin.
Place a hook on the wall for your child
to hang their wet towel each day.

LIVING & LAUNDRY SPACE TIPS

Get rid of unnecessary items,
such as socks missing their match.
Replace random decor with a
meaningful photo or treasure.
Designate a keepsake box for any
family heirlooms you come across.

GARAGE TIPS

Use bins you've found in your home to
group like things together, such as
screwdrivers, nails, and sandpaper.
When gathering donations, remember many
organizations will come to your
home to pick those up.



Remember: Don't spend a dime throughout this process. You never know what you'll find in the next closet, cabinet, or drawer that can serve as a box, bin, or solution in another space.



OVERCOMING HURDLES

PROBLEM

SOLUTION

ITEMS I SPENT
MONEY ON

We are tied, emotionally, to many of our possessions — especially those we've spent hard-earned money on. One benefit of decluttering is gaining a new perspective on spending. Feel those guilty feelings, then tuck that thought away. Rip the band-aid and let your clutter be someone else's treasure. I guarantee you'll think twice the next time you buy "that random item." And that's a good thing.

MEDICINE
CABINET

Be sure to check expiration dates for medications and vitamins. Google how to properly dispose of any medication you're getting rid of. And remember, your medicine doesn't have to live in any certain space in your house. Keep your items where you use them.

DECORATING
WHEN I'M DONE

You'll be tempted, throughout this process, to decorate while you declutter. Resist this temptation. And keep in mind our "no spend" rule. Don't spend a dollar. You never know what you'll find in one space that may work as decor or as a box / bin in another space. Consider displaying newly found treasures instead of buying new decor.

SENTIMENTAL
ITEMS

Emotional attachments are real. If you are sentimental about an item, it may be "best, favorite, or necessary." But I also challenge you to question what the purpose is in saving a sentimental item. Will you take it out and adore it from time to time? Keep. Or will it sit tucked away in a box in the attic forever? Perhaps, don't keep.

SEPARATING WORK /
HOME SPACE

Separating work and home spaces can be challenging. If you don't have a home office or designated work desk in your house, consider using a bin to hold "work things" that can be tucked away when not in use and pulled out for work time. Or, create a space for yourself on one end of a table.

PHOTOS

Consider storing photos in treasure boxes. These are special boxes that hold mementos, photos, and other keepsake items. The trick here is to gather photos into one place, not multiple places. As you declutter, set photos aside to be stored together.

OVER-
ORGANIZING

Resist the urge to color-coordinate or over-sort. Organization is wonderful. But over-organizing can lead to frustration and, eventually, mess. Essentially, some systems are just hard to keep up with. Embrace the "throw it in a bin" mentality. Take legos, for example: Don't sort by color, just dump them in a bin — because you know what your 8-year-old will do with them when you ask him to clean up.



OVERCOMING HURDLES

PROBLEM

SOLUTION

GIFTS

It is okay to declutter something that has been gifted to you. It is also okay to let friends and family know — ahead of holidays and birthdays — that you appreciate their thoughtfulness but are keeping toys, etc. to a minimum.

PAPERS

We don't keep a lot of papers in our home. We have a small file drawer with essential papers that must be saved, and we keep information for tax purposes, but otherwise nothing is saved. If something is important and needs to be kept, but we don't need a printed copy, we use the TinyScanner app to scan it and save the file onto our computers.

TOYS

If your children are anything like mine, they probably play with a fraction of the toys they own. Decluttering our children's play areas and toy boxes is an enormous gift to their imaginations. Decision fatigue is real for adults, so imagine how it must feel for children to choose between many different toys over and over. Be ruthless here.

GETTING OTHERS ON BOARD

Avoid trying to strong-arm loved ones into decluttering. You take care of the rest of your home (and their spaces, if they're on board) but let the fruits of your labor inspire them into embracing this lifestyle. My husband is not an organizer by nature, but he appreciates a decluttered home now that we've lived in one for a few years.

HAND-ME-DOWNS

Under-bed storage is great for hand-me-down clothes and toys. I label each box or bag with a size or age range and keep these tucked away. Save only what you will truly use or pass on to another child. If you won't be having any more children, find another family member or friend who could use your children's items.

PANTRY

I have mixed feelings about decanting food items into beautiful containers. I appreciate this with staples like flour, sugar, and pasta but find it cumbersome with others. Make your pantry work for you. Declutter what's expired, then sort by container type (to make everything fit a little better).

KIDS' CLOTHES

Once every six months, go through your children's clothes to remove what no longer fits, and place those pieces in the appropriate hand-me-down bin. Having a closet or dresser with only clothes that fit makes getting dressed every morning so much easier. Consider where you have the most space (drawers or closets) and store clothes there.



SMALL SPACES: TIPS FROM MICHELLE EDGEMONT | @MEdgemontDesign

Michelle Edgemont (@medgemontdesign) is a designer, wife, mom of two, and Brooklynite of 13 years who lives in a 900-square-foot apartment. We asked her to share her best tips for living in a smaller space. Living in a decluttered space comes down to one main lesson: Have fewer things. Two ways to have fewer things: 1) Don't buy them, and 2) make it clear to relatives who buy gifts for your kids that you don't want big toys or too many toys or clothes. Some other rules to live by: Do not buy anything or bring anything new into your home unless you already know exactly where it will live. Say no to fast fashion and fast home decor purchases — "fast" here meaning mass-market purchases that are produced cheaply and you don't actually need. You can live without that fourth gray t-shirt from H&M. You'll be fine without buying ANYTHING from the home department of Target, I promise you. Throw anything out that doesn't work. Have you ever grabbed a pen, it doesn't work, then you put it right back into the drawer? Throw it out! Hide some of the things you do have, so you don't have to look at them all day. Bins are your best friend. Find places with hidden storage: Use bins under the beds, coffee tables that double as storage ottomans, and little nooks in your home to put a few shelves for books and knickknacks. Be vigilant about putting things back in their places. A small, paid storage unit (or begging your parents to keep things in their attic or basement) is the secret for out-of-season clothing and baby gear. Also, rent or borrow items! We don't have a garage, attic, or basement to store items that are only used occasionally. These things could include maternity clothes, baby gear, camping equipment, beach stuff, snow / sport clothing, bikes, etc. Look into either renting or borrowing these things when you need them instead of purchasing and storing them.



MILITARY FAMILIES: TIPS FROM JEN KINSELLA | @MilitaryMomsBlog

Jen Kinsella (@MilitaryMomsBlog) is Navy wife, mom of two, and a former ex-pat who currently calls Florida “home”. We asked her to share her best tips for military families or families who relocate frequently. Because military families move every 2–3 years and our things are always packed for us, we declutter as we unpack rather than before the move. One thing that works for us: Any items we don’t plan to keep stay in boxes and then get donated after we’re finished unpacking. This allows us to quickly and easily determine what we don’t want or need in the new place. Remember that clear storage bins are a military family’s best friend. Those winter coats, hats, sweaters, and scarves are definitely needed in South Dakota, not so much in Hawaii — but you don’t want to purge them in case you’re headed to Connecticut next! Clear storage bins make it easier to see what’s inside, and hopefully you have an attic or basement to store those items until you need them again. Allot a limited number of plastic storage bins to holiday decorations. Keep the things you love or that have sentimental value. Have a storage tub for each family member to hold their memorabilia. In our family, whatever each person wants to keep has to fit in their one tub! To manage the overwhelm of clothing, sort children’s clothes every season and donate / toss anything you don’t intend to reuse for another child. Once or twice a year, set aside a week to declutter, and assign a room to each day so that it’s not overwhelming. As you handle each of the items in a room, create piles for items you want to donate or throw away. Closets and cabinets are the first places to declutter, as they tend to store the most “junk”. Then work your way to easier areas of the room. Once you finish a room, take care of the donate and trash piles that day. Otherwise, the stuff piles up and family members will find things in those piles that they think must be kept!

Best
Favourite
necessary