

Tips for Organizing Your Home

Susan Pinsky is a professional organizer specializing in ADHD and chronic disorganization. She works closely with medical professionals, training physicians on appropriate organizing methodology for patients with pathologically based disorganization. Pinsky is the author of *Organizing Solutions for People with ADHD* and *The Fast and Furious Five-Step Organizing Solution*. A member of the National Association of Professional Organizers since 2004, she has appeared on national TV and radio as well as in print media and was named to the *Better Homes and Gardens Panel of Organizing Experts*. This column is adapted from "Getting Organized with ADHD." Watch or listen to the entire recording of this webinar in the Ask the Expert archives at www.help4adhd.org.



Susan Pinsky

How can a family affected by ADHD pare down on items and remove duplicates?

Families can begin to remove excess items by moving room by room and project by project within the room. For example, you could schedule two days to focus on the bedroom. First pare down the shoes. Get rid of the items that you don't wear. When that is complete, move onto jewelry and repeat the process. Then do the clothing, etc. When the bedroom is finished, move on to another room.

The job is not done until the items you've pared down are out of your house. Put everything in the nearest charitable donation bin. We have to streamline getting rid of things.

In terms of duplication, within any room you don't want duplicates. One frying pan and one can opener are sufficient. There are certain items that you might want to duplicate in various rooms, however. For example, items that you use in multiple rooms, such as scissors or a toilet brush bowl can be kept in each room that they are used.

How do you find a home for an item?

Ask yourself three questions.

- Where do you use it?
- Who does it belong to?
- Where are other similar items kept?

How do you help a high school student who feels most comfortable when they are surrounded by stuff?

Unfortunately, we must let go of the reins a little bit with teenagers and let them live a little bit in their own clutter. To some extent all you can tell your teenager is, "Your clutter must stay in your bedroom." They have to live with the consequences of their clutter, but when they come out of their bedroom at least the kitchen functions well, the basement functions well, the family room functions well, and the office functions well.

If you are going to work with your teenager on reducing clutter, you might want to think about painting your walls bright and fun colors. Color on the wall gives life to a room. Your teen might feel comfortable with replacing the clutter with items that are bright and special to him or her. You can reduce the number of things the teen owns now, but what they do have you make them special and colorful.



How do you keep a family member's collection organized in your house?

To have an organized home, we must have boundaries in space. The dishes live in your kitchen. Your clothes live in your closet. Your tools live on your work bench. The collection can't live in the garage, the basement, and the bedroom. You have to find a boundary for the collection. Figure out which one space makes the most sense for it and keep the items there. Then, within the room, set a limit to the space you are going to allow for a certain item. Designate some specific shelves and containers for it.

How can you organize notes, such as to-do lists and paperwork, and not become overwhelmed?

The first place for your to-do list is on your calendar. With a paper calendar, use a calendar that is large enough so you can read your notes. The only to-do list that should exist separate from your calendar is today's to-do list. If you write it down, by the end of the day that list can get thrown out. If you create a digital daily to-do list it can get deleted at the end of the day.

With general paperwork: Get rid of it, get rid of it, and get rid of it. Most of what you're keeping you don't need. The same method is true for emails; delete, delete,

delete. Sometimes it is hard to keep up with deletions. You can create an archived folder for the year, and at the end of the year move all emails into that folder. 🗑️

Robyn Maggio, MSW, is the education and training coordinator at the National Resource Center on ADHD: A Program of CHADD. You can watch or listen to the entire recordings of these webinars in the Ask the Expert Archives at www.help4adhd.org.

This Ask the Expert column is edited and adapted from online webinars produced by the National Resource Center on ADHD, a program of CHADD. The NRC's Ask the Expert webcasts are supported by Cooperative Agreement Number NU38DD005376 from the CDC. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official view of the CDC.

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