



Arts & Entertainment

Shape Up Your Space

Tips on de-cluttering the mess the holidays have left behind

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Get Professional Help

If you've already failed in previous attempts to de-clutter and get organized, it may be time to call in the professionals. Much like hiring a personal trainer, a professional organizer will take time to understand who you are and the source of the clutter.

In the Richmond area, rates for professional organizers run from \$50-\$150 an hour. Professional organizers often belong to the **National Association of Professional Organizers** (NAPO), and may be a certified professional organizer (CPO) as well. Visit www.naporichmond.com to find a professional organizer who will be a good fit for your needs.

I spoke with NAPO Richmond Chapter President, **Katherine Lawrence** to find out more. Katherine and her teammates at Space Matters (www.myspacematters.com) work primarily with three types of clients. Roughly half are considered chronically disorganized. They are the type the consistently miss appointments, lose important items or documents, or can't seem to pay bills on time.

A second group of clients include those anticipating a move or other life event that will affect their home. Professional organizers can help the elderly downsize possessions to move into assisted living, help combine two established households (a la the Brady Bunch), or help prepare for a wedding or holiday gathering.

The third group of clients does most of the heavy lifting. This approach involves a roughly a 2 hour visit to your home, followed by a detailed action plan that you execute yourself.

There are numerous reasons for hiring a professional organizer. You might feel completely overwhelmed and not know where to start. It can also be more efficient and effective due to the organizer's training and the accountability the client feels toward making progress. The organizer's focus will keep you on task.

One of the hardest obstacles to overcome on the path to a clutter-free, organized space is the strong emotional attachments to our material possessions. Along with chronic disorganization, hoarding and compulsive shopping are disorders that can manifest themselves in our living space.

Losing a child, spouse or parent presents grief issues as well as practical question of what to do with the loved one's possessions. A professional organizer can assist in "Collaborative Therapy," in which the organizer is in touch with the client's therapist. If your disorganization stems from emotional or mental health issues, visit www.nsgcd.org, review the "Clutter and Hoarding Scale" and get in touch with someone who can help.

"We strive to make a better life through organizing the spaces in which we live, work and play."

