

A modern office desk with a black chair, a lamp, a laptop, and decorative items. The desk is made of a dark material with a silver metal frame. On the desk, there is a laptop, a lamp with a white shade, a vase with white flowers, and some papers. A black office chair with a silver frame is positioned in front of the desk. The background shows a white wall with a clock and a door.

FIND SOME HELP  
Getting it  
Together

# Professional organizers help you clear the clutter

By LILY DAYTON

EVERY YEAR about this time it happens. Confronted with the chore of spring cleaning, things always seem as bad – or even worse – than last year. The process of organizing the home or office can be daunting.

It might be time, once and for all, to call in a professional, someone who can help get things organized in a way that the stuff that now represents clutter can stay organized.

“Organizing is all about creating easefulness,” said Carolyn Kishori Koepsell, owner of Organizing with Distinction of Carmel. “The goal is to make your life easier, smoother and more peaceful.”

Koepsell has spent the past 25 years encouraging people to achieve their goals by helping them organize the spaces where they live, work and play. As part of her training, she attended the Starkey International Institute for Household Management, a prestigious program known for training members of the White House staff.

When Tricia McEntee started her position as chief executive officer of Esalen Institute, she found that her work life had changed dramatically, so the CEO sent an SOS to Koepsell.

“I had a million things suddenly on my plate,” said McEntee. “I wanted to move effectively into my new position.”

For McEntee, the process “was like a reality TV show. I had to go out of town and she set to work on my system while I was gone. When I walked into my office, it was an amazing, pristine, color-coded, organized, energetic feeling of peace and harmony.”



Though the physical changes were the ultimate surprise, McEntee said that it was much more than the initial setup that changed her life.

“It’s a whole system that she teaches. I now have a sectional notebook with me at all times so I have information I need at my fingertips. And when new information comes at me, I know what to do with it. I have an organized, useful filing system.”

Jane Best, an L.A.-based wealth management advisor who hired Koepsell to help her get organized after moving from the East coast to California, said she had a similar experience.

“She came into my home and work office and assessed the work flow,” said Best. “She watched how I worked, how I processed papers. She looked at my

system, asked a lot of questions and made suggestions. She made both practical suggestions, from colored files organized by project, to acquiring a whole new filing cabinet because there just wasn’t enough space for my files, as well as using colors and visual elements to create a peaceful environment. She made my workplace a place I want to be.”

Koepsell said the primary benefit of seeking the help of a professional organizer is the objectivity an organizer can bring.

“A good thing about hiring a professional organizer is that you get another eye, an objective view on your lifestyle, habits and home,” she said. “An organizer will have efficient shortcuts for you that will save you time, money and space.”

Koepsell said the main problem with disorganization is that the disorganized tend to run out of storage space or containers to handle their belongings.

“It’s really important that everything has a home,” she said. “People often have too much stuff for the space. Without places to put your things, you’ll feel unorganized.”

One thing a professional organizer can do is help get rid of clutter. She can also help consolidate or rearrange a room to simplify tasks and put everything away in an organized manner.

To begin the process, Koepsell breaks down space into zones.

“You want to think of what activity you do in different parts of your home or office,” she said. “Make a list. Then think of what supplies or equipment you



Fresh Start

need for each activity. Next, think of what container you'd like your supplies to live in. If you organize your space like this, everything will have a clear home."

But she cautions that you shouldn't run out and buy storage containers until you assess what you really need — and what you already have. Often, with a little decluttering and reenvisioning, you'll find that you already have the appropriate storage you need.

If new storage containers are needed, Koepsell recommends looking for attractive ones made from natural materials, such as wood, fabric or woven fibers.

"Beautifying your space makes a big difference in how you feel," she said. "And you will want to put stuff away if you have a nice place to put it.

"When setting up their ideal home or work space, I encourage my clients to think of things they enjoy, things that make them happy, things that are pleasing to their eyes. These are the objects that should surround them. I like to incorporate elements of beauty into the project, such as flowers, beautiful artwork, fountains and aromatherapy. It's important

## "You can start with 15 minutes a day. Set a timer and stick to it."

to bring in the element of attractiveness as well as functionality. This is an important part of the project. And it makes it really fun."

Koepsell said she believes the most important thing about creating and maintaining a new organizational system is to be open to change. She can come in and help you organize your life, but the tools she will teach you to maintain that level of organization are the most valuable part of the process.

"If you allow space to rethink things differently from your normal way, this allows change to take

place," she said. "It's good to play with different options and to be open to new ideas. Openness and flexibility are what will make it happen."

As opposed to simply rearranging your stuff, McEntee said she believes working with a professional organizer can be a life-changing experience.

"The most profound thing about the process is that there is a very energetic, almost spiritual piece to it," said McEntee. "It opens space in your thought process and being for more peace and organization in your life. It's impacted me personally at that level."

Added Best: "I'm being re-wired. It's amazed me, after being in business for so many years. The process is helpful for people with no organization structure as well as someone who has been successfully in business as long as I have and just needs their systems tweaked for efficiency. People may think hiring an organizer is like hiring a housekeeper, but it's a whole lifestyle change process."

*To contact Carolyn Koepsel, call 277-9041 or visit [www.organizingwithdistinction.com](http://www.organizingwithdistinction.com)*

### How to Declutter

1. When decluttering an area, set up boxes or bins with the following labels: Trash, Recycle, Give Away, Sale, Put Away, Store/Archive, Mend.
2. Start with 15 minutes or a half-hour a day — set a timer and stick to it! Little by little, you'll get there.
3. When you can't decide whether to keep something or get rid of it, you can have a box labeled "Undecided." Mark a date on the calendar for when you're going to look at it and decide. Then keep that date! Time can change your perspective about what you really can live without.
4. Set up a permanent "outbox," someplace where you can put things you want to give away. When it's full, donate the items to a charitable organization.
5. Clothes hanging in your closet that you don't wear are like dead energy. If you haven't worn it in a year, it should move on. Also, if it no longer fits, it's time to get rid of it. You may think you'll get into that size again, but by the time you do the style will have changed or the fabric will have worn out.
6. Slow down things coming in. Create "gift wish lists" so people don't have to guess and give you things you don't want — or things you have no place to store. Gift ideas include donations to a charity in your name or gifts like tickets to a play or lessons to learn a new skill.
7. Before you buy something new, ask yourself where you are going to put it. If you don't have a place to store it, rethink the purchase.
8. Have a "give away" party. Invite your friends over for a clothes exchange. Donate anything left over to charity.
9. Resist the urge to hold on to something you don't use because it's too valuable or too "good" to give away. Give "good" items to people in need — they will benefit and so will you. You will start making space in your life for new good things to come.

Try these tips

