

Davis Life Magazine

Clear Your Clutter with Claudia

By Nicki Orser

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If spring sprung before you had a chance to get your clean on, never fear. Summer's still a great time to get your home and your life into tip-top shape. If you're ready to take back your space and unclog your clutter, then you might want to call long-time Davis resident, Claudia Smith, Professional Organizer and owner of Clear Your Clutter Consulting. Then, get ready to calm the chaos.

"Getting your life organized," says Smith, "is like any major life change. It takes getting committed, just like getting committed to getting healthy. I am like the personal trainer for your house. However, I don't come with any judgment or thoughts of how your space or life should be."

Smith, who began her business as a Professional Organizer after working more than fifteen years as a social worker, brings something different to her clients. She's not a drill sergeant throwing clients into the boot camp of clean, she's more like a cheerleader, a counselor, a friend. She uses her expertise in organization to help others learn how to maintain a clutter-free space, learn how to let go of items and activities that no longer enrich one's life, and how to set up an organizing system that can be easily maintained.

"The majority of people are in some kind of life transition, and some of the transitions can last for years," says Smith.

Often Smith's clients are moving to a bigger or smaller place, or have experienced a death in the family. When there is a time pressure, like when a person needs to empty a parent's estate, things can get even more complicated. It's common for people to bring all of their loved one's things into their own home and not know what to do next.

“They feel such love for the person,” says Smith. “And they don’t want to make the wrong decisions.”

A Professional Organizer can lend much needed support during those difficult life transitions: a death in the family, a divorce, a growing family who starts to feel as if they might burst out of their space. When Susan, one of Smith’s clients, was ready to take the next step toward her goal of living simply when she contacted Smith.



MAKE ROOM FOR BEAUTY IN YOUR LIFE

“As a sentimental mom of four grown sons and having close family ties, I hang on to many mementos and keepsakes from the past,” says Susan. “Claudia has helped me discriminate, organize, and honor my treasures in simple, loving ways. A memory box hung on the wall displays my deceased mother’s photo, silver thimble, glasses, and tiny, perfect abalone shell she’d found.” For individuals who seem to have trouble managing their time, finding belongings, or finishing projects, no matter what the situation, working with an organizer can be just the thing they need to clarify whether the things they own and the way they spend their time reflects who they are and who they want to be.

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“Disorganization comes in basically two flavors: situational disorganization, which can occur as a result of a sudden change or life event that creates short term chaos during the transition,” says Lee Mahla, a Professional Organizer and Certified Relocation and Transition Specialist who serves the Greater Sacramento Area. “Chronic disorganization has usually been a long term struggle, greatly interferes with quality of life, [and is marked by] failed self-help attempts to solve the problem.”

Smith makes a real effort to meet people wherever they are on their journey. For some clients, that means working side-by-side, making the painstaking decisions on whether or not to keep each piece of paper, or Tupperware container.

“I always want to honor their comfort level,” says Smith, “but invite them to think about why they are keeping it. Is it because they can’t be bothered to make an executive decision, because they are scared of making the wrong decision?”

By answering those tough questions they are able to work together on those underlying causes, while at the same time, chip away at the clutter.

“Claudia is a wonderful balance of emotional, sentimental, people-focused, sympathetic, helpful on one side and clear-headed, practical, outcome-based, and logical on the other side,” says Liz King, who has watched Smith’s business blossom during the past seven years. “This balance puts her in the perfect position to help people prioritize and set up a plan of action in steps that feel achievable.”

Once Smith’s clients have cleared away the unnecessary stuff, there are still a lot of changes to be had.

“So many times people think of the stuff, a messy desk or warehouse, a mailroom in disarray. . . It’s not about the stuff,” says Laura Leist, President of the National Association of Professional Organizers and author of *Eliminate Chaos: The 10-Step Process to Organize your Home and Life*, “but about putting systems in place to be more efficient. Organizing and productivity go hand in hand. Without good systems in place, it wastes time and it wastes money.”



TRADE IN CHAOS FOR SOMETHING CALM

Smith works with her clients to help them put those organizational systems into place, and helps them to develop the skills necessary to keep them working, tweaking them now and then, to make sure that life still feels balanced. “When I see somebody go from absolute chaos to embracing order, and making the time to maintain it, it is a joy,” says Smith. “I love my work so much. I am sincerely humbled every day that people invite me into their homes to share their most intimate parts of their life. I feel so honored, so lucky. When people tell me how much I’ve helped to change their lives, and call me to come back, it is my greatest joy.”

For more information about Claudia Smith, visit her website at www.ClearYourClutterConsulting.com

To learn more about the role of Professional Organizers, check out the website for the National Profession of Professional Organizers: www.napo.net