

Post Holiday Organizing Strategy By: Ann Michael Henry

As we get into full swing with the holidays, our pace begins to pick up—so many additional things to do on top of our already busy schedules. Our main goal around end-of-year holidays tends to be to decorate our homes in an effort to make them feel warm and welcoming for all to enjoy. In the *get-ready-for-the-holiday rush*, we start to tuck things away typically with little thought to how we are doing it. We then manage to make it through the holidays and before we know it, it's time to take down the decorations and get back to our regular routines.

We make getting ready for the season so enjoyable before and during the holidays; however, when it comes to post-holiday clean up, a negative vibe comes over us knowing we have to tackle this “unwanted chore”. Why does this occur and what can we do to turn a negative experience into a positive, fun adventure?

HOLIDAYS ARE OVER, NOW WHAT?

If you are organized about how you handle your post-holiday responsibilities, you can enjoy them and have fun at the same time. And, the more organized you are, the better prepared you are for next year holidays' preparation needs.

Here are some tips to help better manage and organize your post-holiday activities:

- **Tackle one space at a time.** Pack by room or area that you like to decorate first, second and so on. For example, let's say for the Thanksgiving weekend you always do the outside of your home. All of your outdoor supplies should be packed in boxes or storage containers (i.e. plastic totes) just for outdoor stuff and stored in an easy to access location. Next comes the front hallway—have a box or storage container for that area as well. Then the living room, then the dining room, etc. Then, when it comes time to decorate the following year, you can pull out the boxes/containers for one area at a time, decorate it, put the containers away and head to the next area and repeat the same process. In this way, you not only finish decorating, you finish cleaning up after decorating as well—all at the same time!
- **Get your holiday list ready for next year.** Make a note of additional items you may need for next year—i.e. more light bulbs for the tree, hooks for ornaments, candles, etc. and tape it to the top of the first box that you will open next year. Another idea is to adhere the note to the front door wreath (this tends to be the first decoration people put up). Also, make note of any decorations that were damaged and, if possible, fix them before putting them away. If you can't fix them, either take advantage of the post-holiday sales and purchase them again (and store them away upon bringing them into the house) or make a note that you need to purchase them before the next holiday season—again adhere this list to your first box or wreath. When you start decorating, you will be greeted by a reminder of things you need, and you will have plenty of time to get them.

TIPS FOR THE TUCKERS!

Once the decorations are put away, we quickly get back into our daily routine. What about, however, all of the things we tucked away pre-holiday? Part of the problem is we really don't want to deal with all of that "stuff"...after all we weren't successful in dealing with it before the holidays so what makes us think we can deal with it after the holidays? Often times, we just continue on as if all the things we tucked away never really existed. This strategy works well until we need to find that "something" that we tucked away so abruptly, or we need the space for another purpose.

A good solution to this challenge is what I call the "10 Minutes At A Time Technique". You can use this technique in combination with the "Full House Sweep"! Start at one end of the house such as the mud room or back door entrance. Open cabinet and closet doors and pull out everything that you tucked away. Now put it away in the right place. You might want to have a laundry basket or box handy to help you tote things to their respective homes. Don't clean out the space, now is not the time. (However, it would be a good time to take some notes about what you would like to do with these storage areas in the future! Keep a notepad in that box that you are toting around or tape the list to the inside of a cabinet in the area you want to focus on later!) Next, head to the kitchen and begin opening up every cabinet door, even the one above the refrigerator and pull out everything you tucked away. Put those things away in their rightful place too. Then the dining room, the living room, front hallway closet, etc. Keep moving room-to-room until you have made it all the way through your home.

Where does the *10 Minutes At A Time Technique* come in? Before you start tackling the tucked away stuff, set a timer for 10 minutes. When the timer goes off, stop. You will be amazed at how much you accomplished; you can proudly say "I got something put away today". If you are on a roll, and you have the time, grab another 10 minutes! This technique is great for forcing yourself to get things done quickly and strategically as well as prevents you from becoming overwhelmed—which may result in you simply giving up and saying, "who cares about these things...I will find them when I need them".

LESSON LEARNED

It's hard for most of us to find a block of 3 or 4 hours to work on a project like post-holiday clean up, so frequently we put things off. By breaking a project down into 10 minute intervals, we can successfully accomplish our *getting organized* goals. Over the course of a week or two, you will have successfully "untucked" everything and put your home back as it was pre-holiday season. Amazing, you did find 3 or 4 hours to get everything back in place, 10 minutes at a time.

So, the moral of our "story" is with some set time (10-minute intervals), plan of attack, and a well organized approach, any one of us can get the things done we never thought possible—or that we purposely put off. The key is outlining a strategy, executing accordingly and staying focused. This reduces stress and allows you to be in control of your home while giving you a sense of accomplish and pride in getting the job done and done right the first time around.

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