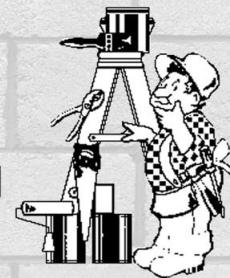


# H O M E I M P R O V E M E N T



## Home organization: The 411 on getting your life in order

Imagine your basement is flooding, and you can only rescue a few items from the disaster. What would you grab?

For most of us throughout the Northland, this scenario isn't too difficult to visualize. Local organizer, Kim Schlichting, has created a business in Duluth that works with people to become more organized in their homes, businesses and throughout their lives.

Schlichting used the recent flooding throughout the Northland as an example of what to think about while sifting through clutter. Most people would start by saving their important paperwork and legal documents. Then, we might grab our more expensive items such as laptops and iPads. "Everything can be replaced, other than family and pets," says Schlichting. "We need food, clothing, shelter and water. The rest is just stuff."

Schlichting's business, called Northland Organizing, helps provide each client with personalized attention by a caring coach who is nonjudgmental. This is accomplished by determining the cause, organizing the space and teaching the client new skills.

"Not everybody organizes things in the same way. It is not a cookie cutter solution," explained Schlichting. "I pride myself in finding a solution that works for the individual." Schlichting uses her focused attention to

meet the unique needs of her clients to transform their homes.

Schlichting explained, "If somebody is in a crazy, disorganized state, I usually tell them to start in a room or area that is giving them the most stress. Then they will see instant gratification."

Schlichting recommends starting the process by asking yourself a series of questions. These questions may include "Do I love it?" "Is it useful?" "Is it beautiful?" and "Do I honor it?" The last question, "Do I honor it?" applies to situations where the items may have belonged to a grandparent. In this case, the item would qualify as memorabilia and should probably be displayed proudly rather than collecting dust underneath your bed or in a box in the garage.

Next, we must ask ourselves if we need the item, or if we just want it. Schlichting stated, "You need the things you use and love and that enhance your life." It is important to think about whether the item is a

liability and causes stress in your life. In addition, we need to watch out for the word "someday." Kim explained, "Someday never comes."

Schlichting advises that instead of putting an object down, you should put it "away." This might require asking yourself where "away" is located. One of Kim's quotes that she likes to remind clients is, "Everything in its place and a place for everything."

To clear up clutter, Schlichting says, "Get out some empty boxes and bins and start sorting." Schlichting recommends using three categorized boxes: Keep, sell and toss. More categories might be necessary, such as repair/mend and donate. If the boxes need to be taken somewhere, take the box out to your car so that you remember to deal with the items.

One of the main items that can create clutter is excess paper. This can include paperwork, bills and credit card statements.

In these situations, ask yourself if the paper requires

action. Next, think about how easy the information would be to find again. Can you easily search it on the internet? Other important questions might be over whether the information is recent, or if it is needed for taxes or legal implications. Schlichting suggests talking to your accountant if you have questions over whether you need to keep certain papers.

For children, Schlichting finds that having a "lost and found" bin can be helpful. This can be a great place to store lost items from your own children, as well as items that may have been left behind by friends.

Schlichting also has tips for situations that cause guilt, such as receiving a gift that is not particularly your style or your taste. While you may have feelings of remorse for donating or regifting items, Schlichting says that it is important to not become upset about it. "You are not giving away that person's love," says Schlichting. "Don't stress about it. Just let it go."

Schlichting says that

becoming more organized can help save energy, time and money. In addition, clutter-free homes can reduce frustration and stress. She

stated, "It simplifies our lives, and it is a freeing experience."

Savanna Johnson  
Student Intern

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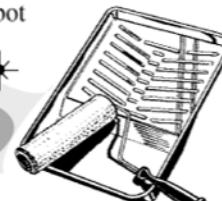
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