



SOUTH CAROLINA FAMILY AND COMMUNITY LEADERS
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Leader Training Guide

“Declutter Clutter”

Objective:

Learn how to cut back on clutter and create more living space for an uncluttered life.

Lesson Overview/Introduction:

Everyone has a little "junk" lying around the house. OK, some of us may have more than a little. Regardless of how much stuff we have, we can all benefit from decluttering our lives and homes. According to *Psychology Today* and *Web MD*, people tend to feel like life is out of control when they surround themselves with more things than they can manage. “The mess causes stress.” If you’re not taking care of the clutter in your home, you may not be taking care of yourself either.

Lesson:

Why You Should Declutter Your Life

When is clutter a problem? For many people clutter can be an energy zapper or they waste inordinate amounts of time looking for things they can’t find. In extreme cases, people may suffer from obesity or depression when a life of consumption extends beyond "stuff." In hoarding situations, a house full of clutter can cause fire hazards and other health complications when mold and dust are present. But extreme cases are not common.

What is clutter? Clutter is anything you’re keeping around your house that doesn’t add value to your life. Decluttering is all about making room in your home for the things that matter.

Why should you declutter? Many people enjoy decluttering because it relieves stress by providing a sense of control and accomplishment. For others, getting rid of the junk frees up a little extra space in the house that wasn’t there before. Some people may just need to purge before they move to a new house. Whatever your reason for decluttering your life and home, this lesson will help you through the process. “With less clutter, there will be more room for you, your family, and your friends. You’ll get to enjoy the freedom of all the space you’ve reclaimed. If you like to socialize, invite friends and family over more often. If you like your alone time, sit down and enjoy a good book or a favorite movie, rejoicing how easy it is to relax and stretch out while doing it.”

PART 1: How to Declutter Your Home

Step 1: Set Goals

Before you get started, make a plan. No matter how many rooms or how much clutter you have to get through, starting with specific goals will help you create a plan that will reduce any frustration as you go. Here are a few things to keep in mind as you get started decluttering your home:


Write down or make a map of all the rooms and ‘clutter hot spots’ you want to tackle.

- Give each space a grade based on the severity of the clutter. For example, on a scale of 1 – 3 (3 being the most cluttered), a particularly messy room or space would get a 3. This will help you prioritize your time.
- Do one room or one space at a time.
- Set completion dates for each phase of your cleanup. Be sure to pick dates that are attainable so you don't get frustrated. If you make it into a declutter challenge for yourself, it may feel a bit more like a game.
- In addition to completion dates, you should plan time to work on specific areas when you expect decluttering those spaces to take longer than a few hours, such as a basement or a garage.

Step 2: Create a Sorting System


As you go through the rooms and spaces in your house, you will need a system for sorting the items you find. You can create your own method or use one of the most popular organizational tips: the “Three-Box Method.” This method forces you to make a decision item by item, so you don't end up with a bigger mess than the one you started with. Gather three boxes or storage bins, label them as follows and then use the organizing tips below:

The Three Box Method




Keep

Empty after you complete a space. Items you keep should go in their newly designated home. Optimally these things should be stored neatly in a container or drawer. Label if desired.



Get Rid Of

Empty after you complete a space. Store any items you want to give away or sell outside your home – either put them in the vehicle you plan to transport them in or store them temporarily in a garage or an attic.



Put In Storage

Empty into storage containers after you complete a space. As you fill your containers, label them or drop an inventory sheet on top and neatly put them in your storage area.

Step 3: Get Rid of the Clutter

You have a few options for disposing of items that make their way into the “Get Rid of It” box.

- ✓ **Recycle:** Recyclable glass, plastics and paper can go straight into your recycling bin if you have curbside pickup. Otherwise put your recyclables in bags so you can transport the waste to the nearest recycling drop off location. Many [electronics](#) can and should be recycled. With over 1,890 kiosks in 42 states, **EcoATM** recycling kiosks can turn your old electronics into cash. [Check prices](#) for your old devices and use the [ecoATM locator](#) to see if there is one near you.

- ✓ **Donate or Freecycle:** You can rest easy knowing that something you no longer need is going to a good home. Clothes, shoes and other household items in good condition can be donated to a number of local charities. Or try posting to [freecycle.org](https://www.freecycle.org): You post what you want to get rid of and people come get it. Your trash is truly another man's, or woman's, treasure.
- ✓ **Have a Garage Sale:** If you're up to the task, you may be able to make a little money off your clutter by having a garage sale. Check to see if your neighborhood or homeowner's association has a designated garage sale date. Just make sure you begin the declutter process early enough so you can participate – you'll get more foot traffic that way.

10 Helpful Decluttering Tips for Your Home

If you're like most people, you have trouble getting rid of something that you spent your hard-earned money on, which you once used or loved. Many items you find will have more than just a monetary value –they will stir up memories and have sentimental value. These are real and valid feelings that make it challenging to part with our stuff.

Remember, you have options when it comes to getting rid of clutter, so you don't have to feel guilty about putting everything in the trash. Mentally prepare yourself for decluttering your home and keep the following concepts in mind when you are struggling to part with something you haven't used in a while.

1. **The 80/20 rule:** When it comes to clothing, we generally only wear 20 percent of the clothes we own 80 percent of the time. This rule tends to hold true for other things as well, such as video games, computer parts, books, DVDs, toys and more. Your mission is to get rid of the things you don't use 80 percent of the time.
2. **Get over sunk costs.** In the world of economics, costs that have already been incurred and cannot be recovered are referred to as sunk costs. As you go through the items in your house, most things should be considered sunk costs (except for rare situations where an item may have increased in value). Since you cannot get the money back that you spent on that item, you should *only* think about the value that thing can add to your life in the future. Understanding this concept of sunk costs can help you make more rational decisions about what to keep and what you should toss.
3. **See if it works.** If whatever treasure you found stashed away in your house doesn't work, get rid of it. If you want to fix it, then fix it, but don't let it sit in your house for another month collecting dust.
4. **Think of the last time you used it.** If you haven't used something you come across in the last six months, you should probably get rid of it. If you pulled the item out and said, "I've been wondering where this was!" you should probably get rid of it. And if you didn't even know you still had the item in question, you should definitely get rid of it –you didn't miss it enough to warrant keeping it.
5. **Track which items you actually use.** There's a neat decluttering tip you can use with clothing, books and DVDs. Over the course of the year, when you use or wear an item put it back facing the opposite direction of the others. This allows you to see what you've used and what you haven't. If you haven't used or worn something in a year, get rid of it.
6. **Ask yourself if you love it.** This may seem obvious, but sometimes we keep things we aren't completely crazy about. Yes, sometimes we spend money on things we don't love, and sometimes we don't return them. But if you don't love it, and you haven't used it in more than 6 months, add it to the "Get Rid of It" bin.

7. **Sleep on it.** After you've made the decision to get rid of some of the clutter in your home, sleep on it. If there's something you can't live without, you'll know in the morning. You can pull it out of the junk bin and put it away.
8. **Start with small decluttering projects that feel big.** Before you commit to an entire room, start with a few small projects that will give you a sense of accomplishment when you're done. "If you are overwhelmed with your clutter and just don't know where to start, start small. Tackle one drawer, one shelf, or one corner of your desk. Set a timer and work for 15 minutes and accomplish as much as you can. Taking baby steps can eventually lead to a big change in your clutter level."
9. **Clear off flat surfaces.** Countertops, shelves and other flat surfaces are clutter-magnets. If you need to keep a few things on the countertops, that's OK, but make it a goal to free your flat surfaces of most clutter. Make space in drawers or add small boxes or bins to your shelves for paper items. Only keep frequently used, essential small appliances on kitchen countertops – the rest should be put away or donated if you never really use them. "Create Homes – When things have no place to go, they start to gather in piles. Establishing a place to put your things helps reduce clutter. Make sure that what you keep is 'home worthy.' Is it useful? Do you love it? Does it fit? Do you need so many? Is it time to let go? Ask the questions before putting things away."
10. **Keep like things together.** Categorizing things as you go through them is imperative to organizing your home. In fact, keeping like things together forces you to organize your home. And it will make your life easier! Store like items close to where you will use them and you'll not only know where they are when you need them, but you'll reduce some of the little frustrations in your daily life. "Sometimes it is better to take on a category instead of a room. Items that are similar often end up in different spaces. For example, if you have books in every room, it may make more sense to gather up ALL the books, group them by subject or genre, then make decisions about which to keep. You may not realize you have four copies of the same thing if they are in different rooms."

PART 2: Room-by-Room Decluttering & Organizing Tips

Now that you have the tools you need to tackle any decluttering project in your home, you are ready to Declutter. Decluttering room-by-room is the most efficient way to declutter and organize your home. And you will feel a sense of accomplishment as you complete each room! Use your plan that you created as a guide for decluttering how-tos for each room in your house.

PART 3: How to Declutter Your Home for Good

Trust me, after you spend the time removing clutter from your house, it will be easy to let it back in due to all the excess room!

"Make a commitment to yourself that once an area is decluttered, it will no longer become storage space for stuff you don't know where to put. For example, after you clean out the entry closet, you can't come across a broken item in the entertainment center and move it to the entry closet—that's not decluttering; that's simply rearranging junk!"

Prevent the clutter in your home from returning in the future with these four simple tips:

- **Don't allow potential clutter into the house in the first place:** Before you purchase or acquire anything new, ask yourself, "Do I really need it?" and "Where will I keep it?" If you don't have an immediate answer to those two questions, don't bring it home.
- **Declutter a little each day:** Deal with mail, clothes, toys and other common clutter a little each day. Set aside 20 minutes a day and you'll avoid having to find *hours* to clean up messes in the future. If you build this time into your daily routine, you are likely to have

greater success. If daily isn't doable, plan a weekly declutter sweep and be sure to give yourself enough time.

- **Use the one in, one out rule:** Whenever you bring something new home, you have to throw out or donate something else. You can even implement this room-by-room – it will make you think about where you will keep this new thing.
- **Don't buy. Rent or borrow:** If you need something only once in a blue moon, consider renting or borrowing it. When it comes to books and video, the library is a great resource, or you can opt for digital versions, which take up far less space!

Lesson Summary:

You will learn how to cut back on clutter and create more living space for an uncluttered life, why it's important to declutter for stress reliever, realize the possibility of fire hazards and possible health complication due to mold and dust from clutter, how to (set goals, create sorting systems and get rid of clutter), detailed decluttering tips and (most importantly) keep the clutter out of your home and life for good.

Suggested Activities:

To keep this lesson light and fun, bring a bag of "stuff" (some suggestions); a dress too small or with a big stain, a pair of OLD worn out shoes, broken or other items that do not work, broken storage containers with missing lids, old strings of Christmas lights with bulbs missing and tangled, books, samples of personal items from hotels, etc. (15 or 20 "wacky" items that need to be organized.) Bring 3 boxes with labels (KEEP, TOSS, STORE). Have members help sort the items and have them share their decluttering experiences. At your next meeting, you might like to hear about their decluttering results.

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Andi Willis, Professional Organizer and author of www.goodlifeorganizing.net

Linda Samuels, CPO-CD® and author of The Other Side of Organized and owner of www.ohsoorganized.com

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Mary Johanson, Professional Organizer and author of www.maryorganizes.com

Davonne Parks, author of Chaos to Clutter-Free and www.davonneparks.com

Joshua Becker, Best-Selling Author of Simplify and Founder of Becoming Minimalist

<https://www.budgetdumpster.com/resources/how-to-declutter-your-home.php>