

## Simplify, Simplify. How to Declutter Your Life



Her mother claims she was organizing from the crib. Dr. Darnita L. Payden was the rare child who kept her toys neat and orderly and who helped classmates organize their school desks and notebooks. As an adult, she helps clients, friends, and family members organize their lives and spaces. “I have a great deal of empathy for people and want to see them live the lives they desire and deserve,” Payden explains. “I promote functioning at their best over seeking perfection.”

After years of working as a therapist, grief trainer, and educator, Payden has turned her lifelong quest for organization into a vocation. Through her life management company, PreciousOnes™ LLC (dba Dr. DClutter™ Life Management), she helps individuals from all walks of life get organized and regain control of their lives. Here she offers the first steps to keeping your life on course.

**Recognize You Need Help.** Move past the stigma and the shame you might feel about your cluttered life. I’ve worked with business managers, teachers, and leaders in the community who are all very effective in their jobs, but their homes, and even their offices, may be disaster areas. One client loved buying bathroom accessories to the point where you could barely enter the room from all the clutter. She had pots and pans and an electric burner in her bathtub. Ask for help before you get to the point where you can no longer function.

**Reorganize Your Priorities.** List the things that are important to you from 1 to 10. Is your name anywhere on the list? If not, it is time to reorganize your priorities. The majority of people who have done this exercise with me don’t even mention themselves! If you are not in the equation, add yourself. If you don’t, none of the other priorities matter.

**Practice Saying ‘No.’** Make your precious free time more about yourself and your family. Say no to others, your stuff, and your relationships if they are not serving your greater good. You do not have to accept every invitation. I’ve gently taught those around me that “No” means “No,” and you should, too. Gracefully decline and send a “present” when your “presence” is not an option, if that makes you feel better.

**Streamline Your Stuff.** Begin living with less. Do you really need a television in every room of your home? How many pairs of shoes can you wear at one time? If you kept a journal of new purchases for a week or month, you would find that you don’t use half of the things that are occupying valuable space in your life. One client saved everything her two children had made throughout 12 years of school. She kept the macaroni art even without the macaroni. Remember, things don’t make memories—the memories are in your heart.

**Start Small.** To get started, pick a room or an office and start there. Break the job down to make it more manageable and to give you a sense of accomplishment. Rather than setting a goal of reorganizing your entire office, start with your desk. For one of my clients whose desk was completely filled with “stuff,” we had to narrow the goal even further: Clear the left side of the desk first. Assess every object and every piece of paper in the space and decide if you need it. Have your “toss,” “donate,” “recycle,” and “save” piles and files—but be prepared. Things may look worse before they look better. —**Nancy Grund**