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UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI
Extension
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Kindred *Spirits*

Household organization has benefits

De-clutter for your mental and physical health

Tackling Clutter

Consider these steps when tackling clutter:

- ◆ What area bothers you the most?
- ◆ Once you identify your biggest concern, set a deadline to conquer the clutter.
- ◆ Keep it simple.
- ◆ Decide to decide.
- ◆ What supplies are needed to remedy the situation?
- ◆ Consider using baskets, boxes, containers, bags and divide into categories.
- ◆ Get rid of the old when buying new.
- ◆ Reward yourself for a job well done.

When asked, almost everyone will say their home is somewhat disorganized. In fact, the average home has 25% more furniture and 75% more toys than is needed. Often lack of space is not the cause of clutter but rather disorganization.

According to Marsha Alexander, MU Extension housing and environmental design specialist, "Most Americans use 20% of what we own. The other 80% is made up of items we don't use, feel we should use, or think we might use someday."

Household clutter can result in serious health and safety issues. Not only will an organized space help to prevent tripping and falling, a clean, clutter-free home can help in the management of allergies, asthma, and indoor air quality concerns.

Organizing a home can be a big money saver. When a home is organized, items will be located where they are most often used, eliminating the need to buy replacements for misplaced or lost objects. Household organization can also help to avoid paying late fees on bills that are found after the due date.

The average household may accumulate 300 pages of paper a day! Think about all the junk mail that is received daily. Without a plan unwanted papers and documents pile up needlessly and create unwelcomed clutter.

Where do you start in the de-clutter process? One of the best strategies is to begin by focusing on one specific area or room.

Where does your family spend much of their time? Where is organization the biggest problem?

Where would a well-organized space make the most difference?

The first rule to follow is "keep it simple." Get tough when you consider the various objects in the space.

Discard the old when you buy the new. Use labeled boxes, containers, or bags and group items into categories. Finish one area or room before beginning another de-cluttering project. Once organized, clean out the space routinely.

A well-organized home will result not only in a safer and healthier environment but will also reduce stress on family members.

MU Extension contributors:

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Taming Holiday Stress

Stay healthier with three stress-busting tips

Preparations leading up to the holiday celebrations can, at times, make us want to scream and call off Christmas! Yes, the to-do list grows longer this time of year and one glance at it may leave you feeling overwhelmed.

But, if stress strikes, do all you can to tame it. Stress is more than just a mood-wrecker. Stress has health implications.

According to Susan Mills-Gray, MU Extension nutrition and health specialist, "Stress can harm your health. It reduces artery diameter

by 35 percent, raising your risk for heart attack and stroke."

On the bright side, laughter can increase artery diameter by 22 percent – so focus on the joy of the season! Have some fun with your grandchildren and laugh together!

Here are three quick stress-busting techniques from the experts to make your holiday cheer unshakable.

Get Your Zzz's. You'll be better equipped to handle the holiday chaos if you're well-rested; you'll be irritable and anxious if you're not rested. It's a myth that people require less sleep

as they grow older. Still feeling sleep-deprived and frazzled? Slip a 30-minute nap during the afternoon into your schedule.

Work It Out. Whether you hop on a bike, go to a yoga class, or just take the stairs, exercise is one of the most effective stress-relievers out there — and it will jump-start your energy. Plus, your grandchild will eagerly join in this type of playtime with you.

Take Time for You. If you take a time-out every now and then or take a day off from making a batch of cookies, you'll avoid feeling overwhelmed — and you'll be better company for the whole family.

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Grandkids Frazzled?

Don't let the hectic holidays make your grandkids feel frazzled. Kids, in particular, are exceptionally sensitive to holiday stress. Lisa Wallace, MU Extension human development specialist suggests these three stress-busting tips for your grandchildren:

- ◆ **Don't wait for a meltdown.** If your grandchild gets a little fussy, take a break. Go into a quiet room or divert his attention by singing a holiday carol.
- ◆ **Set up rules ahead of time.** Before you go anywhere—whether it's a holiday party or the mall—tell your grandkids what you expect from them. You might say, "You can only have one dessert at the party," or "We're going shopping, but we're not going to buy any toys for you today. We're buying gifts for your brother and sister, and I really need you to help me pick them out."
- ◆ **Keep up routines.** Make sure your grandchildren go to bed, eat dinner and do homework at a regularly scheduled time. Structure is very important to kids, and the more routines they have, the better they'll handle the excitement of the season.