



Organizing Articles, Newsletters and Tips

Free Information from Space4U

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CAN A COUPLE'S BEDROOM BECOME A SANCTUARY?

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written by Wendy Thomas, Telegraph Correspondent

Marc and I have never had one of those sanctuary bedrooms seen in magazines. You know the ones with gas-lit fireplaces, water trickling from a fountain and coordinated Zen paintings on the walls. What we have always had instead was semi-organized chaos. Our bedroom has been the nursery, where, because of breathing problems our kids, have slept the first year of their lives. It has been the infirmary, where sick kids who had returned from hospital stays slept so that we could give them respiratory treatments every four hours.

The last place Marc and I would go to relax was the bedroom; instead, it was the place where we literally crashed at the end of every day.

But times have changed and, like the rest of our house, it was time to clear out what was no longer needed and to put some order - and, dare I say, serenity - into our adult bedroom.

For advice on the bedroom, I met with Sue West of Space4U in Amherst. I had worked with West before when we worked on the living room at the very start of this decluttering project, and I was delighted to welcome her back into the house.

As I always do, we first sat down and talked about what was in our bedroom that was not working and how we envisioned how we wanted it to work. We also talked about the clothing situation for both adults and what changes could be made in that area.

West also let me use a hypnosis CD she has developed with the Healing Crossways Hypnosis Center. The sessions allow you to focus on decluttering your life - and therefore your space - and allow you to relax.

"Stress and being overwhelmed are huge contributors to clutter," West said.

Along with the CD came a booklet with 52 tips for organizing your life. The decluttering tips are genuinely helpful, and the CD is very relaxing. I'm not sure if it is going to "cure" me (I'm not sure I'll ever be "cured"), but it did make me think about new skills and focusing on my objective.

What Sue West of Space4U in Amherst (Sue@OrganizeNH.com or 765-9267) wants you to think about while decluttering:

- ✦ If you can't decide what to keep in the room, go back to the purpose and see if that item matches the purpose you have for the room.
- ✦ Get rid of your second best stuff and only keep your very best.
- ✦ When organizing, it's progress that you want to see, not perfection.
- ✦ The biggest secret is to set it up right in the first place. Have a place for everything, and everything in its place.

Books

West knew Marc and I do books big time. One of the problems is that we tend to start many books and then lose them in the literary debris on the floor. When West saw the books on the floor, she said very pointedly that I had to make a decision: Contain them in a bookshelf or move them out of the room.

Move books out of a bedroom? Sacrilege! Instead, I got a large bookcase and a small one at a local consignment store. The large bookcase holds all the hardcover books, and the smaller one holds the paperbacks. I plan on passing on these books, but I like to read them first. Having them up off the floor with the titles facing out makes all the difference in the world.

Clothing

My job has changed over the years. I no longer have to dress for the office, and I now dress for my home office. When you are in a Net meeting with people around the world, no one cares what you wear.

One of the clothing problems West quickly caught was that although I had stopped dressing for the office 12 years ago, I still had all those clothes. Did I really think I was going to go back to an office setting? Did I really think I would fit into some of them ever again? If you are working on a diet, then keep the next size down, but move it to another part of your closet. Otherwise, get rid of them she told me.

I still need a few outfits for social events and the occasional time that I have to meet face to face with clients, but for the most part, that aspect of life I can let go of. West suggested I keep just a few pieces and arrange my closet by outfits, kind of like the Garanimals of our youth.

West also suggested that when I wear an outfit to hang it back in the closet with the hanger facing the other direction, that way at the end of the season you can tell which clothes you haven't worn and you can make a decision of whether to give it another chance next year or to get rid of it.

"It's all about outsmarting yourself," West said. "You figure out how your brain works, and then you use a system to try and outsmart it."

Toys

West didn't have to say anything to me. One look did it. There are no more toys in our bedroom.

Container-ize

One of the problems in our bedroom is that it is on the third floor, and when you are dead tired at night, the last thing you want to do is make a trip downstairs to get a supply you forgot to bring up.

For the last year, Marc's bedside lamp didn't work because the bulb had blown. The logical thing would have been to replace the bulb, but that would have been far too easy. Instead, we limped along with only my bedside lamp. That, of course, meant that when I was done reading for the night, by default, so was Marc. I held an awful lot of power with my light.

"Um, you could create a space in a drawer and keep common supplies for this room like light bulbs and tissues so that they would be handy," West said. Brilliant, simply brilliant. Although it does mean an end to the night-light wars, at times logic does prevail over passion (and power).

Blinds vs. curtains

The vertical blinds in our bedroom had long been destroyed by toddlers grabbing onto them as they learned how to walk. Because I wanted something colorful that would not darken the room, I pulled out the old shower curtain idea. I used two: a cream-colored one behind and a floral one in front, so that we would have enough coverage in the evening. In order to make the curtains reach the ground, I used three sets of alternating curtain rings. The effect was exactly what I wanted: easy, airy, colorful and unique.

Although our room would not be called a "sanctuary" by any stretch of the imagination, it is clearer and certainly more functional than it had been. We still have room for sick children, but instead of always having the blankets and medical supplies present and waiting, we have tucked away blankets, buckets and respiratory machines to be used when needed. Chairs that were going to be repaired someday were thrown away. Clothes were culled and donated and our bedside tables now have lamps that properly work.

Next month

Next time, I'll tackle the laundry room.

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