



Series: Simple Living in 20 Minutes A Day

Guide to
Eliminate Visual
Clutter

MATERIALS NEEDED:

-Willing heart and mind

-20 minutes

-Printed out worksheet IDENTIFYING VISUAL CLUTTER

-Pen or Pencil

-Designated area and/or box to place pictures and items for a few days (ideally in a garage or basement as they need to be out of sight)

FOCUS:

This guide will help you focus on removing 'visual clutter' in your life, and keeping only those items in view that provide positive visual stimulation and have personal meaning. We will also learn how to strike a balance between the positive items you display and giving your eyes and brain enough empty space to visually rest.

INTRODUCTION:

Visual clutter comes in all forms, whether it is too many pictures on the walls, a dirty countertop or stacks of paper, it all begs for attention in our visual space, and with that attention, the need to act or think about acting on the object(s). When you are viewing a picture on the wall, your mind automatically processes what you see, spends time interpreting it, makes a judgment as to whether it likes what it is seeing and what it will do with that information. That is a lot of effort just to view a picture! A similar process takes place when you see a stack of papers you haven't gotten around to going through. Your brain sees a task that needs to be done, perhaps causes some stress to the rest of your body if you realize some of the papers are overdue bills, then tries to solve the problem by thinking, "I'll go through those right after dinner." This ends up causing more visual stress when you get up the next morning and realize you weren't able to get to it the night before, and the cycle begins again.

Not everything in our line of sight is visually negative. Indeed there are wonderful pictures and items to look at that cause peace and content feelings, or happy memories. These are the items we want to display where we will see them on a regular basis. However, there can be an unlimited number of even positive things, so you want to be sure you are displaying those that are most important to you personally. There are also items that do nothing for us, maybe it was a cheap wreath that you thought would look nice hanging on the door, but is now just taking up visual space and energy, or a picture hung on the wall because you thought the wall was bare, but the picture has no meaning in your life. These types of items should be replaced or removed altogether, leaving room for a creative empty space, space for nothing, or what I like to call, visual rest.

Consider the following images and be mindful of your feelings as you look at each of them-







WORKSHEET:

Choose one main living area to focus on while filling out the worksheet. (Usually the front entryway, bedroom, kitchen or living room, although this can be applied to any area of your home.)

Complete the IDENTIFYING VISUAL CLUTTER worksheet (Don't spend too much time on this, go with your gut feelings and don't overthink your answers)

[DOWNLOAD WORKSHEET PDF](#)

TASK:

Now that you have identified the area of focus in your home that is causing you stress or visual clutter, you can take action to remove the clutter. This can be a difficult step, especially if it involves taking pictures off of walls, or knick-knacks from shelves. We have the tendency to come up with reasons to keep everything, maybe it was a gift, or you spent X amount of money on it, you 'sort of' like it, you still need to go through all of it, etc. Let those reasons go, and go with your gut feelings as you complete the following task. We won't be getting rid of it permanently, not yet, for right now we are just removing it from view.

1) Using the second page 'Eliminating Visual Clutter' of the worksheet you filled out, begin removing the items from the walls, off of flat surfaces, or those things that are living in corners of your room or in piles that you have identified as visual clutter, or that provide no personal fulfillment or joy. If you have many items that provide you with joy and fulfillment, you will still want to remove some of them, to allow you to focus on just a few at a time. You can always rotate those pieces you absolutely cherish throughout the months and years.

2) Place the items in your designated area if they are larger, like pictures, extra pieces of furniture, or in a box within that area if they are smaller, such as knick-knacks or piles of paper.

3) OPTIONAL: If you are at a point where you feel comfortable completely getting rid of the items you identified as visual clutter, by all means, load them up and donate them, or give them to others who will see the beauty in them. Maybe spend an extra few minutes tackling that pile of paperwork! If you are unsure, simply leave the items in the designated area for 7-10 days, then come back and revisit whether you missed the items, if your visual view was more positive or negatively affected after you removed them.

Take the appropriate action at that time based and either place them back where they were or permanently discard them. For items like that pile of paperwork, decide if they really needed to be gone through to begin with, or if you are just creating busy work for yourself. Save only those things that are time sensitive or MUST be addressed, and discard the rest.

REFOCUS & AFFIRMATION:

“The more you have, the more you are occupied, the less you give. But the less you have, the more free you are.” –Mother Theresa

The more visual clutter, or stimuli you put in front of yourself each day, the more energy you spend processing the view, both mentally and physically. Intentionally choosing what you surround yourself with may not be possible while you are not at home, but within your own living space, you can create a haven of visual peace and contentment. Choose to surround yourself with only those items that create a positive space that is not overwhelming, but just right. Mindfully consider how much is too much, even of those items that bring happiness, you will appreciate them much more if you showcases just a few at a time.

Use this guide as needed to go through each room in your home for the first time, or to revisit areas you have already gone through on a periodic basis.