

Clear Room Clear Mind: Kiwi guide to decluttering



Clear Room Clear Mind

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Clear Room Clear Mind

Tired of a messy house? Looking for ideas to achieve a clutter free home? We provide a step-by-step approach of practical advice to help you declutter your home. And with the 'a clear room is a clear mind' approach, we extend that decluttering into your everyday life.

Let's set our intention

Most of us plan to lose weight, stop smoking, eat better and exercise more as our main goals for the New Year. But getting organised also makes people's top 10 lists for New Year resolutions.

So if you're one of these people, and you want this to be the year your home gets organised, then join us as we take you through a step-by-step approach to become determined, decluttered and de-stressed. You'll be amazed at how decluttering your house will aid organisation in other parts of your life. Repeat after me:

A clear room is a clear mind!

What are the benefits to becoming de-cluttered?

Living in a disorganised and cluttered home can be quite stressful, and can cause unnecessary problems for those who live there. Clutter adds small, but persistent stress to our lives. You're always annoyed by the mess, you can never find your keys, you're always rushing in the morning trying to find things, etc.

Clutter can also make us more easily distracted. A source of procrastination. Adding even more stress.

Clear Room Clear Mind

It can also be very embarrassing when friends and family turn up unannounced (as they tend to do), and you have to clear a space on the sofa for them to sit.

It can even cost you money as you may 'lose' items and have to replace them. Think batteries, spare keys, cleaning products, etc. Where in reality you have 10 of the same item in various areas of the house!

It can definitely cause health problems, as items gather dust and mould, attracting microbes, insects and pests. Black mould, bed mites, spiders and rodents are just some of the nasties that love to live in clutter.

So, what to do then?

Now that we've set our intention, and understand the benefits for our family, what do we do about it?

The key to getting organised is to tackle the job in bite-sized pieces.

If your whole house needs attention, and you don't have a planned approach to tackling the clutter and getting organised, you may end up worse off than when you started.

We all have a flurry of enthusiasm when we take on a new project, but that wears off pretty quickly, especially when it's a big job. By breaking the project down it into smaller more achievable tasks, it doesn't become too overwhelming.

Importantly, you get to step back after achieving each task, and admire your success.

Before we sink our teeth into our first room, let's take a moment to consider the 6 basic steps involved in decluttering.

Clear Room Clear Mind



So you've decided to **declutter** your home, and now you want to know how to do it. Follow our simple step-by-step process to reduce that **clutter** now. How to de-clutter in 6 basic steps will get you on your way.

Many families are on a tight budget, and don't have the luxury of being able to afford a clutter coach. If this is the position you find yourself in, don't despair!

Just follow our simple step-by-step process, and very soon your house will look like something out of the Your Home and Garden magazine!

How to declutter in 6 basic steps

Step One: Pick a Room

To get started, you need to pick a room to attack first. I have to admit that I'm a complete wuss, and I usually head for the smallest, least-cluttered room first! This might be your bathroom, kitchen or a bedroom.

How to declutter in 6 basic steps

Step Two: Strip the Room

Your next step is to work through that room methodically, and remove anything that shouldn't be there. Doesn't that feel better already?!

Step Three: Find a Sorting Station

Take all of the extra clutter from this room to a 'sorting station'. This could be your garage, a carport, or a room in the house that is not used very often.

This place may need to serve as a sorting station for a few days as you are working through this process (note – do NOT leave it cluttering your hallway!)

Step Four: Sort Out Your Stuff

Now you need to sort your stuff into piles.

- A Rubbish (& Paper Recycling) Pile – which goes straight into rubbish sacks to go out in the next rubbish collection.
- A Charity Pile – items which would benefit other families, and can be bagged up to be taken to your local opp shop or favourite charity.
- A Selling Pile – these are things which you might like to sell on TradeMe or through your local newspaper.
- A Find a Home Pile – all those things which need to be filed in their proper place, in another room of your house.

Step Five: Filing

Now pick up all of the things in your Find a Home pile, and take them to their appropriate places in your house.

Unlike the 'sorting station' where you could just pile up clutter, the Find a Home items actually need to go in a home, where they belong!

How to declutter in 6 basic steps

Step Six: Creating Systems

Your final step is to future-proof your home (and your life) so you don't get into this mess again! Get agreement from the family about where things will live, and who is responsible for putting them there. Some helpful ideas are:

- put some hooks on the wall for your car keys (right next to the door where you enter the house).
- agree that the tv, video and dvd remote controls are always returned to the TV cabinet.
- buy a big plastic toy box with a lid for each child, where their toys must be stored each evening.
- buy a concertina file or filing cabinet for your personal and business papers, set up the appropriate categories.. and use them!
- create a "Memory Box" where you place all those family mementoes that you can't bear to part with (such as birthday cards, the kid's "love notes" to you, their beautiful artwork, and family photos). No more excuses for finding these littered all over the house!

Bite Size Chunks

This process can be quite hard work, so you may want to complete each task room by room. For example, you get rid of your rubbish, do a charity drop and sell some items online, *before* you move on to the next room.

Motivation

A word of warning – this task can be quite time consuming, tiring, and overwhelming! We recommend that you make it a fun family task, put some bouncy music on the stereo, and reward yourself when you have successfully sorted out each room.

Decluttering the bathroom



We love to start with de-cluttering the bathroom. It's the smallest room in the house, yet one we use every day. Due to it's function it needs to be kept hygienic for our family's health. And it's usually a straightforward, and satisfying room, so a great first step.

First things first, remove anything that does not belong in the bathroom and return it to where it belongs.

Here we're talking about items that are taking up space in the bathroom itself, not things in the bathroom cabinet. Don't forget to use the basket or box that you used for organising the lounge. This will help cut down on the number of trips around the house to return items.

Decluttering the bathroom

Next we need to clear the decks so we have some clear space to put things. So remove everything from the cabinet countertop and give it a good clean before we get started on organising the bathroom cabinet.

Now open up the draws and doors of your bathroom cabinet. Make a note of the sorts of things that you have and want/need to keep ie. make-up, skin care, soaps and deodorants, razors and body lotions, first aid and medicines.

As you go through each of the items, make a mental note as to when the last time was that you used that item. If it was over a year ago – out it goes. If you haven't used it in a year – you're not going to.

As with the kitchen, being brutal with your clear out in the bathroom, will help you in the long run as you will have more space to be able to find things easier.

Throw out old bits of soap, worn out facecloths and towels and most importantly any medications and make up that are past their use by dates.

Try and get into the habit of checking the dates of your medications about twice a year ie. summer and winter. This applies to prescription medications and to over-the-counter medications. If you're unsure about how to dispose of old medications, check with your doctor's office.

Make-up also has a limited lifespan and using items beyond their recommend life can cause serious health problems, especially to eyes. So here is the general rule for make-up:

- Eye shadow, lipstick and blush – 2 years
- Foundation and powder – 1 year
- Eyeliner and mascara – 6 months

Decluttering the bathroom

It is also a good idea to use a fresh sponge and to give your brushes a good clean about every 3 months.

Ok, its about now that your bathroom cabinet countertop is overflowing, so its time to start putting things back.

Here is where we put like things with like – exactly how we do it when decluttering the kitchen too.

A good idea to help reduce the spread of items in your bathroom cabinet is to put things into baskets. We recommend plastic baskets for the bathroom as they won't disintegrate or mould with the dampness and they are easily cleaned.

Remember to keep things like medications and make-up out of reach of little fingers.

As for the countertop itself, we recommend that you just keep out the bare necessities ie. tissues, toothbrushes, toothpaste, hand soap. Everything else can find a home in the cabinet.

Depending on the size of your bathroom, this will dictate how much 'other' stuff you can have in your bathroom.

If you're limited on space, keep things simple – towels, a rubbish bin, a set of scales etc. If you have plenty of space, go to town with a comfy chair, plants, candles, towels rolled up and displayed in baskets etc.

Now that you've cracked the bathroom, it's time to move on to de-cluttering the master bedroom.

Decluttering the Master Bedroom



The master bedroom is all about you. You could even say, 'you are your room.' So spend a moment in your room, visualising who you are (or who you want to be), and think about how you can make your bedroom represent that person.

Removing the clutter from the master bedroom might not seem like the obvious choice for room number 2 (we know you want to get stuck into that kitchen!). But the master bedroom should be a place of sanctuary and serenity, and be conducive to a good night's sleep (among other things).

This is 'you' space, and we want you to own it.

And because it's your space, it's one of the few rooms in the house that doesn't need constant monitoring for clutter.

Decluttering the Master Bedroom

This room will show you what the rest of the home can be. And it will be a consistent source of motivation for you.

The first thing to do is have a good look around the room and remove anything that doesn't belong in there – i.e. dishes, kids toys, office/paper work, rubbish.

Depending on how much you have accumulated in your room this could take 10 minutes to an hour or more. The key thing to do here is to return all of the items to their proper place – don't create more work for yourself by making piles all over the house.

Also important – do not get distracted and try to organise any of the other rooms as you return items.

Now have a look at the furniture. Obviously you will need a bed, bedside cabinets, bedside lamps, a dresser, a mirror and a wardrobe (either built in or freestanding). If you have a large room you might also have a head and base board, a bookcase, a reading chair, a television and a laundry hamper.

If you have any furniture that is not bedroom related – out it goes, again to its proper place or to the garage for storage.

Once this is done, sit down with a pen and paper and have a play with the layout of the furniture. Most bedrooms have 1 wall taken up with windows and 1 wall that includes the door. This will leave you with 1 to 2 walls that are free of obstructions.

Try not to block the natural light from the windows by placing large, heavy furniture pieces in front of them. It is often nice to place the bed under the window to allow good ventilation.

Decluttering the Master Bedroom

Don't forget to allocate enough space on either side of the bed to allow for the bedside cabinets.

The dresser should go against the one of the unobstructed walls and have plenty of space to walk around. Smaller furniture items can be placed around the room in the empty spaces, but remember – less is more when it comes to furniture.

At the moment, don't worry about the contents of your wardrobe and/or dresser – we will tackle this at a slightly later date.

Now that the furniture is in place, you can start putting a few key items around to personalise the room. But remember only a few. The key is to keep surfaces as free and clear as possible. As soon as you start using the top of the bedside cabinet or the dresser to “store” things, you are collecting clutter.

This is a very good tip for keeping on top of the clutter – each day, do a 5 to 10 minute sweep of the room to remove anything that doesn't belong there and return it to its proper place.

If you are an evening person, do this before you go to bed. If you're a morning person, do it before you have your breakfast. Whatever works best for you.

Always remember to make the bed – it makes such a difference to the look of the room.

Decluttering the Kitchen



Referred to as the hub of the home, most kitchens get a good workout every day, especially with growing kids to keep fed and happy. With a limited amount of space available, cupboards, pantry's and bench tops start to overflow quickly.

De-cluttering the kitchen is a top priority!

Organising the kitchen can seem like a big job, especially when you have to stop part way through your organising to cook a meal, so plan to tackle this room over a few days. Each day choose a single section and try to finish it. Seeing a decluttered pantry, for instance, is a great motivator for tackling that cutlery drawer.

Decluttering the Kitchen

As with the 2 rooms we've already worked on, we follow the same procedure to declutter the kitchen.

First, clear the decks or the countertop in this case. There is no point in starting to organise a cupboard or the pantry if you have nowhere to put things, so address the clutter on the countertop first.

Kitchen countertops are a magnet for paperwork, mail, newspapers, kids lunchboxes and artwork etc.

Where possible try to find another more appropriate home for such items i.e. mail and paperwork should go into the study/office, kids artwork should go in their rooms or on the fridge if you wish to display it. Mail should be opened and dealt with straight away.

If you're quite happy with the kitchen remaining the collection point for these types of items, then I suggest you purchase a plastic or cane tray that can sit neatly on the bench and act as a catch all. Simply by putting it in a tray, will prevent it from creeping across all the available bench space.

Next you should tackle the pantry, as this can usually be organised quite quickly, and the end result will hopefully give you the motivation and enthusiasm to continue on.

Pull out everything from the pantry and put it on the bench top. At this stage we recommend giving your shelves a good clean – it can be surprising how much dust and grime can build up in our pantry over time.

Remember to make sure your shelves are completely dry before putting food back as you can get packets sticking to shelves and canned goods will leave rust marks behind if they are put back onto a wet surface.

Decluttering the Kitchen

As you return the food to the pantry check the expiry dates. You'll be surprised at how much stuff has gone past its use by date!

Put like things with like i.e, group all baking items together and all rice and pasta items together. Place the packaging so the front is facing out, this way you can see what you have at a glance.

Next, tackle the fridge, and repeat exactly the same procedure as for the pantry.

As you move your way through the other kitchen cupboards, you'll need to take a good look at what you have. Throw out anything that's broken or that you just don't use. Or better yet, donate items that you don't use to friends or family or the Salvation Army.

If you want to be really brutal with your clean out, get rid of anything that doesn't match – you know what we mean – odd wedding presents, or hand me downs from your mother, mother in-law or your aunt!

This cull also applies to things like cleaning products, cookbooks, recipes etc – anything that lives in the kitchen.

Repeat this process with every section. Pull everything out, clean out the cupboard and replace items – but only those that are worth keeping!

Place appliances, pots and pans, dishes and utensils closest to their most frequent point of use i.e. put pots and pans in the cupboard closest to the stove.

This helps create zones or one-stop centres to make coffee, wash dishes, cook or serve a meal

Decluttering the Kitchen

Everyday items need to be easily accessible, so make sure they are either on the bench top i.e. toaster and jug or at the front of a cupboard. Items that you don't use everyday ie. breadmaker or slowcooker should go to the back of the cupboard.

It's a good idea to keep all your warranties and instruction manuals together. If you have the room in your kitchen, I suggest that you allocate a drawer specifically for this otherwise they should be put in a separate file in the office/study.

So that's your big task to crack this week. Go to it and don't hold back with the throwing out!

Remember, this is one area that we need to pay particular attention to. Unlike the other rooms, where we suggest one sweep a day, the kitchen really needs 2 sweeps a day to remain uncluttered. We also suggest replacing and reorganising the fridge and pantry each time you shop.

A little de-clutter each day, goes a long way.

Decluttering the lounge



For most of us, the lounge is where we spend the majority of our relaxation, entertainment and play time when we're at home.

Not surprisingly, clutter builds up easily and get out of control in this area.

De-cluttering the lounge is also vital to ensure you have a mess-free, clear space to entertain guests.

Kids' toys, washing waiting to be folded, ironed and put away, books and magazines, games and DVDs, photo albums and memorabilia, hobby items, etc. all add to the visual clutter in this space.

Let's make this family hub the relaxing place it's meant to be!

Decluttering the lounge

To organise the lounge, we follow a similar formula as we used to declutter the master bedroom.

First, look around the room and remove anything that doesn't belong there.

You might like to use a plastic basket/box to put everything into as you go through the room; so you aren't making 101 trips around the house when returning items to their correct home. With a basket or box you can be more efficient with your decluttering time.

Remember not to get distracted when returning items to other rooms in the house by trying to organise those rooms at the same time. The key to success is to do one room at a time otherwise you'll get overwhelmed and your house will end up worse off than when you started.

Now assess the furniture you have in the room. You'll need a couch and chairs, coffee table, a TV and perhaps a cabinet, bookcase or display case.

Any furniture item that doesn't belong in the lounge needs to be removed. Move it into the room it best suits, or into the garage for storage.

Once you have just the items you want to remain in the lounge left, then you can address placement of the furniture. Try using a pen and paper to have a play with the layout of your furniture. This saves moving bulky items several times before you're happy with the placement.

Most people put their television in prime position in the lounge. The TV needs to be in a place that can be easily viewed from the couch and chairs and away from the glare of the sun.

The bookcase should be placed on a wall away from the direct sunlight also as this will fade the edges of the books and magazines.

Decluttering the lounge

Where possible, place the couch and chairs in a semi circle or opposite each other to allow for easy conversation. Try not to place all seating in one row as this can restrict the flow of conversation.

Place the coffee table parallel to the couch. Allow enough room to be able to walk past comfortably, but it should be close enough for you to easily retrieve your cup of coffee.

Remember – never block the flow of natural light by placing large furniture items in front of windows.

Now that you have your furniture in place, you can start on the fun part – decorating the room. Remember that the lounge is for you and your family to use and enjoy on a daily basis, but it is also for your friends and family to enjoy when they visit.

Of all the rooms in your house, the lounge is the place for your most treasured and beautiful things. But remember not to put out too many items, the key is to keep the visual clutter to a minimum.

If you find that you have piles of things that you are removing from rooms as you go through the decluttering process that you need more time to sort through, or you're not sure what to do with them, then allocate an area or a whole room if necessary, where these items can go until you have the time to sort through them all.

Many of your items can be sold online, which is a good way to get these things out of your house and get a little money back for them.

Alternatively, you may like to donate them to charity such as The Salvation Army.

Bonus #1: 6 steps to fabulous wardrobe planning



A great personal style filling you with energy and confidence. All your friends wanting to know what magic elixir you're taking, causing you to look so healthy and gorgeous! *Fabulous* wardrobe planning... it all sounds so wonderful doesn't it?

But *how on earth* do you actually transform your current cupboard-of-doom into your fabulous dream wardrobe?

I can relate to this question very well. Whenever I read an article on healthy eating, or speak to any of my foodie friends, I get excited about trying out a new food or meal idea.

Bonus #1: 6 steps to fabulous wardrobe planning

But in reality, if it's not in the freezer section of the supermarket, I wouldn't know where to start finding the ingredients; let alone storing them, preparing them and serving them in an appetising arrangement.

I need a patient friend to actually sit down with me and help me write out a plan of what I'm going to cook when, and how, and where the best places are to find all the ingredients.

Everything is easier if you've thought ahead and you've got a plan.

With that in mind, I'd love you to imagine yourself sitting at the comfort of your kitchen table, with your ideas on colours, shapes and styles in front of you (magazine cut-outs, Pinterest mood board... however you collect your inspiration).

Now, imagine me sitting beside you with pen and paper saying, 'this looks fantastic! Let's make a plan so we can make it happen'.

6 steps to fabulous wardrobe planning

Step 1: Map your Lifestyle

The first step in working out what you need in your wardrobe is to work out the practical stuff: what you do in your clothes, and what you need their help to accomplish. As Mark Twain so eloquently put it:

naked people have very little influence on history.

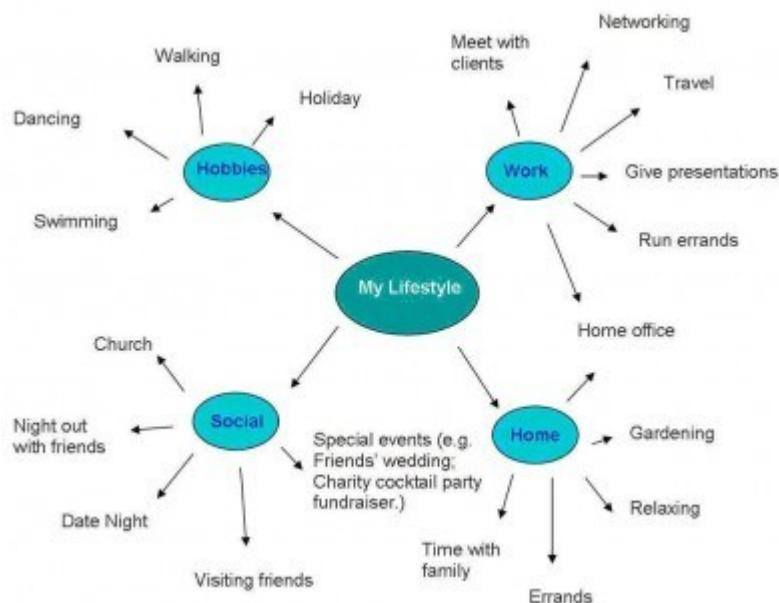
I'm a big fan of using mind maps to accomplish this step.

Bonus #1: 6 steps to fabulous wardrobe planning

If you're more of a lists person that's perfectly fine too. I suggest the following headings: Home, Work (whatever your definition), Hobbies, and Social.

Then have a go at filling in all the activities you do around those areas of your life in an average day, month, or year. Include things you're planning in the near future too (you may like to put these in with a different colour pen).

These planned activities could be a little vague, especially if your plans include a major lifestyle shift such as having your first baby, or returning to work, but picture your ideal scenario (if you plan for it, you're more likely to find opportunities to make it happen).



As an example, here's a mind map I created for my own lifestyle activities a couple of years ago: I challenge you to give something like the above a go. It will really get you thinking about what makes you, you.

Step 2: Create your own Dress Code

Bonus #1: 6 steps to fabulous wardrobe planning

Dress codes needn't be just for businesses and fancy dress parties.

This isn't about conforming to strict standards telling us what we cannot wear. Dress codes are simply a way of thinking about who you are with in each situation, what impression you want to give, and how you want to feel.

You can name each category whatever you like, but to keep it simple you can stick with the usual: 'casual', 'smart casual', 'professional', 'formal'.

I suggest you pick a different coloured highlighter for each dress code, and go over your mind map, highlighting each separate activity in the colour you feel appropriate.

Keep in mind, this is your life and your style – there is no way of doing it wrong!

Step 3: Wardrobe Proportions

Have a look at how much of each colour, or each dress code, you have.

One of the major causes of Wardrobe-Full-of-Clothes-But-Nothing-to-Wear Syndrome is that 80% of our wardrobes are dedicated to things we only do 20% of our time.

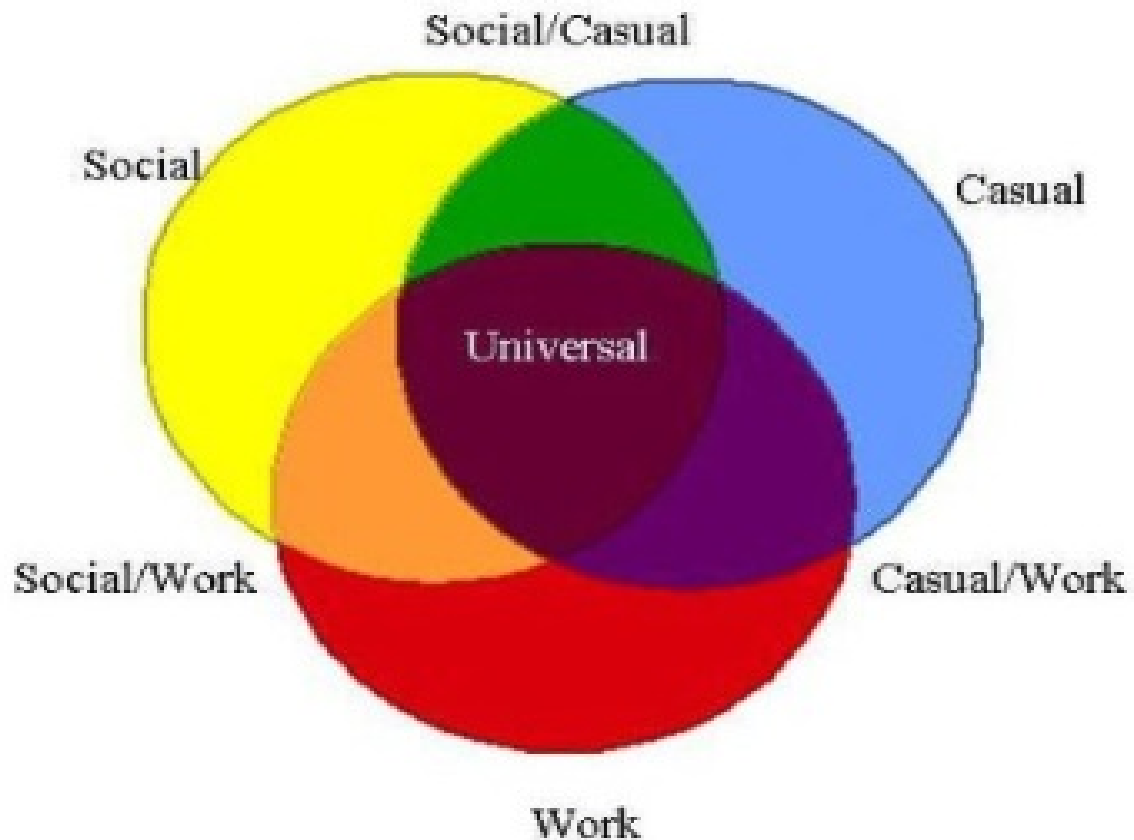
Knowing what we spend our time doing, and dedicating the appropriate amount of items to each 'dress code', helps to balance the *Pareto Principle* or the 80/20 rule in our wardrobes.

Step 4: Key looks

Start looking at your selection of colours, garment styles and accessories and see which dress code and activity they fit in with.

Bonus #1: 6 steps to fabulous wardrobe planning

Play around with different colour and item combinations to create outfit ideas. Once you have at least one outfit for each dress code, you'll start to see how you can relate your style and colour preferences to your lifestyle.



With any luck, you'll find quite a lot of these items cross over into several areas. You get extra points for these items.

Step 5: Capsule

To help you maximise the versatility of the items you want to keep and to buy more of, planning a capsule wardrobe can help immensely.

Bonus #1: 6 steps to fabulous wardrobe planning

A capsule set of clothes and accessories is basically a simple collection of items that can be mixed and matched in any combination, producing a variety of different 'looks' with a minimal number of items.

Outer Top
(Jersey/
Jacket)

Outer Top
(Jersey/
Jacket)

Outer Top
(Jersey/
Jacket)

Inner Top
(T-shirt/
Blouse)

Inner Top
(T-shirt/
Blouse)

Inner Top
(T-shirt/
Blouse)

Inner Top
(T-shirt/
Blouse)

Bottom
(Trousers/
Skirt)

Bottom
(Trousers/
Skirt)

Bottom
(Trousers/
Skirt)

Shoe

Shoe

Scarf

Necklace

Bonus #1: 6 steps to fabulous wardrobe planning

Have a go at setting out your chosen items into the boxes above, and see how many combinations you can come up with.

(You needn't stick to these boxes exactly; you can add or remove any boxes as desired. The goal is to try and get at least 2 of each main item.)

Step 6: Budget

Why does this word always creep into anything related to 'planning'? I guess it's because it's important.

The main reason I come across for people not budgeting for their own clothing is they're waiting until they have more disposable income to add clothing into their budget.

Again I go back to Mark Twain – naked people won't get far in this world. Consider your wardrobe an essential expense and budget for it.

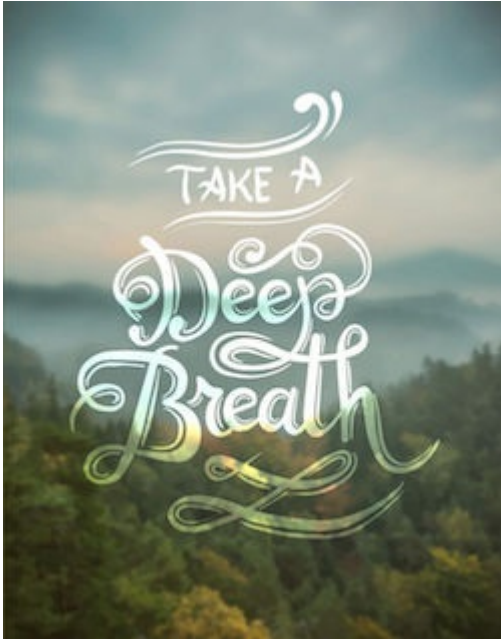
It will help immensely knowing you have even \$5 a week that's solely for the purpose of establishing and maintaining your wardrobe. A wardrobe that will help enable you to do the things that are important to you.

Things like cooking, parenting, entertaining, going out, going to work, getting a new job, working in the garden, and anything else worthwhile; wardrobe planning is something that's ongoing.

Our lifestyles and personal styles are dynamic. Being able to review and tweak our plan as we go, and having the funds to do so, is the way to ensure we continue to find our wardrobe interesting and engaging.

One of the greatest gifts we can give our children is the ability to be mindful – to be still and be in the moment.

Bonus #2: How to bring mindfulness into your home



Mindfulness teaches us to clear our minds. When your family's minds are clear, and the rooms in your home are clear, you'll experience a balance in your household that feels so good, you'll want to feel it every day!

One simple way to bring mindfulness into your home is by using simple breathing and focusing exercises.

These exercises are easy to learn, and even easier to teach to your children.

Find some peace amidst the chaos

The hectic world we live in is something many adults find difficult to cope with at times.

But what about the impact an ever-increasing drive to 'succeed' is having on our children?

A world of constant action, noise, and expectations can deprive children of the quiet time they need to grow and learn. It can be a baffling and scary thing to navigate.

Mindfulness can help children to:

- pause and find some peace amidst the chaos
- learn to turn their attention inwards and use of all the valuable resources they have inside themselves.

Bonus #2: How to bring mindfulness into your home

Mindfulness has been shown to benefit our brains to such an extent that we can feel calmer, more aware, have an increased ability to focus and concentrate, remember things better and feel happier."Grant Rix, NZ Mental Health Foundation, July 2012.

Train your mind and stop habitual thinking

Mindfulness is a non-religious, evidence-based, psychological approach to mind training. Jon Kabat Zinn, Professor Emeritus at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, describes it as:

Paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally.

Mindfulness increases our ability to be present and aware.

By learning to participate fully in the present moment without thinking about the past or worrying about the future, we can become less reactive and can break free of our habitual ways of reacting.

We can respond consciously to the challenges life throws at us rather than react out of anger, fear or anxiety.

Reduce stress and improve your wellbeing

Mindfulness has significant benefits for adults and children alike – and growing evidence to support its effectiveness. Some of these proven benefits include:

Bonus #2: How to bring mindfulness into your home

- less stress and anxiety
- an increased sense of joy and wellbeing
- improved resilience
- greater focus
- better relationships
- enhanced emotional intelligence
- improved sleep.

Bring mindfulness into your home

Bringing mindfulness into your home can be simple. As parents, we can model mindful behaviour for our children.

We can do this by quietly taking the time to be aware of the present moment, really noticing what we think and feel, and identifying our emotions for what they are. Engaging all five senses to become more aware of and appreciate our surroundings is a powerful mindfulness tool.

Here are some practical things to do at home with your children, to help them (and you) become more mindful.

Teddy bear breathing

Place a teddy bear on your child's tummy while they're lying down. Encourage your child to breathe in and out, and to notice their tummy rise and the teddy move up, then down as they breathe out. Have your child hold their teddy over their belly button and watch as teddy gently moves up and down to the rhythm of their breath.

By 'giving teddy a ride', your child learns to relax and focus. This is great to do if your child feels stressed, anxious or is struggling to calm down and sleep.

Bonus #2: How to bring mindfulness into your home

Mindful walking

Take the time to walk in nature with your child, simply noticing your surroundings. It's amazing what you notice when you take the time. Discuss with your child your experience of what you see, hear, smell, and feel as you walk.

Make and use a Mind Jar

To make a Mind Jar, put 2 cups of hot water and about 2 tablespoons of glitter glue in a 600ml jar (adjust proportions for different sized jars). Add an extra tablespoon or 2 of fine glitter. Shake until the glue dissolves.

You can add food colouring or leave it clear. You can also change the proportion of glitter glue to water if you'd like the glitter to settle more or less slowly. For younger children, you may want to use a plastic jar.

To use the Mind Jar, ask your child to give it a shake. Ask them to imagine the glitter being the busy thoughts going through their mind when something stressful happens. Watch as the glitter slowly settles and ask your child to notice how that is like their thinking.

When the glitter settles at the bottom of the jar, the water is clear, just as our minds should be. When we're calm, we can focus again. 'Shaking the Mind Jar' allows your child to pause between experience and reaction, showing them how to respond to something stressful in a healthier, calmer way.