

Generations

Striving for a minimalist domain

I was unfamiliar with the term “minimalist domain” until I read an article by home and interior designer Sacha Strebe, courtesy of www.mydomaine.com, about how uncluttering your home can alleviate stress.

Minimalist decorating breaks a room into necessities — every single item must be functional — and everything else is considered clutter. There is hope, however, for clutter fanatics like me because becoming a minimalist in décor is possible but only with some hard work.

Strebe says that while science suggests messy people are smarter (one point in my favor courtesy of my desk), studies have shown that people who live in cluttered environments are likely to have high levels of the stress hormone cortisol. I knew the reason was hiding somewhere amidst the clutter.

So, the first step is to look around your home

and assess the abode. Are there piles of paper (junk mail, magazines, newspapers, cards and letters, dreaded bills), car keys, shoes around the front door (or for me



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throughout each room to grab in a hurry to let the beagle out), empty cups (even more than one on the desk with something growing in the bottom), and random other objects that somehow made their way to the kitchen counter?

Often, the counter is a catchall for just about anything you're holding since it's steps from the front door and central to the refrigerator, the true dictator for happiness in the home.

The dining table, too, seems to daily become a juggernaut for clutter. Not only is it by the kitchen

counter and fridge, but it begs for all sorts of objects to temporarily (or often permanently) be used for storage. Occasionally, I force myself to buy a bouquet of flowers at Food Lion just so I'll have a reason to clear off the table. It always works — until the flowers die.

If you want to embrace the minimalist design look and feel, stuff needs to be cleared and kept free of clutter and it takes planning. Assess what can be stored out of sight and what items aren't essential.

For example, a drill bit that my husband has been planning to use for a couple of weeks to fix the front door can certainly find another place other than the dining table.

On the other hand, if I remove the drill bit, the door may never get fixed, so, in practicality, the bit will have a longer storage life on the dining table than the bunch of dead flowers.

When creating a classic minimalistic interior, Strebe recommends keeping your wall paint a basic, subdued hue because it's clean, fresh-looking and inspires a sense of calm. Frankly, I can't remember the last time we painted the house — I think it might have been around the time everyone was wondering “Who shot J.R.” on “Dallas.”

Ditto with furniture — keep it simple. Impulse buys on trendy items that you'll tire of quickly doesn't work with minimalist design, so choose well-made pieces that are built to last. This might be the push I need to replace the coffee table in the den with a chewed leg courtesy of our dog Ali or the \$400 area rug in the living room that our dog Rocky decided needed trimming. The frayed edge remains hidden under the recliner.

The next suggestion was to practice Colleen Madsen's “one in, one out” rule, courtesy of

www.365lessthings.com. Her remedy for fighting clutter is that for every item that comes into your home, something else should go out. “The one-in item does not need to match the one-out item, although to make a difference it would need to be of at least equal size or — better still — bigger.”

That may be a dilemma for me since yesterday I ordered two more 1,000-piece jigsaw puzzles from Amazon and to accomplish the task of one in, one out, I'd need to part with two puzzles before they arrive via Prime. Tough choice — more stress.

Strebe comments that a minimalistic room with neutral tones can tend to feel cold or bland, so she suggests adding knitted throws, beaded pillows, sheepskin rugs, and velvet décor for a much-needed comfort factor. Velvet would be tough with two small dogs, but knitted throws have become a ne-

cessity for furniture in my home to cover everything.

Going through treasures of a cluttered house, www.espresso.com had some suggestions such as discarding outgrown and unworn clothes and pairs of shoes you don't wear. If in good shape, donate them to a local charity. Broken jewelry or just one earring? Time to clean out the jewelry box unless you like the pirate look.

Since old makeup can hide bacteria, mold and yeast, it's best to toss any old stuff, especially mascara after three months, liquid foundation after six, and lipstick after two years. I think I have some lipsticks that are older than my granddaughter.

This one I had no trouble with: Throw out old cookbooks because most recipes these days are online. Who cooks?

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