

**CLEAR THE SPACE...**  
***FEEL THE RUSH***

**Declutter Body, Mind, and Stuff,  
and the *Real You* Shines Through**

**Connie Lockhart Ellefson**

**v7.5**

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*How refreshing is the whinny of the pack horse,  
relieved of all burden.*

-Zen saying

# INTRODUCTION

## Feeling the Rush

Have you ever had that scrumptious, tingling feeling from reorganizing and sorting out an area of your possessions? Especially when it included getting rid of some of that stuff?

If you've done any decluttering, versus simply reorganizing, you know what I'm talking about. It could be a room, a closet, or even your glove compartment.

Did you notice what happened when you started weeding out the fuzzy edges of your ruffraff belongings, seeing the back of the closet, not just what's jammed in at the front, found a glimmer of the edge sharpening between the loved items and the unloved detritus?

There's an exhilarating rush—a feeling of freedom and accomplishment.

And didn't you feel at least a little bit...high?

Not going to lie, one reason I took up professional organizing fifteen years ago was due to that high!

For me it happens. Every. Single. Time.

And it doesn't even have to be my own stuff. I feel the rush of energy from clearing out any old space, even if it belongs to one of my clients.



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Scientific studies show that decluttering and organizing can relieve stress, help you focus, feel calmer, and get out of a rut.<sup>1,2,3</sup>

But we know that. We've watched the shows, read the books, or simply seen a super-organized parent or friend in action with the secrets we'd love to learn. We may have even felt a vicarious thrill from seeing other peoples' spaces transformed.

That's the rush! That's the fun side of decluttering and organizing your stuff. Unfortunately, it usually comes at the end of the process, long after we've climbed over the big boulder of reluctance blocking our efforts to let go of our belongings. How can it be fun all the way through? How can we shrink that boulder down to a pebble? And how do we overcome the challenge of simply getting started?

I have to confess—I am a recovering “organizing book” junkie. Each time I gave in to the allure of a shiny new organizing book, I dreamed of a life of order and ease, convinced “this one at last” would magically transform my life! With each new method, I'd tuck into decluttering and organizing with great enthusiasm and inspiration. I experienced the exhilaration of the pack horse mentioned above.

I'd make a lot of progress—*almost* completing the task, but eventually dwindling down and stopping. Or I'd finally get everything sorted out, but it wouldn't stay that way for long. Often, I'd be too depressed or tired to care.

What was missing?

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<sup>1</sup> Saxbe DE, Repetti R. No place like home: home tours correlate with daily patterns of mood and cortisol. *Pers Soc Psychol Bull.* 2010 Jan;36(1):71-81. doi:10.1177/0146167209352864. PMID: 19934011.

<sup>2</sup> Indiana University. Tidier homes, fitter bodies. <https://newsinfo.iu.edu/web/page/normal/14627.html>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/how-decluttering-your-space-could-make-you-healthier-and-happier/art-20390064>

## **It's Not Just About the "Stuff" Clutter**

Fortunately, though I tried to quit the organizing books cold turkey, a few still slipped past my guard, and these started to hint at what I was suspecting. It isn't only about the stuff (possessional clutter)!

What if there's more to it than simply applying better storage and downsizing methods? There must be a deeper secret to getting organized.

The "stuff" is what's most visible, and it looks like the obvious culprit, so that's what we focus on and spend an ocean of time and energy trying to get all sorted out. We hope, hope, hope it will change everything and stay that way for good.

But why did I always stop the process at the 90% mark? Why did I drag my feet so long to get started in the first place? Why was it so very difficult to let go of items any kind friend would simply dropkick into the dumpster?

It was then the lightbulb lit. The possessional clutter is only the tip of the iceberg! Below the waterline, the mind clutter (thoughts and emotions) that creates it is far, far vaster than the "stuff" clutter.

If we're honest, we also have to accept that sometimes we don't freaking feel like sorting, deciding, discarding, decluttering, and organizing because we're simply too tired, undernourished, or under-exercised. Surprising, I know, to think we could be undernourished with the cornucopia of food available to most of us lucky enough to live where we can afford items we don't need. But a steady diet of additive-filled foods can leave us deficient in key energy-giving nutrients. This is physical body clutter slowing down our efforts to declutter mind and stuff and hampering our ability to enjoy our lives.

## An Alternate Approach to Decluttering

What if there was a way to unclutter your life that went beyond simply reorganizing your random belongings, yet again? What if we could *start somewhere else* in our efforts to get decluttered and organized?

After all, if you shake off the doldrums with a little energizing exercise, it's easier to dig into the junk drawers that need sorting. Let go of a long-standing emotional/mental block and see what else you could let go of. Round up a few items to donate and the thrill of release lightens your mood.

Thus, the idea for this book was born, with the aim of being different than any other organizing book: a collection of ideas for coming in any of those three doors (body, mind, or stuff) to declutter that which doesn't serve us, then move on to other refreshing changes in our lives!

The cool part is we don't have to sort out *all* those clutter realms in order to be decluttered and organized. Since they're interwoven, you can start anywhere you like among the three, and changes will start automatically happening in the other two!

The next question is, "How to make it fun?" After all, most of us don't relish the thought of wading into all those unmade decisions (stuff clutter), suiting up to work out and get tired (body clutter), or wrestling with our mental and emotional roadblocks (mind clutter.) That's what makes it so hard to get started at all.

I realized there's one perk that kicks in right away in any of those realms—it's the rush!

And it doesn't just happen when you declutter your stuff! It also happens when you release those tiresome emotions that drag you down! It happens when you declutter your body—which then feels frisky and exhilarated to be free of toxins and other dead weight!

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So that makes it fun in the moment, but what about the long term?

### **Decluttering to Create Your Dream Life**

Take a page out of the professional organizer's manual and ignore the stuff stacked around everywhere for a while. Whether you're living your dream life, spending your time as you want to, and living in your home or office as you would like to, ask yourself, "What's my vision for my life?"

By focusing on the life you'd like to create, it becomes crystal clear which of your possessions are supporting your dream life and which are sabotaging it.

When I asked my 80-something stepfather how he'd like to spend more of his time, he instantly had the answer: "I'd like to build more model ships."

He realized that having most of the flat surfaces in his house covered with piles of paperwork he felt duty bound to deal with wasn't conducive to that dream. He began systematically taking steps to get control of the paper and cut it off at the source.

This is a possessional dream, of which there are thousands, billions, even when you consider the unique viewpoint of each person in the world!

A dream that inspires physical body decluttering might include things such as eliminating a health challenge, being able to dance the tango, or waking up feeling frisky more days than not.

The dream of an emotionally uncluttered life will also often be an ongoing one. A dream to feel more peaceful or courageous is lifelong, and to some extent always a challenge, due to the nature of being human.

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Having that shining light in front of you inspires you in an exciting way, and a thousand times more effectively than beating yourself up for not being there already.

Short term fun? Check.

Long term reward? Check.

Who knew how much power there was in simply taking out the trash, so to speak??

You're going to hear "Make it fun, and it's more likely to get done," quite a lot. I consider life one big science project with infinite experiments available for your enjoyment. Look on this whole "clear the space" process as just one of the many ways to experiment with life, then you'll supercharge its enjoyment that much more!

### **Decluttering versus Organizing**

Which do you find easier, decluttering (downsizing, getting rid of, minimizing) or organizing (arranging the pared-down items in a beneficial, orderly way)?

For most of us, hands down, it's the decluttering that gets the best of us. It's simply so, so hard to let go of our stuff, no matter how useless, unlovely, and unloved some of it may be.

Sooooo, just so you know, this book is much more about decluttering than organizing. My thought was, "Why clutter up a lot of pages with what has already been said so magnificently in dozens of other books about organizing?" Especially since it's really the decluttering that's the harder of the two, isn't it? Deciding what to delete brings up a lot of resistance, while figuring out how to organize what's left—not exactly rocket science, eh?

Is it rude to say, "A child of three could do it"?

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The truth is, a child of three *can* sort items and put them away where they belong. Letting go of that set of blocks, though? Not so easy.

However, my favorite organizing tips, pared down by the test of time, are still included here, plus a few you may not have heard of before.

There are multiple options to take that first step into either decluttering your thoughts/emotions (mind), your physical being (body), or your possessions (stuff).

Some tips are very intuitive, as in “Yes, I’ve heard this before. Tell me something I didn’t know.” Perhaps these examples will strike a chord you have not heard before and help move you over the threshold with that first step. Other suggestions are less well-known and will give you new experiments to try in the game of life and letting go.

(Including “what’s good about clutter”...What??)

This book is divided into four main sections and a summary section (with a secret bonus tip at the end!):

- **Part I** – Declutter Basics: Introductory material that applies to all kinds of decluttering, how you’ll experience “the rush” no matter which door you choose to enter first, and just how beneficial the rush is. Turns out there’s a lot more to it than just feeling buzzed!

The next three sections help you recognize the clutter and decide which you want to tackle first.

- **Part II** – Clear the Mind Clutter: Mental & Emotional
- **Part III** – Clear the Possessional Clutter: Your Belongings, Your ‘Stuff’
- **Part IV** – Clear the Body Clutter
- **Part V** – The Big View: Final Thoughts

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There are many topics and ideas offered, and many are like brief introductions. Whatever appeals to you can be researched in greater depth with the help of the resources section at the end, or through your own online searches.

### **Declutter on Your Own Terms**

You can read through the whole book and go back to the area that appeals most to you. Or, because each section stands on its own, you can save time by simply reading the beginning section and the area that interests you most, be it body, mind, or stuff.

By the end of the book, you should have several strategies that inspire the unique person you are to get started with decluttering, organizing your life, and jumpstarting your dreams!

If nothing else, it's my hope you'll come away with at least these four messages:

1. Decluttering and organizing are worth the time it takes, several times over, in the rush of energy, enjoyment, and lightness they bring out in you!
2. "First, declutter the guilts." Guilt is the best first thing to toss on this decluttering journey. Feeling guilty is almost always about the past, over which you have zero power to change. Don't waste a second beating yourself up about how you've gotten to where you have with your clutter, whatever it may be. Focus on what you can change, and what tickles your fancy to get started with. Plus, how can you have the fun of creating the "after" if you don't have a "before" to compare it to??
3. Decluttering and organizing are part of an ongoing journey, part of the flow of life, not a one-stop event. You see this most clearly in physical decluttering; it's not hard to realize you don't exercise or eat right once and you're good to go! Similarly, stresses and challenges are

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never going to stop coming at you and your thoughts and emotions; it's about learning to manage how you respond to them. And new things are likely to keep showing up in your home—unless you completely give up shopping and gift-receiving. As if! (See point no. 2)

4. Last, but not least: Make it fun, and it's more likely to get done! A good dose of humor, and not taking yourself or the situation too seriously, will go a long way in not only speeding up the decluttering process, but also immeasurably adding to the richness of your time on earth!

My aim is to encourage rather than lay down the law. Let's face it: it's an ingrained human tendency to take on more than we can easily handle. ("You crazy kids!") It's a chief ingredient in hope and in the desire to grow, those basic, yet powerful human drives.

It's also an ingrained human tendency to resist doing what people tell you you "should/must" do, even if it's yourself doing the telling, which is reason #2 I don't lay down the law. Try testing it right now. Tell yourself you have to do something. See how you react. Crazy, right? That's why I only cheerlead (with a few possible exceptions...).

Before you do anything else with this book, write down at least one dream (or many) that you've given up on and that you would like to work toward again. Keep it in mind as you read through the decluttering tips and make notes of suggestions to apply.

It's said we can never stop a bad habit (and certainly not in one step, like a New Year's resolution), but only replace it with a better one. So, while you're at it, list new habits you'd like to adopt to support your specific dreams.



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And remember, the dream is a powerful motivator that will crystallize your focus and draw you forward!

# PART I

## DECLUTTER BASICS

### **Raised by a Decluttering Supermom**

Since I just said, “First, let’s declutter the guilts,” I offer this story to let you know no one is immune to changing their stuff-gathering ways. With my dad working for an oil company, I grew up moving about every six months to a year, either to a different town, or a different house, as often happened, when a landlord sold our house out from under us.

My first six years were spent living in a trailer. Truth was we could simply tape up the drawers and head out when we moved without having to do anything else. But what stuck with me, besides the pain of saying goodbye to my little friends each and every time, was that even when we still lived in the trailer, Mom made us systematically junk out our possessions to lighten the load with every move.

Our first trailer, which fit our family of four, was eight feet wide by forty-three feet long (344 sq. ft) and it never seemed that crowded, so you know our belongings were few! Eventually the homes got bigger, but the habit of “junking out” continued.

All through college, I still traveled light. Any new item in my life was scrutinized with an eye towards whether I could easily pack it into the sturdy old dynamite boxes (about the size of a document storage box) which were relics of my childhood.

I also needed to be able to carry it myself. I never had the courage to ask people for moving help--also a leftover from my

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younger days. I had an entrenched horror of having too many things, always thinking ahead to my next move.

The habit stuck with me. When I finished college and moved to Denver to seek my fortune, I carried everything I owned, including a ten-speed bicycle and two large speakers stashed, with room to spare, in my old Chevy Impala.

“Travel light,” was my motto, ever and always!

Fast forward six years: My husband-at-the-time and I moved house with our two little kids. It took me and five big guys four and a half hours to load all our stuff into a big moving van! With shock and disbelief, I cried out to God and everybody, “What happened?!!”

I started working on figuring it out and downsizing from that day on. I had seen with my own eyes how easy it is to go off the “travel light” track!

### **The Seeds of Clear the Space**

In 2008, after my civil engineering occupation and the faltering economy had brought me four layoffs in six years, I said to myself, “Call me crazy, but thinking might be time for a new career.”

Remembering I’d gotten much more satisfaction out of organizing and clearing up my desk at the office than doing the work itself, I decided to give professional organizing a go. A name for my biz didn’t come easily; for a couple of months, I discarded many versions of “Streamlining your Life,” and vague references to “sailing into your future.” (Living in land-locked Colorado I’ve only ever sailed a leaf down a stream.)

On a Tuesday afternoon about 4:30 pm, as I stared out the window from my dining table, the words “Clear the Space” showed up, unbidden, in my head. I knew it was a message straight from the heavens, and that it meant something a lot

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bigger than organizing my sock drawer! I gave my new company that name, and I have been intrigued, inspired, and amused by the words ever since.

It seemed an open-ended phrase that could have endless connotations. It wasn't the same as "clear space," or "clear a space." It hinted at meanings I didn't yet know, beyond what I knew of organizing then—purging your belongings of the dumb stuff, and storing the remaining "beautiful, useful and beloved" items in a way that makes your life easier.

You can pick your own meaning: clear the space for your creative, productive life; for your dreams to materialize; for you to know yourself and loved ones better; for your friends to find a welcoming haven at your house; for your joy to expand; or for your skateboard to have its own parking space in the house! Whatever. Mainly, clear the space for you to be you, which is the best contribution you can make to this life!

### **"Feel the Rush!" – What it's about**

It turns out the good feeling of the rush doesn't just appear out of thin air. It has an actual physical effect on your body. Have you heard of endorphins, the feel-good chemicals that circulate through your body and help relieve pain or stress? You might have noticed them when you eat food that's just the right amount of spicy for you, enough to wake up your taste buds, but not enough to get into the painful range.

A few minutes later you feel like pounding your fist on the table and saying "Yeah, that's some good chili!" Your brain has registered the heat on your tongue, and whether it hurts you or not, it sends out endorphins to relieve the pain. That's why you feel good! And that's a small taste of the rush.

You may have heard of endorphins in relation to exercise. They're famous for starting to course through your system after

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you exercise for about 30 minutes in a row. This is partly why some get addicted to exercise, believe it or not.

Technically speaking, endorphins are neurotransmitters. They transmit messages along your nerves using electrical impulses, but the bottom line is: endorphins make you feel delicious, like you're in the middle of getting a massage! Another neurotransmitter, serotonin, helps you feel "happy," and is famous, too, for being in short supply when you feel depressed. You also may have heard of dopamine, the more hard-edged pleasurable-feeling chemical related to desire, that can come from indulging in alcohol, drugs, and video games (not kidding, that's why they're addictive--TV watching is in there, too, sorry to say).

Whether it's endorphins, serotonin, or some other neurotransmitter<sup>4</sup> that rises up in your body after a good bout of decluttering, these chemicals are what cause the exhilaration ("the rush") you feel from it.

Related to the rush is the Chinese practice of feng shui, the art of placing objects in your environment to harmonize with your own energy. Feng shui practice is about much more than decluttering, but one of its main ideas is that stagnant energy is released when clutter is cleared out. Feng shui speaks more about the interplay between you and the objects, but still, you're part of the circuit.

So, I'm thinking we could call it part of the rush as well, especially because decluttering is almost always a first step in applying feng shui principles.

As an example of how we interact with our stuff, our eyes can't help but be caught by every item out of place as we walk

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<sup>4</sup> Timesaver: I don't want to keep writing "endorphins, serotonin, or dopamine" over and over, any more than you want to keep reading it. So, for simplicity's sake, I'm just going to call them endorphins, OK?

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through a room, or even just glance around. This scrambles our focus and distracts us; our brain stops momentarily to think about where that item really should be and wonders whether or not to put it away right now. Or now. Oh, how 'bout right now?

Each day our decision-making ability can only handle so much before it needs to rest and refresh; wasting it stewing on the clutter cuts down on what's available for something more creative. Cortisol, the stress hormone, also circulates in your body when you are irritated by the stuff out of place, further diminishing your current creativity or problem-solving potential by taking you into fight-or-flight mode.

By contrast, the rush of an uncluttered space is a gift that keeps on giving. For days after, you can revisit the cleared space and feel the refreshing energy all over again. Delicious rush!

Scratching your head about this? Thinking, "I've never felt that rush in my life... Or at least not about clearing out a closet!" For you it might show up in a different way, a little more enthusiasm for finishing a task, a little more enjoyment, a little more spring in your step. These are also signs of that energy released, and the life lightened.

### **Declutter Body, Mind and Stuff**

As I mentioned, this book is laid out as I see clutter, in three interwoven aspects: possessional clutter (your things), physical body clutter, and mental/emotional clutter.

Here's a quick rundown on what each means.

#### ***Mind Clutter – Mental/Emotional***

Science estimates we think between 12,000 and 70,000 thoughts per day. At the very least it's several per minute. Forget how fast we talk—the brain on its slowest day thinks way faster than the most seasoned motor-mouth.

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Most of those thoughts (up to 95%<sup>5</sup>) are the same thoughts we thought yesterday, the day before, and the day before that. Unless we make a practice of trying out new ideas and habits, our thoughts may also be the same as they were a decade ago, which is why life sometimes seems like it doesn't change much. Many of those thoughts are negative, fearful, or at the very least, simply uselessly random.

Do *not* fear that I'm not going to tell you that you need to *stop that right now* and start thinking positively, or else! That way lies madness, and a lot of energy wasted attempting to stem the tide. Or worse, beating yourself up for not being able to do it.

The fact is, we can't control our thoughts. They simply keep barreling along at different rates of speed, but still nonstop. The more we try to stop them, the more overwhelmed we feel.

Though most of our thoughts are negative, it isn't the first time we think a negative thought that it starts doing its damage to our mood and courage. It's the 50<sup>th</sup> or 500<sup>th</sup> time in a row. The only thing we can do is drop them without judging them before we get hooked into them and panic.

We can gently steer them towards something more productive. When you really get good at this, you'll be able to drop them with good humor in an instant: "Easy come, easy go."

A few examples of mind clutter include:

- Long-accepted limiting beliefs.
- Unwarranted fears (rarely justified - a 2005 Cornell University study<sup>6</sup> found 85% of what we worry about never happens, and among the feared events that do

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<sup>5</sup> Tseng, J., Poppenk, J. Brain meta-state transitions demarcate thoughts across task contexts exposing the mental noise of trait neuroticism. *Nat Commun* 11, 3480 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-020-17255-9>

<sup>6</sup> See *The Worry Cure* by Robert L. Leahy (2005) for more on this research.

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happen, people often find there was a good lesson to be learned, or other benefit associated).

- Poor opinions of our bodies.
- Waking up in a bad mood from a crazy dream not even remembered.
- All the above, and dozens of other forms of mental/emotional clutter negatively impacting our emotions; most of it is our subconscious mind feeding our conscious thoughts.

It's big, man, and very cluttered! Clearing out a bit of the mental/emotional attic yields excellent dividends. The habits of favorite emotions (both "good" and "bad"), and knee-jerk reactions to almost everything that comes our way in life take up a ton of energy and time each day and are what leads to a lot of the same-old, same-old.

Bottom line: if the decluttering and organizing of your possessions never quite seems to get done, it's likely mind clutter holding you back.

There's good news about that, though. You may or may not have experienced an energy healing of your emotional blocks, but you've certainly enjoyed the stress relief that comes after a good cry, or finally telling a story you've kept bottled up to an empathic listener. These are energy releases, too. Coming from the "biggest part of the iceberg," emotional releases can be the biggest rush of all!

### ***Possessional Clutter - Our Belongings, Our Stuff***

Possessional clutter is generally obvious; that's why it's usually the prime target of most organizing strategies. All we need do is look around our spaces to experience the draining effects.



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- Items piled up (those not part of the decorating scheme). Whether neatly or haphazardly, they likely indicate no plan has been made to store them effectively out of sight.
- Over-stuffed closets, drawers, or cabinets.
- (Possibly) the need to rent outside storage space when you're already living in your permanent home.
- Excessive time required to keep everything put away and organized.
- A feeling of dread when you think about entering your home or office.

### ***Physical body clutter***

Yikes! This is a subject that could get super-technical, with conditions such as arterial plaque, sluggish lymph systems, and inflammatory response potentially on the agenda.

Given that my training is in civil engineering and not medicine of any kind, we're sticking to the simple strategies in removing physical body clutter (whether toxins or just dead skin cells.)

Physical clutter may be evident in:

- Low energy.
- Headaches.
- Some unneeded weight (fat) you might be willing to release (Note: tongue-in-cheek).
- Allergies, skin problems, etc.
- Illnesses caused by toxins absorbed by skin and lungs, or from our food.

Physical decluttering, with its own kind of rush, will nevertheless provide exhilarating benefits in the short run (less lethargy, more energy, improved mood, etc.). In the long run, it

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may also benefit us by helping prevent many degenerative diseases we've come to consider a normal part of aging.

So, the rush is the fun part of decluttering, short-term deliciousness (endorphins) to go along with long-term payoffs. But however delightful this may be, it pales in comparison to the even bigger payoff.

### **The Real You Shines Through**

At a business meet-up I heard two women discussing their desire to write a series of short books on their favorite subject, essential oils. One said, "We just need to get organized to write those books and get them published."

Like a thunderbolt, it hit me.

The whole point of getting decluttered and organized is not just to *be* organized, it's to *do* things!

We each have at least a handful of activities and dreams that speak to us and light us up from the inside. They could be sweetly simple or wildly ambitious and improbable.

We might dream of running a classroom, leading a boardroom, building airplane engines, repairing torn clothing, sweeping up the room or sweeping into a ballroom, keeping the account books or writing best-selling books, parasailing over a 1500-foot-deep canyon or tucking your kidlet into bed at night. (I know it sounds crazy, but my daughter-in-law did those last two in one day. The next day she returned to her beloved job as a dental hygienist, as per usual.)

It could even be sitting on the porch in the evening, quietly contemplating your garden with all your senses.

It's simply whatever unique combination of dreams, relentless desires, skills and topics that never fail to catch your attention and draw you in, with a hunger to go do that, be that, study that, handle that, achieve that, enjoy that.

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Your desires, from the smallest (“Let’s get everybody to breakfast on time”) to the grandest (So, yeah, I desire to make art that changes the world for the better/travel to all the continents/nurture some gorgeous relationships”) are all part of your hardwiring. They are the reason you are here: to be your astonishing self and move the world forward in your own unique way!

Clutter takes many forms: belongings, worries, ailments, over-packed schedules, lackluster entertainment, self-criticism, or favorite addictions. And whether the clutter’s emotional, possessional, or in our physical bodies, it takes up energetic space in our lives. **Translation: Sometimes we use our clutter distractions as a convenient excuse to procrastinate on our dreams.**

### Main Points and Purpose of the Book:

- The whole point of getting decluttered and organized is not just to *be* organized, it’s to *do* things!
- The real reason to clear the space in your life and in your soul is for the real you to shine through—to make the most of this life you’ve been given.
- You get to choose which form of clutter you clear first.
- No matter how you choose to start, before long, those endorphins will be swirling around inside you, making decluttering feel a lot more fun than it first sounded, eh? Long-term benefits and short-term deliciousness at your service!

### At the very least, you can expect to:

1. Add 5–6 hours a week of free, unfettered time to your life each week.

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2. Simplify routines, making your work, both at home and in your profession, more enjoyable.
3. Be in much better shape to deal with life's stresses.
4. Spend more of your time living in the present, the only place you have any real power.
5. Make room for the real you—your creativity, your best problem-solving skills, your unique contribution, and your fun.

### Back to the Rush

It took a crazy long time to write this book, but it turns out it was just the right time (as it so often does.) Asked to give a last-minute talk, I quickly gave up my chicken-hearted excuses, realizing it gave me a perfect chance to crystallize my *Clear the Space* message.

Thanks to the time pressure and some recent info I had the biggest “Aha!” moment of this whole extended book-writing process.

I thought “clear the space” and “the real you shines through” was my main message, but I realized “the rush” was every bit as important, maybe even more so, with the benefits it provides.

I had recently read a very in-depth book, *Becoming Supernatural, How Common People are Doing the Uncommon*, by Dr. Joe Dispenza (chiropractor, neuroscience researcher, speaker, and contributor to movie *What the Bleep Do We Know?*) One key story gripped me. At a 4-day seminar he led in 2016, he asked 117 volunteers to take eight or nine minutes three times a day during each of the four days putting themselves in a high-vibrational frequency (a.k.a. positive) emotional state, such as happiness, gratitude, love, inspiration.

So, a little under thirty minutes a day of feeling happy.

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At the beginning and end of the seminar, he tested them for Immunoglobulin A (IgA) levels in their systems. IgA is a protein present in the body which is one of the main indicators of the current strength of the person's immune system. At the end of the four days, the volunteers' IgA levels had risen an average of approximately 50%! As Dr. Dispenza stated, an increase in IgA such as this is significantly more effective in warding off disease than any flu shot or immune booster (supplement such as Vitamin C) people normally take to improve their immune system.

What else happens when we're happy, besides our immune system getting stronger? We experience "the rush" (which just plain feels good), stress hormones go down, we think more clearly, life's petty irritations bother us less, we see the good in people, we see the good in ourselves, and we come up with infinitely more creative solutions.

It isn't just about clearing the space that matters and isn't even just about the real you shining through.

The rush is equally important! The rush happens in each of the declutter areas. The endorphins are what make you feel happy and at peace. The rush isn't only about decluttering body, mind, and stuff; it's about the exponential release that happens when you declutter any aspect of your life, and how it opens up energy and time for your dreams and desires.

Talk about bang for your buck—the rush rules!

Here's to you and your fun game of clearing the space! As I said, you can start anywhere from here, Part II, III, or IV, but to me, mental and emotional clutter is the tail that wags the dog, so that's where I'm starting...

## **PART II**

# **CLEAR THE MIND CLUTTER – MENTAL & EMOTIONAL**

You could reasonably ask, “Why go to all this trouble to declutter emotions? Don’t I have enough to do yet? And anyway, isn’t that just life?” One of my friends often says, “What’s all this obsession with happiness crap? What’s so bad about just allowing yourself to wallow in your negative emotions once in a while?”

She’s right in one way, as resisting anything, including negative emotions, tends to make it stay around longer. That’s a lot of what counseling and other healing techniques are about: letting yourself feel your emotions by giving yourself permission to talk about them, and thus, (hopefully) processing them and defusing their grip on your life. However, the payoff for everyday wallowing is small.

Researchers who study emotions and their effects on our lives say we can become addicted to our favorite negative emotions just as easily as we can to vodka or the shopping channels. Not only do they tend to keep us in a rut, but they also keep us rooted in the lizard brain, the amygdala (home of the fight-or-flight response mechanism, a.k.a. fear). This shuts off the reasoning and thinking parts of our brain, which could potentially come up with a solution to the problem or a different choice (not to mention simply enjoying our lives and having fun!).

According to Shawn Achor, author of *Before Happiness* and *The Happiness Advantage*, chronic unhappiness can cost us in our