Over the Fence

NEWS FROM YOUR REAL ESTATE PROFESSIONAL...

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JANUARY HOME WARRANTY TIP: *You can use weatherstripping in your home to seal air leaks around movable joints, such as windows or doors. To determine how much weatherstripping you will need, add the perimeters of all windows and doors to be weatherstripped, then add 5%–10% to accommodate any waste.*

10 Ways to Cut Clutter in Your Home

By David Freeman WebMD Feature

Mired in mess, fuss, and disarray? These quick hints can help you de-clutter fast.

1. Find a place for every item. One reason things pile up on counters, tables, and floors is that they have no "home." "Make sure everything lives somewhere," says Sharon Lowenheim, a professional organizer in New York City. Storing items in the room where they're used helps ensure they get put away when you're done, and usually it's best to store similar items together.

2. Play clutter cop. The better you are about keeping things out of your home, the less likely things will pile up inside. Take freebies. It's nice to get a T-shirt or coffee mug, but will you really use it? Enjoy it? If not, decline it.

3. Do some detective work. Periodically scan your home for clutter hot spots, and spend some time figuring out why stuff accumulates there. Once you understand the problem, you'll find it easy to devise a solution.

4. Hold off on container shopping. Clutter victims often think the solution is to stock up on organizing products, so they head to the nearest superstore and stock up on bins and boxes. Shop for storage items only after you've done some de-cluttering—to understand the scope of the problem, the specific cause, and an appropriate solution.

5. Dump duplicates. Why have two nonstick spatulas when one is enough? Why have six hairbrushes or 17 coffee mugs? Lowenheim says that throwing out duplicates is one of the easiest ways to quell clutter. Her simple rule: One in, one out. "Anytime you get something new, get rid of something like it that is old," she says.

6. Beware nostalgia. If you're a doting parent, it's not easy to discard a child's creation, whether it's pastel drawings from the second grade or that cooler-sized medieval castle. But if you're serious about minimizing clutter, you must. Robertson recommends taking a picture of your child with the creation, and letting that be your keepsake.

7. Weed out your wardrobe. Odds are your clothes closet is chockablock with clothes that are rarely worn. Lowenheim says it's a case of the familiar 80:20 rule: we wear 20% of our clothes 80% of the time. She recommends sorting through your clothes, and your children's, at the end of each season.

8. Look for simple clutter control solutions. Often, there's an easy solution to even stubborn clutter problems. "One of my clients could never remember where she put her keys," says Laura Leist, a professional organizer in Seattle, and president of the National Association of Professional Organizers. "I suggested that she put a hook by the front door, so she could hang her keys up every time she walked in the door. And it worked."

9. Think home organization "kits." Buy some clear plastic shoebox-sized containers, and use them to create kits where you store all the items you need for a particular task. For instance, you could create a shoeshine kit, a bill-paying kit, a manicure kit, and so on. That way, you can easily find everything you need to accomplish everyday tasks.

10. Stick to a schedule. Some spaces, like kitchen counters, need daily de-cluttering. Others can be tackled weekly or monthly. When that time comes, be systematic. Take all the items in a defined area (a cabinet, a desk drawer), and spread them out so you can see what you're facing. If you're de-cluttering the drawer where you keep kitchen utensils, for example, spread them on the counter, and then sort into two piles: utensils you use regularly and those you don't use.

For full article and more tips visit: http://women.webmd.com/home-health-and-safety-9/10-ways-to-cut-clutter-in-your-home

JANUARY

Get Organized Month

Bath Safety Month

National Soup Month

January 1st: New Year's Day

January 16th: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

January 23rd: Chinese New Year

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Repair, Replace, Relax with Fidelity National Home Warranty (FNHW). A home warranty from FNHW provides both the home buyer and seller with "peace of mind" when it comes to repairs and/or replacement of a home's major systems and appliances. FNHW prides itself on superior customer service, including quick response time and efficient solutions for homeowners' problems and needs.

If you are thinking of buying or selling a home in the near future, please call for a personal interview and property assessment with no obligation.

This is not intended as a solicitation if your property is currently listed with another agent. These materials contain information and articles obtained from third parties. FNHW does not endorse the recommendations of any third party nor guarantee the information provided is complete or correct.

January is National Bath Safety Month

Protect your child with these safety tips:

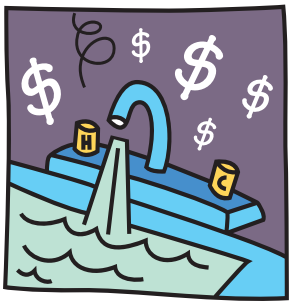
- Never leave small children alone around any container of water. This includes toilets, tubs, wading pools, spas, aquariums, and buckets.
- Safeguard bathtubs and sinks used for bathing by using faucet covers and nonskid mats or decals.
- After running bath water, check the water temperature before placing the child in the bath water.
- Once your child is in the bath, don't leave for any reason. Children can drown in just a small amount of water. They can easily topple into the tub or toilet. It only takes a few seconds for a drowning to happen.
- To avoid falls and slipping under the water, always keep one hand firmly around the child when bathing him and keep the child sitting.

Safety tips courtesy of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services

Insulate Your Water Heater Tank for Energy Savings

Unless your water heater's storage tank already has a high R-value of insulation (at least R-24), adding insulation to it can reduce standby heat losses by 25%–45%. This will save you around 4%–9% in water heating costs.

If you don't know your water heater tank's R-value, touch it. A tank that's warm to the touch needs additional insulation.



Insulating your storage water heater tank is fairly simple and inexpensive, and it will pay for itself in about a year. You can find pre-cut jackets or blankets available from around $10–$20. Choose one with an insulating value of at least R-8. Some utilities sell them at low prices, offer rebates, and even install them at a low or no cost.

http://www.energysavers.gov/your_home/water_heating/index.cfm/mytopic=13070

SIMPLE WHITE BEAN SOUP

2 (15-ounce) cans or 2 cups home cooked Northern Beans

5 tablespoons olive oil

1 medium onion, finely chopped

1 celery stalk, finely chopped

1 (15-ounce) can plum tomatoes or stewed tomatoes

1 (15-ounce) hot chicken or vegetable broth or 2 cups hot water

Salt and pepper to season

Extra-virgin olive oil, to serve

Puree one can of Northern Beans with an immersion blender or food processor.

Heat the oil in a large saucepan. Stir in the onion, and cook until it softens. Add the celery, tomatoes, and cook for 5 minutes more.

Pour in hot broth. Stir in the beans and the bean puree. Season with salt and pepper. Simmer for 10-15 minutes. Sprinkle with a little extra virgin olive oil in individual soup bowls.

simpledailyrecipes.com/1322/simple-white-bean-soup-recipes/