

Buried in Treasures Clutter Reduction & Accountability Group

Week 8: Sorting & Decluttering Preparation

“You don’t have to stop everything to get organized; you just have to start. Start somewhere right now.”
(D. Smallin)

2026 Meeting Dates & Times: Wednesdays 4:00PM-5:30PM

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|-------------|-------------|
| 1. April 7 | 7. May 19 |
| 2. April 14 | 8. May 26 |
| 3. April 21 | 9. June 2 |
| 4. April 28 | 10. June 9 |
| 5. May 5 | 11. June 16 |
| 6. May 12th | 12. June 23 |

Group Comfort Agreement:

- We try not to ask other group members personal questions.
- What’s said here, stays here.
- Please make “I” statements, only referring to your personal experiences.
- Participation is voluntary.
- The group will begin at 4:00 PM and end at 5:30 PM.
- Cell phones should be set to silent and important calls will be taken outside of the room.
- Please be on time. Contact Suzanne (so@SuzanneOtte.com) or leave a message at (508) 645-6883 for absences or late arrivals.
- Group cancellation calls will be made by noon on the day of the group.

Syllabus:

Week 1:

Introduction & Getting to Know the Group

Week 2:

Assessing Clutter and Hoarding Challenges

Week 3:

Meet the Bad Guys

Week 4:

Meet the Good Guys

Week 5:

How Did This Happen?

Week 6:

Enhancing Motivation

Week 7:

Help with Reducing Acquiring

Week 8:

Sorting & Discarding Preparation

Week 9:

Sorting & Discarding – Let’s Go!

Week 10:

Bad Guys: Motivation and Working Time

Week 11:

Bad Guys: Taking on Your Brain

Week 12:

Planning Next Steps & Celebrating Success

Session to Session:

- Slides and handouts will be distributed at each session.
- Bring book to each session. Keep handouts and notes in one place.
- Write in your book
- Set goals!
- Practice sorting, decision making, and discarding.
- Planning Next Steps & Celebrating Success

Check-In:

- Mood rating (0-10)
- What sorts of things come up for you as you gain more insight and skill through the group?

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Working with Your Brain – Not Against It

- Bill was distracted by TV and phone (pg. 122-123). What things distract you?
- Bill made sure to work at times when he had the most energy and attention. Why does this matter? What is your “power hour”?
- Using a calendar (pg. 125) can help to organize efforts. Has anyone taken steps like this to guide your work?
- Helen was concerned about seeing all of her clutter at one time. She turned her back to the piles and focused on one small portion of clutter at a time. Did anyone try this approach?
- Helen was afraid to toss something important. When she did, it turned out to be not such a big deal. Is this true for you? Has this ever come true (or not)?

Systematic Approach to Problem-Solving (pg. 126-128)

- Identify the problem
 - Why is it important to be very specific about the problem (pg. 127)?
- Come up with as many solutions as possible (pg. 127).
 - For the example above, what might be some solutions?
 - Why is it beneficial to come up with more than one strategy?
- Evaluate possible solutions and select one or two that seem best (pg. 128).
 - When it comes to decision-making, how might this exercise be beneficial?
- Implement the solution (pg. 128)
 - When the implementation of the solution becomes the priority, you may need to cancel something to get the work done first. Has anyone had to do this? How does it feel?
- Evaluate the outcome (pg. 128)
 - How does success feel?
 - If you don’t succeed, how do you bring yourself to try again? What “good guys” might help you to motivate yourself?

Strategies for Sorting/Organizing/Discarding (pg. 129-138)

- Review pg. 129-144.
- How many categories did you end up with on pg. 130-131?
- Why is it a problem if you have too many or too few categories?

Preparing for Organizing Form (pg. 138)

- Did you feel anxious about creating this list?
- Did you feel more organized in your thinking when you did this visualization compared to if you hadn’t first considered what sorts of things you should do to prepare for the job?

Papers! (pg. 138-14)

- Were the categories on pg. 139-140 helpful?
- Why do you have trouble sorting and discarding paperwork?
- What steps might you take to organize paper based on what you learned from this chapter?

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Upkeep (pg. 142)

- From the examples on pg. 142-143, which suggestions (list of maintenance activities) were most helpful?

Reward Yourself (pg. 143)

- If you completed the reward agreement on pg. 143, please share!
- Do you think this agreement will be helpful? Why or why not?

Organizer's Suggestions

If you take it out, put it back.

If you open it, close it.

If you throw it down, pick it up.

If you take it off, hang it up.

If you use it, clean it up.

Goals of the Program:

1. Understand why you save things.
 2. Create living space you can use.
 3. Find your things.
 4. Improve your decision-making skills.
 5. Reduce acquiring and enjoy other activities.
 6. Reduce clutter
- Which excite you the most?
 - What are your priorities?
 - Which do you think will be most difficult?

Goal Setting: At the close of each group, we will ask each person to set a short-term clutter-related goal for the week between sessions.

- Identify the problem or area you'd like to work on. Be specific.
- Define what you want to achieve.
- Create your plan. Write your goal.
- Set a timeline. Scheduling your work may help.
- Learn by doing. If needed, adjust your goals along the way.
- Be realistic. Clutter likely didn't accumulate in a short period of time. Be thoughtful about taking on a goal that is too ambitious.
- Share your progress during group time.

Preparing for Next Session:

1. Read chapter 10 in the Buried in Treasures (BIT) book, "Sorting/Removing Stuff – Let's Go!" and complete exercises. *Please read tomorrow so that you'll have time to do the exercises in Ch. 10.
2. Complete Homework Form for Session 9 and bring to next group.
3. Questions? Please e-mail Suzanne at so@SuzanneOtte.com

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Check-out:

- Mood rating (0-10)
- Your decluttering goal for the upcoming week?
- 1 encouraging word for the group.

NOTE: All slides and handouts are posted here:

Slides Posted Online: <https://www.southshorecrc.org/sspch-bit-2026>

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