

Home organization tips from a pro



Photos provided

By Jenn Freedman

With the new year comes resolutions and fresh starts, and for many of us, the craving to get organized. But where do you start? And how do you get organized and stay organized?

Organizational guru and longtime Moraga resident Jennifer Raftis, Certified Professional Organizer and founder/owner of Efficiency Matters, says, “Getting organized is a marathon, not a sprint.”

Raftis uses the S.P.A.C.E. method for her clients, which she describes as a “no-fail” method. Developed by organizational expert Julie Morgenstern, author of “Organizing from the Inside Out,” the S.P.A.C.E. method, which stands for sort your items, purge items you don’t use or need, assign a “home,” containerize, and evaluate your new system periodically, works for organizing any space—a room, a kitchen drawer, a filing cabinet, a closet, or even the garage.

Raftis recommends starting in a visible area like a room (not a drawer) because you will be able to see the results. Before starting, label four boxes or containers as

follows: recycle, stays, remove (to another location), donate/consign. You will use these same boxes for each space that you want to organize.

When sorting, Raftis says to sort twice. Put all like items together (magazines, toys, phone chargers, sunglasses, pens, newspapers, books, etc.), then go through each pile and put items into one of the boxes (recycle, stays, remove, donate/consign). You may want to start removing the items that don’t belong in the room, but don’t do it yet. “Stay focused on your sorting,” she says.

Then decide what to keep and what to purge. “Ask yourself, does this item serve me today?” If you have a hard time letting things go, Raftis says to consider the reasons. “Was it a gift? If you gave someone a gift that they weren’t using or loving, would you want them to keep it out of obligation? Was it expensive?” Raftis says if you are not using it, you have already spent the money and keeping it won’t bring the money back. This also applies to the age-old dilemma of thinking you might need the item someday. In this instance, Raftis uses the 20/20/20 rule. “If

you can replace it in 20 minutes under \$20 within 20 miles, let it go,” she says.

For the items you are keeping, Raftis suggests figuring out where each item should “live” – ideally close to the place you will use it. Keep it simple, put a label on it, and ensure everyone in your household is aware of the new home. The more complex you make your systems, the harder it will be for anyone to follow.

Once you know what you are keeping (quantities, sizes, and homes,) find or buy containers to store it. Raftis recommends using matching containers and labeling, as this creates an organized and calm aesthetic.

“Your life is always changing, and you will need to evaluate your organizing systems from time-to-time,” Raftis says. “In a few weeks, assess the system. Is it too complicated? Is it in the right location? As the new organized systems in your home start working, I have witnessed a change in confidence and energy with my clients, because they are now in control of their homes.”

To learn more about Raftis’ work or to contact her, visit efficiencymattersllc.com.