

Confronting Clutter as a Pathway to Mindfulness

By Carolyn Koehline, MA, LMHC

I have been helping people to Confront their Clutter for twenty years. Clutter is the excess baggage that drains your energy, gets in your way, and distracts you from your priorities. It accumulates in your home, and also in your head, heart and schedule. The Confronting Clutter process I teach provides potent practice in mindfulness.

Try looking at one of your cluttered spaces. You may notice that your self-talk immediately becomes nasty. You may find yourself getting agitated, feeling deflated, or reaching for a bag of chips. This is an excellent opportunity to bring in mindfulness – to breathe into the thoughts and feelings while inviting in some loving kindness.

Confronting Clutter provides practice in being present. Your home can fill with artifacts from past chapters of your life and things you might need someday. Your head and heart can fill with regrets and future fantasies. It is a powerful ritual to stop and ask, “Right now, at this chapter of my life, what objects and papers are helpful me? Which ones are no longer relevant? Can I free myself from being their caretaker?” It’s also helpful to ask, “What activities, roles, beliefs, and attitudes might it be time to release?” Doing so can potentially open up tremendous energy for the present.

After you’ve uncluttered and arranged a space, maintaining it also requires mindfulness. It takes awareness to hang up the coat, make the bed, put the cereal box back in the cupboard. It requires awareness to quiet the voice of the inner critic, and to say “no,” when someone is pressuring you to say “yes” to one more commitment.

Try these writing prompts letting them be a springboard into the whole mix of thoughts and feelings that come up for you as you focus on a space or an emotionally-loaded object or commitment. Write for 5 minutes. Then read it over and write a brief reflection on what you notice.

When I look at this cluttered space . . .

If I keep this in my life . . .

If I let this go . . .

To order Carolyn’s book [Confronting Your Clutter](#), access her clutter videos, and learn about her services, go to <http://www.ConfrontingClutter.com>.