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Simply Back to Basics
Providing Customized Solutions for Life Situations™

Get it Together! Keep it Together! Let Linda Help!

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Linda's Organizing Tip for October 2007:

It's a Gift to Be Simple:

The holiday season can be even more joyous and fun when gifts are kept simple and meaningful. Here are six suggestions to make life easier for you to be prepared and relaxed when the holidays arrive.

1. **Simplify your gift list.**

Decide each year who you would like to give gifts to, and don't be afraid to stop exchanging with someone at any point. Simply request a change in a gentle way (for example, "I wonder if we could consider not exchanging gifts each year; we all seem to have so much"). Maybe you could agree to contribute to a charity instead. Don't feel obligated to go into great detail as to why you want or need the change. Explaining that you want to simplify your life is a good enough reason, and one that almost anyone can understand.

2. **Limit the gifts.**

We all have so much stuff! For children, too much can actually prevent them from using (or finding) toys they already have! Instead of adding to the pile, see if you can do things differently this year. Grandparents, aunts and uncles can offer to contribute money to a kitty to buy a larger gift, perhaps with additional contributions from others. Or, if you live nearby, ask that parents suggest an activity that the child might enjoy doing with you. Likewise, the same ideas apply to adults. An accumulation of unneeded extras over years can lead to cluttered counters, closets, cupboards and stress. Don't feel bad about giving (or asking others to give) less.

3. **Honor the true meaning of "gift".** Dictionary.com defines "Gift" as something given voluntarily without payment in return, as to show favor toward someone, honor an occasion, or make a gesture of assistance. Rather than routinely exchanging presents at predictable intervals, give special gifts only when they are particularly matched for someone. That way, it will truly be a gift and a surprise. Be spontaneous.

4. **Prepare the children.**

If you are a parent and want to scale down on gifts but are afraid of your child(ren)'s disappointment, tell them ahead of time how this year is going to be different, and describe what they can expect. Don't feel obligated to keep up with past precedent. Focus on family activities, fun, and togetherness rather than material things. Work toward your principles, not towards excess in giving.

5. **Store the gifts together in one easy to access spot.**

When you do decide to purchase gifts for others, put them in solid colored bins in an easy to access storage area. If you don't have "peekers" you can label them "Gifts" so you remember what's inside. Two or three bins will hold many gifts. When the gift bins are empty, do not fill them with anything else. You can add to them throughout the year when you see an item that you think would be good for someone. Don't forget to put on a sticky note labeled with the intended recipient! Several times before the holidays, look through the box and compare against your gift list. This will help you remember and avoid overbuying. When I organize with people, I find that many people have gifts stashed all over the place and don't remember buying them. When we get them all in one place the size of the "gift category" always surprises them!

6. **Set up a wrapping center.**

Look for a place where you can pull together all of your wrapping materials into one accessible place. The best container for this is a long bin, trunk or cedar chest. Long rolls of paper will fit in easily, as well as boxes, flat paper, tissue paper, bags, bows and gift tags. Be sure to purge your wrappings so they fit into the chosen container. Get rid of anything that looks too wrinkled or old, anything too large to fit, or anything you have too much of to use in 1-2 years. (If you don't give a lot of gifts, you don't need 20 boxes, 30 bags or 100 bows!) Include a pair of scissors, marker and scotch tape and you will be ready to wrap!

If you need help with organizing, simply call Linda.

Please forward this tip to those you know who may be interested in organizing services.

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