



HEALTH ASSOCIATES*

Your Workplace Wellness & EAP Partner

Brought to you by [H & H Health Associates](#)

July 2026



Cleaning House: The Benefits of Decluttering

Thanks to greater purchasing power, an abundance of mass-produced items, and a culture that promotes consumption, we have more things than ever before. While these items can be a source of joy, pride, and usefulness, they can also be a source of stress. This is particularly the case as you get older and realize how much you've accumulated over time.

Decluttering can be a difficult process, but it's a worthwhile one. In the future, you may need to move to a smaller home or move in with a relative or into an assisted living facility. In any of those scenarios, it's unlikely you'll have space to bring all your belongings. Paring them down now will help—especially because this kind of move may be quick and unexpected.

Even if you remain in your home, decluttering keeps your house more manageable. It's safer for you, too. Having many things collecting dust can reduce the indoor air quality and lead to pest infestations that are hard to treat. Clutter can also become a tripping hazard.

The process of decluttering

As you're going through your items, separate them into three categories: keep, pass along, toss.

- **Keep:** Keep anything that you regularly use.
- **Pass along:** Items that you no longer need and are in good condition can be donated or sold. Maybe you have five pots and you only use one; then the other four can find a good home. There are some items you'll likely want to give to loved ones, such as family heirlooms. Be sure to set these aside from the general donation pile.
- **Toss:** Anything that's worn out, stained, or broken can be discarded. If you have a lot to toss, it might be worth using a junk-removal service to haul everything away.

How to deal with sentimental items

As you're sifting through your belongings, you'll undoubtedly come across items that have sentimental value. These are the trinkets filled with meaning that connect you to different chapters of your life. Use these strategies as you make decisions about these beloved keepsakes:

- Have photographs and videos digitized so that you can keep them without the clutter.
- Create guidelines around what you'll keep, like one physical item per memory. You might, for example, keep a vial of sand from that fun family trip to the beach but let go of everything else you still have from that time.
- Turn favorite photos into a collage for your wall, or have special T-shirts sewn into a quilt.
- Snap photos of things you're parting with but would like to remember.
- Take your time. It's emotionally taxing to go through a lifetime of memories. You don't have to do it all at once.

Getting help

Overwhelmed by the idea of downsizing? There are experts who can help, such as professional organizers and movers. For specialized expertise, the [National Association of Senior & Specialty Move Managers](#) is an organization whose members focus on helping older adults simplify their homes.

Don't feel like you have to do this alone. Whether you turn to an expert or friends, you'll want some support. It's mentally, emotionally, and physically challenging, so it's normal to need some assistance. Once you've started to make progress, though, you'll feel the benefits of a lighter, decluttered life.