

Resource F. Onsite Clutter Coaching Toolkit

A. By looking around the spaces, notice patterns:

1. What is accumulated?
2. Where are items kept, stored, left?
3. What, from the clients' perspective, was the original plan for the items and spaces?
4. How has the original plan or logic changed?
5. What are the factors responsible for
 - a) the plan changing to its current condition?
 - b) the change happening in the first place?
 - c) the change being maintained?
 - d) the change not being resolved?
6. Once you have more information on the
 - a) what;
 - b) where;
 - c) why; and
 - d) how maintained,

go to B.

B. Begin the scaling process.

1. Of the things visible, are there any "easy wins"?
 - a) things that your clients fully believe can go now, such as 7, 8, 9, 10s
 - b) things that have "extreme importance," that is, 1, 2, 3s
2. Somewhere in the middle are these items:

- a) absolute “needs” for daily life, even though there is no attachment to the particular item
- b) “handy” but not needs
- c) “likes” that your clients would keep as many as possibly of if space allowed *but* if something has to go in a cleanup, many items will come from this group--it needs to be sorted and decided on one by one

C. Ask about the criteria pattern for the “easy wins.”

- 1. “Extreme importance” items, the 1, 2, 3s:
 - a) “I can’t imagine life without it.”
 - b) “If I let this go or anything happens to it, I would miss it forever.”
 - c) “I absolutely love it.”
- 2. Ask your clients what makes these 1, 2, 3s. What characteristics or qualities of these items give them their importance?
- 3. Repeat this exercise with “easy wins” that are 7, 8, 9, 10s. By reviewing the most important first and the least important next, your clients get a visceral emotional and intellectual experience of the difference between both personal extremes.

D. Now ask about the 4, 5, 6s.

- 1. When deciding each grouping (1, 2, 3s / 7, 8, 9, 10s / 4, 5, 6s), ask them to really focus on and describe to you:
 - a) what they are feeling about the items as a collective in each group;
 - b) what they are saying to themselves about the items; and
 - c) any inconsistencies, any “buts” they are aware of.

2. Set a guideline to discard anything:
 - a) contaminated by mold;
 - b) tainted by mouse scat/urine;
 - c) chewed by rodents or insects;
 - d) heavily soiled; or
 - e) seriously broken so that it can't be used.

E. Scale items for decision making.

1. Select an area that will give your clients the most satisfaction to resolve.
2. Start with the "easy wins" 7, 8, 9, 10.
3. Process the space by
 - a) picking up each item at a time;
 - b) confirming it is a 7, 8, 9, 10;
 - c) giving the client an opportunity to "feel" the reasons that it is a 7, 8, 9, 10 and confirm it can be
 - discarded (all contaminated and damaged items);
 - donated (take that day);
 - recycled (must go next scheduled day and, if possible, not be stored in living space);
 - possibly sold (realistically help research market and price expected and the likely time, effort, and probability of success);
 - regifted
 - to someone specific--set the time
 - for future gifting events--set a dedicated box or shelf

4. Review 1, 2, 3s.

- a) Confirm that each item has the characteristics necessary to be a 1, 2, 3.
- b) If staging space is available, divide the possible 1, 2, 3s into categories by type, for example:
 - paper
 - clothing
 - plastic bags
- c) As the tentative decision to keep the high value items is made, explore with clients where the “keep” items will be housed.
 - Is that space available?
 - If not, what category does the item currently in the space qualify for?

5. Continue with the 4, 5, 6 category.

- a) Have your clients remind themselves of the criteria and feelings associated with 1, 2, 3s and 7, 8, 9, 10s.
- b) Select the 4, 5, 6s closer to 7, 8, 9, 10s and ask if it is all right to put these items into the “let go” piles (discard, donate, etc.).
- c) For these 4, 5, 6s closer to a 3 and place in a “keep as many as there is space for” area (in the spaces where those types of items are normally used).
- d) If possible, put the items in the correct area with other things belonging in the same area.

- Put all “like” items together where they would normally be used, even if doing so increases clutter in that area (but *not* if it creates a safety hazard!).
 - The visual cues are strong when people see how much they are expecting each space to hold, and gradually they begin to realize the impossibility of it.
 - This usually also generates a drive in people to identify the 1, 2, 3s of each piles, reducing the accumulation even further.
- e) Create a “maybe” pile *only if absolutely necessary* to avoid significantly increasing client anxiety.

F. Review problematic “keep” items.

1. During the criteria setting and scaling exercises, you might encounter items that clients resolutely state they want to keep that are
 - a) contaminated;
 - b) excessively soiled; or
 - c) irrevocably broken.
2. Gently discuss and identify what makes the item contaminated, soiled, or broken.
3. Listen carefully to the beliefs, values, fears, and feelings fueling your clients’ perspective.
4. Using common strategies learned in trainings¹, try to influence your clients to let the items go.

¹ Hoarding Level 1 and Level 2 Workshops available on www.hoarding.ca

5. If unsuccessful, ask your clients if they would give you the items to hold for 6 weeks to see if their feelings remain as strong as in this moment. Agree to these terms (possibly in writing, initialed by your clients):

- a) You will return the items if the clients wish (if contaminated, items must remain sealed even if returned).

If they don't ask for the items back, then they are agreeing that their feelings have changed, and the items will not be coming back.