

12 Surprising Ways Clutter Is Ruining Your Life [Infographic]



Clutter is bad for your health. Clutter increases creativity. Clutter ruins productivity. Clutter damages your relationship.

You've heard a lot about clutter. It can get confusing. Now it's time to get the hard facts on how clutter affects your life.

We analyzed various studies on clutter and hoarding. We spoke to psychotherapists, physicians, and professional organizers to learn more about the psychological reasons for clutter and its negative effects. We then created a clutter infographic. All so you can finally decide if you have a healthy or unhealthy amount of stuff in your home.

Here's how clutter affects your physical and mental health, relationships, career, and finances:

12 Surprising Ways Clutter Is Ruining Your Life

Clutter Harms Your Health

- 1 Increases your stress**
Clutter raises levels of the stress hormone cortisol.
- 2 Wrecks your diet**
Clutter overwhelms your brain, so you're more likely to resort to coping mechanisms such as seeking comfort foods or overeating.
- 3 Triggers respiratory issues**
According to the Alliance for Healthy Homes, cluttered homes often contain more dust, which can cause or amplify breathing problems.
- 4 Threatens your safety**
Accumulating excessive amounts of items that are flammable and block doors or windows poses serious fire hazards.



Clutter Hurts Your Relationships



5

Jeopardizes your love life

Excessive clutter causes you to overlook changes that need to be made to strengthen your relationship. It can also lead to higher rates of divorce.

6

Upsets your kids

Children living in a severely cluttered environment are less happy, have greater trouble making friends, and are more likely to feel embarrassed about their home's condition.

7

Isolates you

50% of surveyed homeowners said that if they have clutter, they won't invite friends over.

Clutter Derails Your Career

8 Prevents you from getting promoted

28% of surveyed employers are less likely to promote someone with a messy desk.

9 Makes you miss work

One study found compulsive hoarding associated with an average of 7 absences per month.

10 Decreases productivity

A study by Princeton University found clutter to decrease participants' productivity. Messy surroundings compete for your attention while distracting you from your to-do list.





Clutter Drains Your Wallet

11 Encourages bad spending habits

Hoarders tend to purchase items without agenda. Beat debt with a money management service like YNAB.

12 Keeps you in debt

You can't pay off debt if you can't find your bills. Set up automatic bill pay, or create reminders in your phone's calendar to pay your bills on time.



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Clutter Harms Your Health

Your apartment isn't the only thing affected by over-accumulation of stuff. Clutter also has proven, tangible effects on your mental and physical well-being.

1. Clutter increases your stress.

According to a study in the Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, people with cluttered homes full of unfinished projects were more depressed, fatigued, and had higher levels of the stress hormone cortisol than those who described their homes as “restful” and “restorative.”

The study also mentions that cortisol’s failure to decline normally over the course of the day has “been associated with greater chronic stress, disease progression, and even mortality risk.”

2. Clutter wrecks your diet.

A study in Psychological Science found that participants in an orderly environment chose healthier snacks than those in a cluttered environment.

“Clutter is stressful for the brain, so you’re more likely to resort to coping mechanisms such as choosing comfort foods or overeating than if you spend time in neater surroundings,” explains Dr. Eva Shalhoub.

3. Clutter triggers respiratory issues.

According to the Alliance for Healthy Homes, cluttered homes often contain more dust, which can cause or amplify breathing problems.

As more things pile up, more dust is generated. This creates the ideal living environment for pests like dust mites.

The harder it gets to access different areas of the home to clean, the more serious these respiratory issues become.

4. Clutter threatens your safety.

The Mental Health Association of San Francisco warns that excessive amounts of clutter — especially cardboard boxes, paper, and clothing — can block doorways and windows, creating a serious fire hazard.

Clutter Hurts Your Relationships

If you share your home with others, excessive clutter is no longer just a “you” problem. Clutter in your home can also negatively impact the lives of your significant other and kid(s).

5. Clutter jeopardizes your love life.

People with hoarding disorder persistently have difficulty getting rid of things because of a perceived need to save them. They also feel distressed at the thought of parting with their belongings. This can take a toll on one's marriage, as studies have shown that compulsive hoarders have higher rates of divorce.

Clutter's negative impact on marriage is not limited to hoarders. "Spouses of a cluttered person who are bothered by the condition of the environment express their discomfort in judgment, negative comments, name calling, anger and irritability," writes Debbie Bowie, a Certified Professional Organizer based in Richmond, Virginia.

6. Clutter upsets your kids.

If you have kids, they too can feel the negative effects of a cluttered home. The National Institute of Mental Health found that kids living in a severely cluttered environment often have elevated levels of distress, experiencing less happiness and more difficulty making friends.

7. Clutter isolates you.

The cleanliness of your home can affect your desire to invite anyone into it. In a Rubbermaid survey conducted by Russell Research, nearly half of surveyed homeowners said they won't invite friends over if their home is cluttered.

Try not to go too far in the opposite direction, though, as living in an overly tidy and controlled environment can also cause stress. According to Kellie Rice, Psy.D., CGP, that level of anxiety makes it hard for someone to leave the house because he/she is so preoccupied with whether or not it's neat enough.

Clutter Derails Your Career

“If a person doesn’t have control over their home environment, they use work as an escape,” says Connor McClenahan, Psy.D. People with messy tendencies rarely confine their disorganization to just their homes. Meaning that chaos can seep into your professional life, too.

8. Clutter prevents you from getting promoted.

A chaotic desk, an untidy briefcase or purse, and an undefined filing system (or no filing system at all) can all have a major impact on your job performance. A CareerBuilder study found that 28% of employers are less likely to promote someone with a messy workspace.

9. Clutter makes you miss work.

Researchers from the National Institute of Mental Health discovered compulsive hoarding was associated with an average of seven work impairment days per month — more than those reported by participants with other anxiety, mood, and substance use disorders.

10. Clutter decreases productivity.

When your environment is cluttered, the chaos inhibits your ability to focus. A study by the Princeton University Neuroscience Institute observed that “multiple stimuli present in the visual field at the same time compete for neural representation.”

In other words, a desk strewn with papers, snacks, photos, and pens will probably beat out any kind of productivity you had planned for the day. The research also shows that a clean work environment will help you be more productive, less moody, and better able to process information.

Clutter Drains Your Wallet

A messy home can negatively affect how you manage your finances, leading to poor money management and severe debt. While there are solutions to these issues, being able to find your electric bill is a good place to start.

11. Clutter encourages bad spending habits.

When your home is cluttered, it's easy to misplace things. If you can't find an item, like your yoga mat or your dog's favorite toy, you might buy a duplicate. This habit, combined with spending a lot of money to hoard items, can get you into debt.

Beat debt with a money management service like YNAB.

12. Clutter keeps you in debt.

A cluttered home can also make it difficult to locate credit card bills and bank statements. Another lost bill leads to another late payment. Suddenly, you're dealing with additional fees, higher interest rates, or even collection agencies.

Set up automatic bill pay or create calendar reminders in your phone to ensure you pay your bills on time.