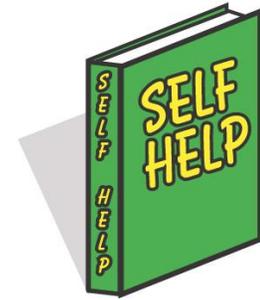


Get Back to Basics in the New Year	Vali G. Heist, Author and Certified Professional Organizer®
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January is National Get Organized Month and I am celebrating my tenth year in business as a professional organizer. I'd like to thank my clients and my faithful readers for supporting my passion to help you simplify and live your best organized life! January is also the time for making resolutions and promising to follow through on all the advice in the self-help books on your bookshelves. Being the author of a self-help book, I can't say I don't recommend them, but striving to constantly improve your life and your home may not be the best advice.

According to Lindsay Myers on brainblogger.com, self-improvement represents a \$10 billion per year industry in the U.S. alone. (In addition to high revenues, self-help has a high recidivism rate, which means that those same people already purchased another self-help book in the last 18 months.) Whether we want to lose weight, eat healthy, have a better marriage, or advance in our career, many of us rely on self-help books to improve our lives. What's more, home improvement is an almost \$300 billion industry, which some say started with Bob Vila on *This Old House* and cable channels taking over from there with HGTV and DIY Network. I must admit that when we bought our old farm house over 30 years ago, we've been improving and upgrading ever since.



Stop Improving Yourself and Start Living by Robert Jean Bryant is a classic self-help book that challenges us to end the perpetual quest for improvement and instead upgrade the quality of our daily life. We are constantly bombarded by commercials and retailers who try to convince us to buy the latest and greatest stuff so we can “improve” our lives. But all that buying means more clutter distracts us from the real issues and the real people in our lives and takes us away from living in the moment. Bryant also says that when you get off the treadmill of constant improvement you help yourself to the freedom of creativity, joy and well-being.

I suggest that we start the New Year by getting back to the basics. Let's break it down:

- Kick the bully out of your head. Be kind to yourself and don't let others convince you that you are “less than”. Strive for the joy of being well, not being a certain size.
- Embrace your space. Do you have a patio you never sit on? Or is your two-car garage sans car? In many ways, our homes are “good enough”; we just need to take the time to find out.
- Trust your own judgment. Focus on your own goals, use expert advice sparingly and move forward; follow the guidance you need and discard the rest.
- Streamline your home. Identify your CRAP (Clutter that Robs Anyone of Pleasure) and let it go! The less there is to take care of, the more time you have to be creative.
- Take stock...of your blessings. If you live in the United States of America, you are blessed.
- Answer the question “I wish I had more time to...” and make it happen.

Happy New Year from The Clutter Crew!!

Clutter Quote: “*Know many, trust few, learn to paddle your own canoe.*” Anonymous