

Made to order

Busy lifestyles often equate to chaos on the home front, but take heart, for help is just around the corner ...

TEXT: KAREN HEINRICH

Home is where the heart is, but what if that 'heart' is in urgent need of major bypass surgery? If your living space is cluttered and all arteries leading to and from it are clogged with vitality-sapping junk, then drastic action must be taken to return it to full health.

But where to begin? As with open-heart surgery, you wouldn't attempt to do it by yourself, so enlisting the help of experts can be a smart place to start.

Prolific in the US and catching on fast in Australia, personal organisers come into your home and teach you methods for revamping areas suffering from clutter overload. Not surprisingly, the rooms that tend to be in most need of attention are home offices, bedrooms, kitchens and bathrooms.

The techniques these organisers devise and implement vary from client to client, and may involve just a few simple changes to streamline how you manage your time, information and space.

Carol Posener, author of *Get Organised! A Practical Guide to Organising Your Home and Office* (Lothian Books, \$24.95), has seen it all. Something of an industry veteran, Posener has been in the home organisation business for nine years and likens its increasing popularity to the destigmatisation of therapy.

"A lot of people are more open to getting help – it's really the way of the future," Posener said. "So many people have got many issues, but no time to deal with them."

Rebecka Goodwin, whose business, The Organising Angel, is based in Geraldton, said people are now realising that organisational skills do not come naturally to everyone, and they are actually doing something about it.

"Just like you wouldn't do things like accounting or plumbing yourself, organisation is not something that you can pick up just like that," she said. "It's most definitely an acquired skill."

For the increasingly hectic lifestyles many of us live, the benefits are enormous. For example, Goodwin points out, being organised saves time (which would otherwise be wasted looking for things such as keys) and saves money (on things such as late fees for missed bill payments).

"I had a problem with overdue books and videos – now we have a basket by the front door," she said. "As soon as the item is finished with, it goes in that basket and I grab it on my way out."

"Being organised makes your mind so much clearer. I can't not be organised – it drives me nuts."

"... organisation isn't something you can pick up."



PROBLEM: I'm so disorganised I don't know where to start!

SOLUTION: Rebecka Goodwin's tips on how to transform disorder into order.

■ Sit down and brainstorm. Make a sketch of each room, concentrate on how you would like that room to look once you are finished, make it as detailed as you like, perhaps using pictures from magazines. This gives you something to aim towards – use it as an incentive when you're feeling a little overwhelmed.

■ Set goals. Rather than tackling everything at once, break it down into achievable portions.

■ If the problem is clutter, grab four boxes per room and label them 'keep', 'toss', 'donate' or 'unsure'. Pick up every item in that room and decide in which box it belongs. Make sure EVERY item is picked up and sorted.

PROBLEM: I don't have the right tools to be organised!

SOLUTION: Buy some (or all) of these must-have products.

- Upright magazine boxes.
- Archive boxes – for storing documents you need to keep but which don't need to stay in your filing cabinet.
- Photo albums/photo boxes.
- Recipe display books – for recipes you've cut out.
- Five-pocket insert folder.
- CD boxes.
- Zip/floppy disc boxes.
- Intry for documents that need urgent attention.

