

15 Ways to Declutter Your Mind

By Melissa Eisler



Clutter doesn't have to be just physical items in your environment. A cluttered mind can include:

- Ruminating
- Focusing on the negative
- Worrying about things outside of your control
- Holding onto negative emotions and experiences, including resentment, past hurt, anger, and sadness
- Keeping a mental to-do list, including incomplete dreams and goals
- Having external distractions and constant sensory input

When your mind is cluttered, it wastes your time and mental energy. It also creates mental confusion, distraction, and disorganization that prevents you from creating clear priorities, making decisions, having focus, and being productive. When your mind is cluttered, you are not present, which causes you to lose connection to yourself, your environment, your relationships, and the moment you are in.

It's time to let go of the mental habits that are keeping you from reaching your full potential. In order to build mental muscles and declutter your mind, you need to become intentional about where you place your attention and how you spend your time and energy. Only then can you unravel unhealthy thinking patterns that are keeping you stuck and your mind cluttered. Here are 15 tips to help you clean and declutter your mind.

1. Get Some Sleep

[Sleep has numerous benefits](#), including helping with your mental state. If you are not getting enough sleep, the most common effect is sleepiness, of course, but also brain "fog"—the general inability to think straight or remember anything. [According to researchers](#), sleep deprivation disrupts your brain cells' ability to communicate with each other, leading to temporary mental lapses. If you want to start decluttering your mind and creating healthy habits, start by getting [some restful sleep](#).

2. Meditate

You'll never be able to declutter your mind if you don't make the time to meditate on what is actually keeping you stuck. By committing to a practice of meditation, you'll take your mind to a place where clarity is natural and effortless. When you meditate, you'll help reduce confusion by getting clear on your priorities, and you'll get better at focusing your attention and reducing distraction. [Take some time to practice meditation](#) and build it into your daily routine to help you declutter your mind.

3. Transfer Thoughts to Paper

One of the best ways to help you declutter your mind is to take all those thoughts and tasks floating around in your brain and write them down. Getting them on paper takes them out of your head because it allows you to let go of the responsibility you have to remember them, thus decluttering your mind in the process.

If you're the kind of person who constantly generates new ideas (great!), you may want to look into a way to store your ideas, rather than keeping them all in your head, which could quickly become unmanageable. To create some headspace, try finding an app or carrying around a small notebook so that you can jot down your fresh ideas. The goal is to pick one place to store them and stick to it so you know where to find them.

If simply listing your thoughts, feelings, etc., down doesn't quite stop you from ruminating, you have other options. For example, if you are trying to problem-solve an issue and don't have the mental space to do so, or you haven't quite fully explored yourself and

your personal beliefs and need space to do that—the next step is to journal. Journaling is an exploratory form of writing and is a great way for you to ponder important things so you can come to a solution.

Journaling can also be therapeutic. According to the University of Rochester Medical Center researchers, [journaling is a helpful tool in managing mental health](#). It helps you organize your thoughts and understand your emotions, which is a healthy practice for your overall well-being.

4. Set and Complete Priorities

You may have a [long to-do list](#) and feel overwhelmed on where to start, which keeps those items stuck in your mind, taking up valuable real estate. Once you data dump by writing down your tasks (see above), start to categorize them in order of importance.

If you are finding that everything that you are writing down feels important, you can further identify items that are *urgent*—meaning if you don't complete them today, it will have serious negative consequences on your life (i.e., a project with rigid deadlines, taking medication, paying a bill, etc.).

Then, start assessing the value of all the other important items. What items are most in line with your life goals? Those should be your next priority, after your urgent items. Keep assigning value to your items until you have prioritized everything on your list.

Prioritizing will help you get clear and organized. Last step is to start doing them and crossing them off your list for the ultimate relief!

5. Reduce Multitasking

Humans are not multitaskers by nature. Multitasking may seem efficient on the surface, but [studies have shown](#) that multitasking actually reduces productivity and fills your mind with too much activity. Instead, go down your list of priorities and focus on one task at a time to avoid mental overload. To avoid getting lost in time, you can set a timer for how long you want to spend on any given task, to ensure you manage your time well.

6. Practice Being Decisive

“Mental clutter is simply delayed decisions.” –Barbara Hemphill, SpotOnOrganizing.com

Life is fundamentally a series of choices. Some decisions are simple; others are difficult and can stir an uproar of emotions, causing you to avoid the decision-making process completely. In fact, procrastinating is one of the greatest culprits of mind clutter because it causes your brain to become overwhelmed by all those pending decisions you have put off. It can be an honest mistake though—we are all constantly bombarded with so many options and “what ifs?” that it can quickly turn a decision into analysis paralysis.

7. Challenge Negativity

Negativity can be debilitating and take up a lot of room in your mind. Feeling sad and disappointed is healthy, but toxic self-talk magnifies your misfortune, skewing your perceptions of reality.

The first thing to do is become aware of how you talk to yourself. What are you saying in your mind about yourself? Be on the lookout for red flags, such as [victimizing thoughts](#) (“Poor me” type of thinking). If you notice that the thoughts in your head or the words on your paper after your journaling exercise are toxic self-talk, it's time to change your mindset.

To change your mindset, you need to [start challenging yourself](#). Is the thought accurate or is it distorted? Each time you prove to yourself that the negative self-talk is incorrect, your mind will start to replace the negative thoughts with positive ones. And when that happens, your mind will shift from feeling heavy, cluttered, and chaotic (negativity) to lighter and free (positivity).

A part of challenging yourself is to start gaining more positive experiences. Practice gratitude and compassion by doing something to make your life or someone else's life a little bit better. When you catch yourself thinking negatively, do something that helps you or someone else. That way, the next time you experience negative self-talk, you can acknowledge that your brain isn't always right.

8. Schedule Time to Worry

We all worry; it's natural to have fears. Where you can get into trouble is letting [your worries consume your mind](#) to the point where it interferes with your life. Rehashing the same things over and over in your mind—such as second-guessing your decisions and coming up with an endless list of hypothetical situations—won't help you.

To avoid spinning your mental wheels, [schedule time](#)—maybe 15 minutes a week or a day—to worry and ruminate. During that time, don't hold back; let it all out. When you start to worry between your scheduled worry times, remind yourself that you set aside time and then let those worries go. By confining your worries to a scheduled time, you don't allow them to take over your mind and life.

9. Confide In a Loved One

If you're feeling mentally overloaded, try sharing the burden with a loved one. Whether it be your spouse, a friend, a family member, a therapist, or [a life coach](#), sharing what's on your mind with someone can be helpful. Unloading your thoughts and feelings can help you gain perspective and clarity, break the cycle of ruminating, and lighten the burden of carrying everything in your head.

10. Declutter Your Environment

According to [an article published in the Journal of Neuroscience](#), if your environment—whether it be your home or office—is cluttered, the chaos constantly competes for your attention and restricts your ability to mentally focus and process information. Whether you realize it or not, having clutter in your surroundings occupies a part of your mind and blocks your ability to think and act clearly. If you want to improve your mental state, you need to organize and clear out physical clutter.

11. Enjoy Time in Nature

[Studies have shown](#) that being in nature is associated with mental health benefits, including decreasing anxiety and depression. In a lot of ways, nature restores, refreshes, and invigorates you and your mental energy. Next time your mind feels heavy, take a stroll outside to clear your head.

12. Limit Your Social Media Intake

Your brain is bombarded with sensory information all day, every day. Being on social media constantly adds brain clutter and can even affect your mental health [by increasing depression and loneliness](#). Monitor your usage on social media platforms, and if you start to notice your mind getting cluttered by thoughts and feelings from triggering posts, it is time to take a break.

13. Exercise

We all know exercise is good for your overall well-being, including your body and your mind. [In addition to decreasing anxiety and depression](#), [regular exercise](#) can help you concentrate and feel mentally sharp for tasks at hand.

15. Take a Break!

Last but not least, everyone needs some space to unwind. It doesn't have to be a week-long vacation, although that is very helpful, but sometimes spending 15 minutes with your feet up or doing something that makes you happy is all you need to hit the reset button.

Let these tips help you to declutter your mind. Remember that the goal isn't to “empty” your mind—removing every thought, feeling, idea, dream, etc., would be impossible. Instead, it is to help you simplify your life and build new mental habits that increase your productivity, clarity, awareness, organization, and well-being. Next time life throws you a curve ball, you'll have the space and tools to flex your mental muscles.

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