

# At Your BEST

on and off the job

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**PURPOSE:** To provide authoritative, useful, easy-to-understand information that will help our

readers reduce stress, be more energetic and balance the demands of home and work.

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## ACTION PLAN

ADVICE FROM JEFF DAVIDSON, *AT YOUR BEST*  
ADVISOR AND AUTHOR OF *BREATHING SPACE*

### Master the Art of Creative Trashing

In a society that speeds off in all directions it's understandable that you'd like to hang on to pieces of the past. In fact, we all tend to overcollect in America. We're drowning in clutter. And clutter is stressful.

Well, now's the time to declare your freedom from the clutter syndrome. Consider every piece of paper, junk mail, document, book, article of clothing—anything you hang on to that doesn't support your priorities—as hazardous to your breathing space. Your best choice: Toss it while it's still fresh. But you also need to wade through all your existing files and piles and do some creative tossing.

**LEVEL 1:** *As you wade through your files, ask yourself four questions:*

1. Have I used this info in the last year?
2. Are there any consequences of not keeping it?
3. Does it support me, my family, my job or my community?
4. Is the information or item irreplaceable?

Keep those items you said "yes" to. Otherwise, toss it.

**LEVEL 2:** *What else can you toss? Consider these:*

- ☛ Which books can you give away? What information that is old hat to you would be welcome to a new member of your organization?

- ☛ How many bags and boxes of old clothes and books can you donate to the Salvation Army or Good Will? What about hospitals, schools, libraries and retirement homes in your area? It's a lot easier to let go of items when you know they'll benefit others.

- ☛ Place a box where you can see it in a closet, pantry or other area and add to it as you discover clothes that don't fit or items you choose not to hold on to.

- ☛ When the bag or box is full, drop it off. In addition to reducing the clutter in your home, you've now contributed to a worthy cause.

**LEVEL 3:** *Maintenance measures:*

- ☛ At least quarterly, reexamine everything you own and practice creative trashing.

- ☛ Prune your holdings one week before your birthday, and near New Year's Day. The realization of years passing just before your birthday or other notable milestone prompts you to toss what does not support you.

- ☛ If you have to, allow yourself one file drawer, closet or storage locker as a dumping ground for whatever mess you want to accumulate. If you don't get rid of that stuff eventually, however your executors will, and they'll charge your heirs for doing it!