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If you want bedroom bliss, get rid of the clutter

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SPECIAL TO THE P-I

There has been a lot of discussion lately about our sleep-deprived way of life. While a number of factors have been cited as the cause, there is one that almost never gets mentioned: clutter.

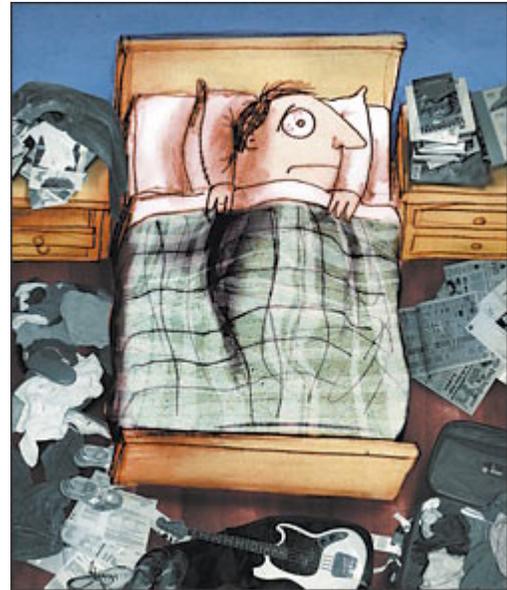
The amount of clutter in a bedroom plays a big role in how restfully we sleep.

Picture the last time you walked into a hotel room. Most likely you encountered a freshly made bed with fluffed pillows properly arranged, two bedside tables with no clutter except for maybe a lamp and small clock/radio/alarm, minimal decor on top of the dresser, artwork that did not cover every square inch of wall space and nothing strewn on the floor.

Now take a scan of your bedroom.

Is it a heavenly oasis that you retreat to in the evening? Or, is it a disorganized disaster that you dread waking up to every morning?

If you're not going to sleep in and waking up to peaceful, serene surroundings, here are several tips to help you create bedroom bliss:



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Floor

First, pick up what's on the floor -- dirty clothes, clean clothes, books, magazines, dishes, the suitcase you never unpacked, kid's toys ... you get the idea. I'll go out on a limb here and assume that all these things have an "assigned" home -- and it's some place other than the floor.

Bed

Use your bed for its intended purpose -- getting a good night's rest.

I know what you're thinking: this is just common sense. And I agree. But I also can tell you that there are individuals (both men and women) who share their bed with everything imaginable, except another person. I have seen it firsthand, and also heard many stories.

I'm not saying to get rid of all the stuff occupying the bed -- just find another place for it. And storing lots of pictures, books, knickknacks, dishes, etc., on the bed frame or headboard is not safe -- especially if there is an earthquake.

Horizontal surfaces

Now use the newly cleared floor and bed as staging areas for cleaning off all horizontal surfaces such as dresser tops, bedside tables, chest of drawers, trunks -- any surface on which you place things.

Horizontal surfaces can get you into a lot of trouble because when you need a place to put something, the automatic response is "I'll just set this here for now and deal with it later"

Of course after you do that too many times, you end up with all clutter and no visible surfaces.

There are common reasons why someone sets something down -- for later:

- No time at the moment to put it in its proper place.
- Indecisiveness about the item and whether it still serves a purpose.
- No defined place for the item to live.

The solution to the first is simple. Discipline yourself to take a few minutes later to put the item away in its defined location. No real organizing taking place here. Rather, you are maintaining an uncluttered space that you already created.

The solutions for the second and third reasons require a bit more time, some organizing and the ability to make decisions -- often tough decisions.

For dealing with the horizontal surfaces, it's best to start with a completely clean slate and add back what you need and enjoy looking at.

Here are some recommendations:

Bedside table (top) -- One book or magazine you are currently reading, lamp, box of tissue, remote for the TV (if there's one in the bedroom), alarm or clock/radio.

Bedside table (drawer) -- Reading glasses, sleep mask, flashlight, medicine you may need to take in bed (take precautions if there are small children around)

Dresser/armoire top -- Framed pictures, small fountain, jewelry box, plant and candles. When arranging items, place them in odd numbered groupings -- for example two framed photos and a candle.

Walls and ceiling

One of the biggest impacts you can make for a small investment is a fresh coat of paint.

Find a warm, inviting, peaceful shade that accents your decor. You'll love the feeling you get when you enter your retreat.

Another great reason to add a fresh coat is that it will force you to move furniture and all the other stuff in your room -- which will help stimulate the decluttering process!

Desk

If space is available, I always recommend that bedroom desks used for work be relocated to another area of the home. A bedroom desk usually means unfinished business -- which for many is a major source of sleepless nights.

If a desk area in the bedroom can't be avoided, try these suggestions:

- Use a moveable screen to partition off the area.
- Use stylish boxes and baskets to help contain projects and supplies. Find a product that you can access easily, which will encourage you to put things away when done.

As with any organizing project, remember that there is no right or wrong way to organize a room. What matters is that you create a space you can maintain and that works for you.

What works for you may not work for the next person; everyone's needs and goals are different. If you start your project with a clear vision for your goals and how you would like the space to look, you will have even greater results.

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