

Clutter, organisation & the neurodivergent brain

Clutter is rarely about not caring.

For many neurodivergent people it is about how our unique brains handle:

- *Attention*
- *Planning*
- *Decision making*
- *Our senses*
- *Emotional overwhelm*

ADHD

You have the **INTENT** but **STARTING** can be difficult

Out of **SIGHT** can mean out of **MIND**

DISTRACTION can lead to tidying one thing and then starting another task before the first is complete

TIME – a quick tidy becomes an afternoon slog as we become distracted and overwhelmed

PROCRASTINATION kicks in and it never quite begins

Piles form because every item asks for a **DECISION**, and decisions require energy

SHAME can make it harder, so the mess grows and asking for help feels so difficult

AUTISM

Visual clutter can feel physically and emotionally **OVERWHELMING**, not just untidy

You may need things in particular places and in a certain order, and it can be **DISTRESSING** when they are moved

Some objects may feel **COMFORTING**, **PREDICTABLE** or part of a special interest and letting go can feel like a loss

Big jobs can feel **IMPOSSIBLE** and **OVERWHELMING** when the steps or instructions are not clear

BURNOUT or a hard week can mean that our ability to organise can stop working, and this can feel like **CHAOS** and be **DISREGULATING**



AUTISM

Calm & order

Everything put away

A clear system and routine

BUT

you are living with a brain that scatters things

THEN

you forget it exists once it is out of sight

BUT

you find it hard to keep one going



ADHD

A few things that may be helpful

TIDY and **CHAOTIC** corners can often sit side by side, a sign of a brain doing it's very best.

A short timer, with permission to stop when it ends.

One designated area of a room e.g chair that is the messy, a dumping area, rather than the whole room.

Open storage or clear boxes, so things stay visible.

A landing spot for keys, bags and post.

A buddy system – someone alongside you, in the room or on a call.

One calm corner where your eyes can rest and not feel shame or overwhelm.

Asking "does this work for me?" rather than "does this look right?" Clutter affects mental health, yet individual tolerance and comfort in clutter varies.

Three piles only when sorting or organising – keep, donate, discard.

No "maybe" pile, which is referred to as the **the enemy of progress**.

Start where you'll see it the most – choose a countertop, desk or shelf where the result is immediately visible. ADHD brains respond to visible, immediate feedback and seeing a tidy area will feel more positive.

Reduce demand – pick one area to tidy or clean and not one room.

Two UK-friendly tools. Tiimo, a visual daily planner built for neurodivergent users, and the Time Timer, a visual countdown timer helpful for time blindness.

Exact right amount of stuff for you rather than less stuff – A good reframe for neurodivergent minds. Maybe even having multiples of certain items can make life better. And doing this with no shame!

Routines that forgive a missed day – predictable routine without becoming suffocating, boring, overwhelming or impossible to restart after one bad day.

SET YOUR BAR LOW!

Try not to compare your home with others – creates shame and despair. Instead use peer support and social connections to reduce any shame.

Pace yourself – exhausting yourself on a project can throw you months behind, so work within your limits, take breaks and listen to your body.

TAKE WHAT FITS AND LEAVE THE REST – GOOD ENOUGH REALLY IS ENOUGH!