

## Getting it Together for the New Year

Underneath all of their new gifts, wrapping paper, and miles of ribbon is the floor in their bedrooms. There is no more room in their closets or on their shelves. Christmas was fun, cold, and quite memorable, now it's time to pick up and clean up. So how do you get your children to participate in this massive organizational task?

Your child's age and developmental level are certainly factors to consider when deciding on an appropriate and effective approach. It's important for you to remember that screaming your head off won't get you very far. Approach this task like a meticulous engineer. Begin with a general plan and break it into individual, smaller tasks. Your child will find these smaller tasks more approachable. As adults we often tackle problems in our own lives the same way. Initially when we're faced with the whole, and only see the "whole" picture, we become fearful and intimidated by the monster. But when we take time to develop a plan, with individual steps, the problem does not appear as big. Instead, it appears more manageable and we are able to approach it with more confidence and ease. By appearing more doable, the task is likely to be conquered faster, more successfully, and with less stress. This is how we need to organize the project for children. For younger children it is best for you to decide on the plan and explain it to them. With children of ages 4 1/2 and up, get them in on a basic design of the organized approach to cleaning up and managing their room for the New Year. There are so many types of inexpensive bins and stack containers that you can purchase to assist your child in their quest and actually make it fun.

Sorting and discarding items your child has out grown is so important. If you want to hang on to them as keepsakes for a younger sibling, do so. Carefully box, label, and store them in an attic or storage area to allow for more space in your child's closets and on their shelves for new times which have now taken on significant roles in their lives. For those items that have clearly lost their necessity, clean, box, and deliver them to the nearest Good Will or donation drop off center, with your child. Our children need to learn at an early age, although an item may no longer be of interest to them, it could mean the world to a child in need.

Once your child has completed this project, celebrate to reinforce such a great job well done! Remind your child of how great their room looks and how easily they can find things they are looking for. You may want to do this clean-up / organization project every quarter, or at least every 6 months, in order to simplify things as you all embrace the New Year.

Parent Tips: by Annetta Miller

- Break the cleanup into individual tasks:

It makes the toughest job seem less daunting.

- Become a clutter consultant:

Offer to organize homework or buy plastic bins for c.d.'s

- Lighten up:

Don't let a messy bed come between you and your child. You're not trying to raise Martha Stewart, just a happy kid!