

# Clearing Clutter in a Pandemic

Gentle Guidance from Clutter Coach and Journal Therapist Carolyn Koehnline of [Gentle Approach Coaching](#)



What a time we're living in.

Some of us are on the front lines of this crisis. Some are scrambling to do work in a new way. Maybe you, like many, are finding yourself sequestered at home, with unexpected, unstructured time. If so, you may be thinking, "What a perfect time to clear clutter. Now I can do every unfinished thing on my to-do list."

Before you put that pressure on yourself and dive into your most overwhelming cluttered areas, here are some thoughts about how to bring gentleness to the process, inviting your journal to be a supportive companion along the way.



## **Start by Clearing Some Internal Clutter**

Don't expect yourself to be constantly productive or consistently plucky and optimistic. In a single day, I notice that I can be hopeful, grief-stricken, grateful, angry, and courageous. I can also be both terrified and curious about where all this will take us. We are all recalibrating, taking in new information every day, catching up to changes, losses, restrictions, and unexpected blessings.

Self-judgement is a kind of clutter. It will only get in the way. I encourage you to practice compassion with whatever thoughts and feelings come and go. Reach for people (at a safe distance or within your germ bubble), pets, poems, nature, music, and anything else that calls out your best self and helps you be kinder to yourself. Or reach for your journal and invite it to be the kind listening ear or voice of reassurance that you need. Even taking a few minutes to describe your feelings can help clear some internal clutter and help you feel more able to focus and function.



### **Identify Doable Projects.**

These days, we tend to be especially aware that our lives are full of uncertainties. There are so many big events that we can't control. One way or another, we're experiencing limits and losses, big and small. So, not every project is appropriate right now. Some may be too unwieldy and chaotic. Some may leave you too emotionally raw. I encourage you to start with projects that feel calming to work on, can be completed fairly quickly, and will give you some peace of mind to accomplish.

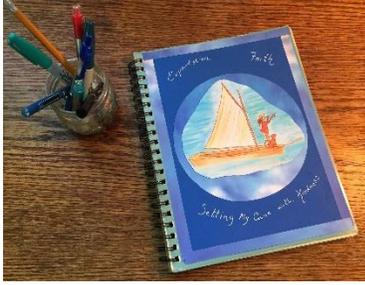
You might want to begin by opening to a fresh page of your journal and listing some possible projects. Even small acts of transformation can be uplifting and help you feel more comfortable in your home. *Organize a sock drawer. Clear some emails. Create an emergency kit. Write a letter. Mend some clothes. Fold some laundry. Glue some things that are broken.*



### **Consult Your Hat.**

If you're not sure which project to start with, make a list of twelve things it would be helpful to accomplish. Number the list and throw corresponding numbers into a hat. Then draw one randomly. Whatever you pick, that's the project you work on. When you've completed that project, you can declare yourself done for the day, or choose another item from the hat.

This strategy can keep you from overwhelming yourself or spinning your wheels. You are giving yourself permission to do one thing at a time instead of everything at once. What a relief! For fun, you can also throw in other kinds of items. *Read a chapter of my novel. Spend an hour with my watercolors.*



### **Have Regular Dates with Your Journal.**

Once you've accomplished some smaller clutter-clearing projects you may feel you're ready to take on bigger ones. I strongly suggest you break them down into smaller steps, take breaks, and pace yourself. And plan on regular dates with your journal along the way.

Clearing clutter is a powerful thing to do. Making clear choices about what to keep and what to release from your home, head, heart, and schedule can be a way of bringing order to chaos and saying needed goodbyes to open space for new beginnings. It can give you a feeling of forward movement and empowerment at a time when you might otherwise feel stuck or in limbo. It can also be physically, mentally, and emotionally challenging.

Let your journal be your own private place to make your plans, find clarity when you start to get overwhelmed or confused, express your feelings, and celebrate your victories. Don't forget to invite it into your process. I have no doubt it will be ready and willing to help you.

Carolyn Koehline, LMHC, CJT offers coaching and online classes in transitions, clutter clearing, befriending time, and creating a more artful life. Visit [www.GentleApproachCoaching.com](http://www.GentleApproachCoaching.com) for more information. You can access her online school, "A Gentle Approach to Clutter" [here](#). And click here for her [free monthly newsletter](#).

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