

Staying Organized Through A Health Crisis

You hear the words “you have cancer” and the bottom falls out of your stomach. Your age or economic status doesn’t keep you safe. You worry how you are going to get through it. A tough road ahead can be made easier by knowing and accepting the journey for what it is right from the beginning. Also, by maintaining balance in your normal day-to-day routine through some organized systems.

Whether you are the patient or caretaker, clearing the *physical, paper, technical and mind clutter* will enable you to concentrate on the task at hand...dealing with your health.

Managing a home while undergoing a health crisis of any kind can seem like an impossible feat, but it’s important to maintain as much of a routine as possible.

- Physical clutter can be overwhelming to look at and causes stress (“I should be doing something with that stuff”) so eliminate as much physical clutter (piles of things, cluttered countertops and tables, laundry piles, toys, etc.) as possible.
- Give up perfectionism; focus on necessities.
- Do only what is physically possible to do.
- Consider outsourcing what you can’t do.
- Say “YES” to help - accept help from friends and family-it’s important to them to be part of journey – but set your boundaries – i.e., when, if and how much help you need or want.
- Arrange daily medicines in daily pill organizers; use a different colored organizers if pills are needed for morning, afternoon or evening.
- Be aware of what can and cannot be eaten; employ help with menu planning and grocery shopping and maybe cooking.
- Select a spokesperson to channel questions, meals, visits, etc. For instance, if there are only two of you perhaps only one or two meals a week will be ample – this will eliminate a lot of waste and overstuffed refrigerators and counters. If you have visitors, you can request more servings per meal or even more frequent meals.
- Replace expensive, dry-clean-only bed and chair coverings with washable ones.

- Know if flowers are allowed in the house or not; remove dead flowers immediately.
- Assign household cleaning tasks to other family members; to avoid stirring up dust around the patient, cleaning times can be scheduled when they are in another part of the house.
- Create a bedroom that is serene and relaxing.
- Have tapes, books and magazines of interest available to fill idle moments.