

# Make 2022 **YOUR** “Shiny” New Year

## ORGANIZE AND DECLUTTER YOUR HOME

Although we make resolutions in the New Year about many things (losing weight, exercising more, getting out of debt, breaking a bad habit, etc.), we often overlook one thing that will not only benefit us mentally, but will also motivate us to be more productive in other tasks: decluttering and organizing our homes.

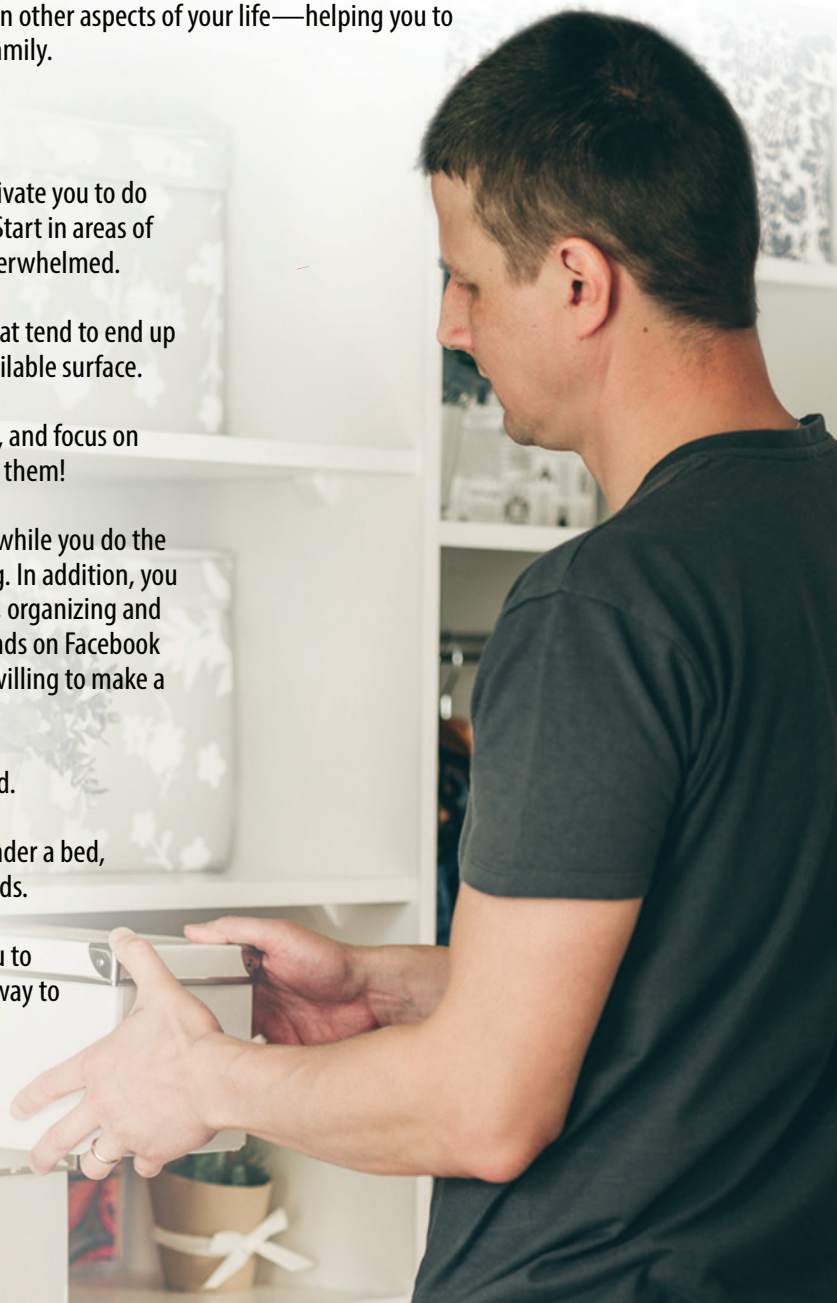


Many people will start the year with new plans for achieving big goals, improving ourselves and personal growth. But a messy and disorganized home can derail these efforts by distracting you, causing stress and preventing you from fully relaxing when you are home. It can also affect your physical health. Piles of clothes and other debris can contribute to dust, pest invasion, mold, and mildew (where damp items have accumulated) and may trigger allergies as well as asthma in susceptible people; it may also create a fire hazard.

A great way to start the new year is by taking the time to declutter and organize; the mental boost and satisfaction from doing this can motivate you further toward your more formal goals and plans. Organization also has been shown to reduce stress, depression, and anxiety. It frees up your time and energy to focus on other aspects of your life—helping you to be more productive, and with more time for yourself, friends and family.

*Here are some tips for organizing and decluttering your home:*

- Start small – small success will give you confidence and motivate you to do more. Set a timer for 15-20 minutes and stop when it rings. Start in areas of your home that are easiest to organize to avoid becoming overwhelmed.
- Clear all flat surfaces and find permanent homes for items that tend to end up there. Often items without a “place” get stuck on the first available surface.
- Make a list of the top 5 areas in your home that get cluttered, and focus on those first. Be sure to check them off the list as you complete them!
- Get outside help - hire someone to just do the difficult tasks while you do the others. There are people for hire who are expert at organizing. In addition, you can often find people who will help with a range of cleaning, organizing and other tasks on an hourly basis. (And don't forget all your friends on Facebook who may have a college student home for the holidays and willing to make a few bucks!)
- If you can afford it, buy a robot vacuum to ease your workload.
- Look for under-utilized places you can use for storage, like under a bed, the area behind doors, under stairways, and above headboards.
- Invest in clear storage bins and baskets – the bins enable you to easily see what is inside, while the baskets are an attractive way to store items you don't need to see all the time.
- Make use of vertical space – there are plenty of items that can be stored vertically, as well as hung on a hook! Consider using over-the-door shoe organizers and hooks for easy, out-of-the way storage.





## ORGANIZE AND DECLUTTER YOUR HOME *continued.*

- Do you have large items taking up space? Consider donating them. There are nonprofits who will pick up large items at your home. There are also companies who will remove “junk” for a fee; just google “junk removal”.
- If you find broken items, fix them or get rid of them. Don’t put it away to fix later!
- If you’re trying to organize a large area and find it overwhelming, ask for help from a family member, a good friend, or a volunteer helper.
- Take 10-15 minutes at the end of a day to put away stray items that are out of place. This step will prevent you from building up even more clutter.
- Get the family involved. It’s not your job to clean everyone’s messes; let them share the workload and enjoy the satisfaction of getting their own spaces organized.
- Designate a place for everything and use labels to remind yourself—and the whole family—where everything should be put.
- Create a catch-all “home” near the door. Designating a space to toss your keys, purse, sunglasses, etc. as soon as you get home can help keep daily clutter from accumulating.
- If you have difficulty deciding about sorting your clutter, label cardboard or plastic boxes with these categories: Things to donate, Things to throw away or recycle, Things to keep, and (possibly) Things to sell.
- Don’t allow yourself to become sidetracked by looking at old magazines or other items that steal your focus.
- Pro tip: Take before and after photos, so you can see how much progress you’ve made. It’s also a great way to remember how you organized things, which helps keep to the new habits and methods you’ve chosen.

## Warm up your winter with CAULIFLOWER SOUP

*There's nothing better on a cold day than a piping-hot, fresh cup of soup. This month we've found a great one by **Christy Denney**, cookbook author and blogger at **The Girl Who Ate Everything** (<https://www.the-girl-who-ate-everything.com>). Check out this delicious, warming and easy-to-make soup and check out her blog for even more healthy recipes.*

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 medium head cauliflower, broken into florets (about 5-6 cups)
- 1 medium carrot, shredded (about 1 cup)
- 1/4 cup chopped celery
- 1/4 cup chopped onion
- 2-1/2 cups chicken broth
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 3/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon pepper
- 2 cups 2% milk
- 1 cup (4 ounces) shredded cheddar cheese
- 1/2 to 1 teaspoon hot pepper sauce, optional

### INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 In a large pot, combine the cauliflower, carrot, celery, onion, and chicken broth. Bring mixture to a boil then reduce heat; cover and simmer for 12-15 minutes or until vegetables are tender (do not drain). The liquid will barely cover the veggies.
- 2 In another large saucepan, melt the butter for the roux. Stir in the flour, salt and pepper until smooth. Whisk the milk in slowly. Bring to a boil over medium heat; cook and stir the mixture for 2 minutes or until thickened. Reduce heat. Stir in the cheese until melted. Add hot pepper sauce if desired. Stir into the cauliflower mixture until combined.
- 3 Puree about 2 1/2 cups of the soup in the blender and pour back into the soup. This makes the soup extra creamy.

