

CLOSET THERAPY

Organize your closet, organize your mind. Expert tips to unclutter (and transform) your closet. BY INGRID SCHMIDT

“I’m all about visual clearance. I believe that if you have a clear closet, you have a clear way to start the day,” says freelance fashion editor/closet organizer extraordinaire Maria Santoro. And given her client list, which includes nearly every major fashion magazine from *Harper’s Bazaar* to *Town & Country*, we’ll follow her lead. Santoro’s

original mission was stylist for fashion shoots and editorial portraits. “But when I went to an editor’s home, I would see her closet and usually it just wasn’t working. So I said, ‘Let me organize your closets. Let me organize you. Let me see what we need and what we should take away’ and I sort of fell into this business. You’d be surprised, but most people live in a complete

and utter mess of clutter!” Sadly, no surprise. But a collective sigh of relief to learn that the closets of these high-style goddesses are also in disarray.

Tip #1: The key to purging your overpacked closet. “The deciding factor is that if something doesn’t fit you well, it’s not going to stay,” says Santoro. “Spiegel’s



Signature Luxury Fabrics are great because many are stretchy and work with your body type, which saves you lots of effort. They’ll retain the fit, even with slight weight fluctuations.”

Tip #2: Overcome the not-to-purge urge by giving a little bit. “Give those things that don’t mean anything in your life anymore to someone who can use it,” says Santoro, suggesting Dress For Success or another charitable cause. If you have a really spectacular piece that you can’t bear to give away and want to save for a niece or friend or grandchild, “It’s not gonna stay in your closet—out of sight, out of mind” she says. Pack it away pronto in a vacuum-seal storage bag or labeled archival box.

Tip #3: It’s all about seeing what you have. Santoro recommends transparent boxes and organizers. “And lots of people don’t like to hang clothes on the door, but I think it’s a terrible waste of space if you don’t,” she says. “I like a system of seeing what I have. When you’re running in the morning, you don’t have time to go into a drawer and look. I love bangles. If I can see them quickly, I put them on. If I don’t know I have something, I’m not gonna wear it.” And she’s not into folding. “If you have room, hang your sweaters. It saves time. People don’t want to spend the time to fold, so it’s going to be a mess and totally wrinkled.” Hang delicate knits on the cross bars.

Tip #4: The color coordination rule. “I’m very much about uniformity, everything matching,” says Santoro. “You can do unique boxes or baskets in different fabrics and shapes. But pick out a color or two, and

a theme, and stick with it! It creates order. And it looks so good that you feel good about keeping it up.” Or why invest the time and effort?

Tip #5: Pack your bags in advance! Santoro always keeps two bags packed with ready-to-go essentials, such as toiletries, pjs and lingerie—one for warm weather and one for her average weekend escape. “It’s a bit over-the-top,” admits Santoro, “but when you return from a trip, you may as well repack because it will save time and create order.”

Tip #6: Organize miscellaneous clutter. Designate one of your color-coordinated boxes or baskets as a catch-all. “So at least you have one orderly bin. Then, when you have the time, while watching television, you can fold those sweaters or iron or do some mending,” says Santoro.

Tip #7: Decorate your closet as a sanctuary and inspiration space.

The average closet is painted blah white. But why neglect this room, where many women spend a majority of their time? Santoro suggests elegant wallpaper or a fun hue of paint. “Why not have a hint of color to add some cheeriness in the closet?” she says. Her other trick is to create makeshift “wallpaper” by tacking up inspirational fashion tear sheets from magazines and other sources. “Create a mood board of fabulous clothes—great looks that you wouldn’t think to create, as a reminder of fun, interesting ways to put things together.”

Book a personal closet organizing appointment with Maria: 917-817-8884 or santorom@mac.com. See more organizing ideas at spiegel.com



Dream closet by Poliform, Maria’s top pick for her celebrity clientele.

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“These are like an extra set of drawers, and they’re \$10 each! Use one for sweaters, one for socks, one for belts, one for toys. Leave one open as a catch-all to quickly toss things into for later.”

Collapsible Tote Bins, 3-pc. set DH64291 \$30



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