The Heart Loves A Clean Space: Why Decluttering Matters Transcript

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Summit Welcome and Introduction

Hey, everyone. Doctor Eric Slansky here. And welcome to the Heart Attack and Stroke Prevention and Recovery Summit. I'm absolutely thrilled to be part of this life transforming event.

There's been carefully designed to give you and your loved ones the natural living tips that you need to enjoy a long, healthy life. This is information your doctor will not be telling you about.

So please clear away distractions and get ready to take lots of notes. No joke, you'll not find this collection of practical, natural solutions anywhere else online.

From avoiding hand and toxins in your home that are damaging your heart to easy natural product swaps to simplifying lifestyle habits, each expert will empower you with simple, money saving tips that put your heart health back in your hands.

And remember to keep this life changing knowledge at your fingertips. Be sure to grab the summit recordings and bonus materials for ongoing support in your journey to a heart healthy, abundant life.

And today, I'm thrilled to introduce you to a good friend and colleague of mine, Heather Artemis. Heather founded the School of Living Lighter with the goal of creating an example of what's possible in our lives when we intentionally choose to go lighter.

As a board certified coach and expert and behavior change. She guides her community towards breakthroughs by helping them clear the clutter in their minds and their bodies, and in their homes, so that they too can focus on what matters most and live lighter lives with fewer regrets.

Her lighter thinking has been featured on a wide variety of health and wellness platforms, health summits, podcasts and more. You can check out her work at School of Living Lighter that. Com.

Now get ready for a light conversation with Heather. Well, Heather, thanks so much for being here with us today. Super excited. I'm excited as well. Thank you so much for having me.

I just want to say I love you. I absolutely love you as a friend, as a person, as a colleague. We've developed just a sweet relationship. The last few years and just a big virtual hug.

And I just wanted to begin this whole experience with just love. Let's just invite love and friendship to this discussion. I just want to say I receive, I will be off.

And thank you so much. That's, when somebody offers a gift, it's the natural inclination to say, oh, no, oh no. And I just want to say, that's clever in a sense, not accepting a gift.

Clutter, Regret, and the Cost of Autopilot

And I receive. Thank you so much for your kind words. Love you too. So, folks, and this can be a different kind of talk. Everything we do here is evidence based.

It's it's based off of fact. It's based off of tradition. Based off of the most, most cutting edge research. And I just want to impress upon everyone the significant health risks.

Associated with clutter and clutter in a way that you might not be thinking about clutter. It's just not that stack of papers in the corner. There's so much more.

And I have the cluttering expert that you need to listen to and from the very heart focus this should be. And hopefully you feel a lighter aspect to this, because everything that Heather does is making things lighter.

This is not scripted. Heather. I have a lot of things I want to talk about. I want to pick your brain in a way that I haven't picked your brain before.

It's kind of neat being on this side of the microphone. We've talked his friends, we've talked to his colleagues. But, I have some other thoughts that I want to bring to the table, but, how do you want to begin?

You know, you just brought up that clutter is not just that pile of papers. That clutter is so much more. And I think that's where we should start. I like to think of clutter as anything that gets between where we are and where we want to be.

I like to think of clutter as the distractions that are there. Are there acting as an obstacle, to us, leaning into our true selves. They are putting us on autopilot and many of us will be so distracted that before we know it, we've lived our lives and we have regret.

And so that's what I'm here to do, is to help people realize what are the distractions, so that there is less and less regret. Eric, have you heard of Bronny?

Where? No, I have Ronnie. Okay, so, Bronny, where was a palliative care nurse in Australia, and she spent 20 years with people in their last weeks of life.

Excuse me. And she listened. And she listened to their stories. And she heard themes, common themes from all of these people that she spent time with.

And the number one regret of the dying was that I didn't live a life that was true to myself. Another regret. I lost touch with my friends. Another I didn't share my feelings.

Well. And so to me, clutter is what gets in between where we are and these lives. This potential that we have. And so if we can get off of autopilot, live intentionally, I think there will be a lot less regret at the end of our days.

Amen. Amen, Amen. I, I want to unpack that in just a second. In the meantime, I want to show you guys, I think it'd be a good point to show you something here.

What we're looking at is recent research and evaluation of the research from Psychology Today. Connecting clutter with cortisol and mental load. And in the context of heart attack and stroke prevention and recovery in the context of all chronic disease.

Cortisol is something we need to be careful of. The stress hormone. Yeah. And I want us to unpack a little bit because here we have some pretty pointed facts that we all need to be aware of, especially if you are a woman watching this or listening, because studies have shown spikes in cortisol related to clutter in the home only, let alone what we're going to unpack as well, because there's clutter of the spirit, there's clutter of the mind.

There's other concepts. Clutter is is very abstract. It's what Heather just shared. Women are affected more than men. For in. I would love for you to touch base on that. Why?

Why are we made differently? Right. And women are more likely to feel that they carry the burden of fixing. So, folks, when it comes down to it, and this is something that I really am hoping that you all leave feeling lighter and feeling that you have a guide.

And Heather, here's my challenge to you is yes, I want to tickle everyone's cortical area. I want everyone to be like wow, wow. I love the moments. We all like the light bulb, but what's the point if we don't know what to do?

And one thing I've tried my best the last ten years of being online is to get people practical how to like, okay, this is

the problem, but here's the solution.

Clutter, Cortisol, and Women's Stress Response

So what my challenge to you is we need to give people some really good action steps. When they leave, they have okay, I know what to do now. I love the next step mentality.

And then maybe here's what you do two, three, four steps down the line. So let's unpack this thing around cortisol. Let's unpack this. What about women?

I would love for you to teach. I don't want to interrupt you. Go as long as you want. Just educate us on this. All such an important topic. And so there is both a physiology and a psychology to clutter and that study that you just pulled up or that Psychology Today article was referencing some ethnographic research that was done in California.

And what the study found was that anyone who perceived clutter. If they perceived that clutter their cortisol, their stress hormone, went through the roof and the corresponding language that they were using when there was a spike of cortisol were terms like my house is cluttered.

Clearly my, house has a lot of projects that aren't done. It feels chaotic. It feels heavy. And so the perception was key. Now, there were some men that perceived clutter as well and had similar cortisol spikes.

However, in general it was much more the women that perceived the clutter. And so there can be some societal factors to this. So, up until the 50s, 60s, it was the woman's job to stay home, maintain the house.

And so some of that is still, I know when I in my own house, I care more about the appearance then my two young sons or my husband. If somebody is going to drop by, I want to make sure things look decent.

And so I think a lot of women have similar thoughts as I do, because the state of your home, even though the state is neutral, we create story out of it.

We create meaning out of it. And the meaning that I create is if I have an orderly home, then all is well. But if I have a disheveled home, then that means there's a lot of chaos and and usually the way a home looks is kind of a mirror image of what's going on inside the head as well.

Excuse me. What's that saying about hoarders? Like, I'm just thinking, like, what's going on through their head? I mean, we have a very close family friend.

A pathological hoarding condition. You. There's a little pathway, literally, a two foot pathway that you could walk through the living room because everything is stacked to the ceiling. It's that bad?

They never, ever invite people to their home because you can't have people to your home kind of thing. And that brings up a whole nother topic. So you're saying projecting that onto the brain, like.

Wow, absolutely. And so with hoarders, hoarders absolutely want to work with a mental health professional. That is, that is that is very, very serious.

But there are a lot of us in this middle ground. So we're not hoarders, but we have a lot of stuff, and the stuff can feel heavy. And so when it feels heavy, anytime you notice that heavy feeling in your body, think about the physiology.

Think about the physiology that is your cortisol. And when we feel heavy, we don't tend to make decisions that are going to serve us. And so I had mentioned there's a psychology declutter as well.

So let's say I come home, open the door. And there are things everywhere. I am more likely going to. Go into the kitchen, find a bowl of ice cream, find something unhappy or unhappy.

Ha unhealthy than I am to go get my dog and go take a walk. And the house is clean and serene and I come home. It's going to feel light, and I'm going to go do something that's going to benefit my health and my well-being.

And so clutter absolutely impacts our decision making. There was a really interesting study where they took the participants half worked in a clean office, half worked in a messy office.

Upon leaving, they were offered a candy bar or an apple as an incentive. And that was the real research was what were they going to choose? If you worked in the clean office, you are twice as likely to choose an apple over the candy bar.

Our surroundings impact our decision making, and usually we're not even aware of it. But they absolutely impact how we show up for ourselves. It's a big deal.

It makes me think when I before I became a Christian, had I known if I told you this, been a Christian out for 22 years, and before that I lived a very reckless life, very unhealthy life, and it was precipitated.

I was self-medicate, depression, struggled with suicidal thoughts, anxiety. You know, I'll never forget I was a chain smoker for five years. Borderline alcoholic, teenage for through my young 20s, abusing narcotics like cocaine, other drugs.

And I will never forget, after going through a bender the night before. And there just. I don't remember a lot of that time, like, blacked out, just blacked out.

Practical Decluttering Mindset and Root Causes

I remember vividly this being on my porch at the time was renting a house and absolutely just hung over from the night before, miserable, feeling miserable and lighting up a cigaret, thinking to myself, this is not good for me.

Just I don't know why I had a lucid moment like cancer didn't necessarily worry me, but like this isn't good for my health. And I just remember thinking, who cares?

It doesn't matter. The self-loathing like. It was almost like a punishment. And it was very subconscious. Just realizing not just who cares, but I just hurt myself this last night doing what I just did.

It's this self-loathing, perpetuating behavior. And I think about that because what you just shared that research is, I resonate with that so much because positive breeds positive.

Negative breeds negative. There's it's how we're hard wired. And maybe you can relate to that. Maybe you can relate to overdoing it during the holidays.

And feeling gorged like you, you had a gluttonous moment and then waking up the next day, and then eating something bad and not doing what, you know, you should do.

Not going to the gym, not doing that self-care. But once you flip the script and this is where we want to shift a little bit, because this is where darkness can turn the light.

And I had my pivotal spiritual moment where it's like, I could change this. Like I felt like I couldn't. And there was something about my surroundings.

It was something about everything that you're saying. I can resonate with my friends, the people I were with, my surroundings, like, everything perpetuated darkness, everything perpetuated death.

And then once I flipped the script and God help me see the light, everything started perpetuating light. And it was like, oh, light breeds light. Positive breeds positive. So that makes all the sense in the world.

And I want to challenge everybody. When was that last moment where you did something that you knew wasn't good because of the situation that you were in?

Like, did you choose that candy bar when you were in a very stressful, cluttered, physical or emotional moment? And then also think about those times when, like Heather saying, so Heather, is there a tip or two?

I think this would be a great time to be like, how do you how do you shift that? Like, how do you what do you got to do? Like what is it? Is it literally moving one piece of paper?

I mean, in this rightful spot, like, what is the tipping point? Give us the tipping point because there's got to be a moment. Absolutely. So what you're describing is a net negative.

So you're going to blunder and then you'll shame yourself afterwards for it. That's two negatives. When in reality you went and you had some drinks. And that's the fact of it. And you can look at that moment and shame yourself.

And usually that shame will lead to more drinking. Or you can look at that and say, I'm human and I'm ready for something different, and I want to open up the door to possibility. I.

I stopped drinking 9 or 10 years ago. I realized that clutter of that clutter, that alcohol was clutter in my body. I didn't like how I felt after I drank it.

And I told myself, Heather, you drink enough in the first half of your life to last you for the rest of your life. You are good. And it was easy for me to let go of the alcohol which I you know, I don't think it really benefits many people or anybody.

And it was easy for me because I told myself I was complete. My life is now complete. I don't need any more alcohol, I am complete, I can let this go.

And that just felt so much lighter. And I will tell you, since I stopped drinking, I put my foot in my mouth a lot less and there are so many other benefits I've never regretted once not drinking and drinking is neutral.

No judgment for me. Everybody gets to make their own decision. And so we just talked about the negative, which is mind clutter. We do something and then we're embarrassed about it or ashamed.

And that that embarrassment and that shame clutter, they're not useful. They're not helpful unless unless they wake us up to the realization that things can be different, that if we show up differently, we will have new opportunities.

And so where do we start when it comes to clutter? Physical clutter, tangible clutter? I like to say that the best place to start before you start, because what happens if one excuse me, what happens is that we'll start decluttering.

We'll move things from one room to another, the job will feel too big and we'll stop, and then we'll shame ourselves. So there's that net negative, right? We'll.

We'll tell ourselves I couldn't keep going. And you know, I'll never get this done. So before we do that, what we want to do is actually get to the root cause of why we have clutter.

Why do I have clutter? What was my childhood like? What was the relationship that my parents had with things? Was I allowed to have my own things? Did I move around a lot?

Did my things become my friends? Did I name my things? As an adult, if you've named your things, it's going to be so much harder to let them go because they become your friends.

And so, before actively decluttering, we want to get to the root cause. Why do I have clutter? And one of my favorite exercises to do this. Might sound a little corny, but it's so powerful.

It's so powerful. You write yourself a letter and it goes like this. Dear Heather, I am clutter and this is what I want you to know. And then you put pen to paper so it's better if you don't type it.

But pen to paper or pencil. The paper and you just let everything come out. Writing this letter can be so cathartic and people will send me their letters and they are so rich, with so much meaning.

And in the letter is usually permission to move forward in a new way, one without judgment or shame or embarrassment. To move forward in a way where you actually make progress sustainable progress, and you really, truly begin to light in your home.

And when we light in our homes. We light in our hearts. We light in our communities. And we can shine brighter and brighter. So number one, get to the root cause.

Spend 30 minutes. Other. Usually people have so much fun with this. Eric. They'll spend an hour or two hours and it's it's it's an act of creation where.

So often we don't ask ourselves what matters most to us or what's most important to us. Well, think about other people and what matters most to them. But this is a moment.

Writing this letter. It's an opportunity to get to know yourself better, to have an understanding for why you've shown up the way you have, and then to move forward from a clean place, a clean and creative place.

So we're linking this to heart disease. We're linking this to stroke, heart attack, and then linchpin in this whole thing. And there's a lot more to be said about it.

Physical Decluttering Strategies That Work

We're, we're we're really hinging on the fact that when you and this is something that I didn't know, and this is where my mind was blown if you perceive because, like my father always said, one of the wisest things he's always told me is perceptions reality.

Yeah. In every aspect of life. And if you perceive clutter in your life, emotional, mental and we're we're going to hinge a lot on the physical aspect because that is something that is probably the easiest thing to fix.

Emotional. Spiritual clutter can take time. You might need a professional to help guide you, but physical clutter oftentimes, if you can get to the root cause and even make those steps to clean things up, and I don't want to use the wrong terminology here.

Because not all clutter is dirty, but. Right. I want to respect that too, because this is a new world. So I want to be very sensitive to my words. But when we're looking at cortisol and perceiving something as clutter, here's the list.

High blood pressure, cardiovascular events. You have an increased risk of 90% increase of cardiovascular events if you have raised cortisol, plaque buildup, blood clotting, and in general, unhealthy behaviors.

And this is what's interesting. People under stress tend to just that whole situation. It's it's this, this self-loathing. I would I really say that it's this punishment.

It's this regret. It's this double negative net net negative mindset where you're not deserving of it. You feel somehow convince ourselves that this little high, this little spike of sugar, this little whatever can get me through a moment.

But these unhealthy attitudes, because of this constant stress and this is low level stuff, and this is where I want to land for just a second, because.

This isn't like a you walk in the door and everything just like crap hit the fan like this takes time. It takes time to

clutter. I'm assuming, right? Cluttering is a chronic disease.

It's not like boom, you wake up and your house is cluttered. It's like slowly. I would love to unpack this chronic idea because it could take time to undo it.

But as you slowly create unfortunate a cluttered life over months, the years, it's this low grade level of cortisol that's constant. And this is why I really wanted to feature you in this discussion.

Heather of Heart Attack and Stroke. Because the first symptom of a heart attack is a heart attack. Like you're too late and it's these things that happen throughout.

So we have people that discuss phthalates and people that discuss heavy metals and people that discuss pesticides and all these little physical chemicals that are everywhere around us.

That's creating cortisol, cortisol, cortisol, spike and stress, baking stress physically. And now we're adding another layer that people aren't even considered.

So this is the the reality is that it's little micro micro stress moments that are constant. And whether it's in your car, your home, your office, like what are what are some things that people can do to really feel like they got a big win?

I would love someone to walk away like, look, this is what I need to do now and this is how I can get a big win. And it and I don't know what that could be.

And I mean, you go project by project, you go I mean, what how do you start. How do you start to climb? There are definitely some do's and don'ts and.

Okay. Some people you know might disagree. This can get a little I not contentious, but there's a very popular decluttering person out there and she recommends you go category by category.

So as I say this just imagine what is having happening to the nervous system. Let's say the category is clothing. Let's say you take all of the clothes in your home and put them on top of your bed.

You have a mound of clothes on top of the bed. You just spend an hour gathering all the clothes, and you look at that mound of clothes and you feel overwhelmed and you feel, oh my gosh, I'm exhausted.

I'm fatigued, and I haven't even begun. That mound of clothes usually stays there for months and months. People don't go back to sleeping in their own bed and don't know what to do.

So if we think about decluttering from a nervous system perspective, we don't want to do category by category. Most of us can't tolerate that too hard.

The job is to beg instead what the research says, rooted in something called the progress principle, is that we want to go room to room, easiest to hardest, starting in the most lived in spaces.

And so the progress principle tells us if we make a little progress, we're going to see that, get excited and keep going. And so that is the recommendation for most people.

Now some people have a nervous system. They can tolerate a mound of clothing on a bed. It's no problem. It's a weekend project. They declutter, they're happy.

But most of us, when we see that mound of clothing, it's so overwhelming that we shut the door and we don't go back into the bedroom and we sleep on the couch for months.

I don't want that to happen to anybody. Instead, you go, you start with the low hanging fruit. And you get some wins and then you keep going. That is where you start.

And once you build those muscles and these are these are muscles that we need to strengthen, right. Once you start building those muscles one encourage people.

Because I've recently gone through a scenario where I had that proverbial wow, I have a lot to do, which is overwhelming. And I flip the script in my head pretty quick and I was like, I celebrated each individual micro step in that process, and next thing you know, it was a longer project.

It got done and I was able to be like, okay, let's just, you know, chopping wood, chopping the tree down, like, let's just celebrate the first strike of the ax being done the right way.

And that would have overwhelmed me years and years and years ago. But it's just because the muscles I've been developing these decluttering muscles and same thing with work, emotional work, spiritual work that needs to be done.

It's like when you have this monumental task and, and I want to encourage people because this is something Heather, I've been saying for many, many years.

You start with the lowest hanging fruit, and I always go back to the cherry tree example of me having the task of this huge cherry tree at my in-laws, and me and my boys and my daughter now at Bella, who helps.

We would pick the cherries in the cherry tree. That was our job every summer visiting family Michigan. It's overwhelming. Like thousands and thousands and thousands of cherries and you start low hanging fruit.

You don't even get the stepladder. You don't get the six foot ladder, you don't get the extension ladder. You start what you could pick on the ground.

And once you're done, celebrate that. Now get a little ladder in three foot step ladder. Now get the bigger ladder and then you climb up the tree. Next thing you know, it's done exactly right.

Exactly. Yes, that's the little steps. You break it down and it makes it so much easier. And here's another little tip. Don't up if you can help it. Don't touch the things.

When we touch things, we create an emotional connection. And it's harder to let go. And so if you want to touch things, put on a pair of thin gloves. It breaks the emotional connection.

Very powerful. Also people will say to me well I don't what if I don't know. What if I don't know if I should keep things are not in a cluttered home.

Doesn't necessarily have to mean a dirty home. It just means there's a lot of stuff there, a lot of stuff that you don't want. But it's hard to let go so hard and so a question.

It's a simple question. Yeah. It's so powerful.

Decision-Making, Peace, and Letting Go

You can ask yourself when you're looking at something, does this thing feel lighter, heavy? If it's light, it's right. You keep it. If it's heavy, that's your answer that there's a story there and you can get curious about the story.

So for example, let's say your grandparents passed away or your parents did, and now you have a lot of their things and you know what you like and you know what you don't like.

And usually when we inherit households or things, there are very few things that we actually like. Well, we keep the things we like because they feel like.

But the other things are hard to let go because of the story that was my mom's or that was my grandpa's or

whatever that story was. They would be upset if I got rid of something.

That's a common sentence in people's heads, however. So if something feels heavy, you get curious what is that story? And is that story true? And would those people who have passed away want me to feel stressed about getting rid of something?

Or they want me to just let you know, get rid of it? If I didn't want it, would they want me to keep something that I, I didn't like that was theirs. And so you can use that question as you declutter.

Does it feel lighter, heavy light? You keep it heavy. You either modify it so that you do like it and it feels light or you don't need it. You let it go.

Sometimes people say, well, what does light feel like? Because we're so disconnected from asking ourselves these types of things. To me, light feels like a hack. Yes, and we know it immediately.

It's a hack. Yes. Anything else that's not a hack? Yes. Is it? No. And we can make it real simple. So as humans we have this complexity bias where it's natural for us to subconsciously make things as complicated as possible.

And so what this question does is that it helps bring us back to our intuition so that we can move forward in a way that feels light and right. And this way decluttering, which to me feels heavy and hard, can become fun and it can become it can become a project where we get to know ourselves better.

It can become a project that I will say for me, was one of the most important projects of my adult life and the most meaningful as well. Decluttering doesn't have to be annoying or hard or heavy, or this thing I have to do to feel happy, to feel healthier.

It gets to be this experience, this journey, this adventure that helps me experience more vibrancy than I can even imagine. It can be one of the best decisions of our adult lives.

It really can. There's a Bible verse book of Psalms. Let me read it here. Psalm 3414 turn from evil and do good. Seek peace and pursue it. I want to leave you with this thought, and it sounds like what you're sharing here is this lighter feeling.

It's a peaceful feeling. And as you're talking, and I hope you all are looking at your life, I hope you just open to this. Just this is more of a an experiential kind of discussion if you allow it to be as is.

Heather speaking, I think about one of the areas of clutter that I struggle with is, is. Packing for a trip and selecting the clothes, I very much resonate.

And not just that, but selection, choosing things, very interesting. Clothes selection is very hard for me and I don't know why. Going into the store, I remember a few years ago I was at the store for like two hours trying to buy a pair of pants.

Just paralysis by analysis. Yet other things I can make a quick decision on. And I could resonate with Steve Jobs and those other people who wore the same exact thing every day, because it takes away that that clutter.

Yeah. And I want to share that with you because as you're talking, I think about that own struggle I have and it's I don't think it's going to go away like I've thankfully my solution is, is Ben, my wife and Sabrina loves dressing me.

She loves if you notice our pictures, if you're a part of our newsletter, if you go to our website, you notice a lot of times, most of the time you see my family photo.

We're coordinating why? Because that's Sabrina's thing. She loves it. She loves that control aspect. She loves being able to dress this all up. And I'm like, great.

Like she does it for me. And at first I fought it and now I embraced it. So now if I say, hey, we're going on a trip like we have an anniversary trip coming up, I know that she's got my clothes picked out and all I have to do is fold it in packet.

Yeah. So I want to leave you with this. The feeling I get, I have it in my gut. It's it's overwhelm. It's it's darkness. There's anxiety. This is this is the heaviness that Heather's talking about when you're making that decision whether or not to keep something or not.

If you don't have light, if you don't have peace like peace, seek peace and pursue it. And anything that's not a peace isn't from God. That's that's from my spiritual background.

Anyone who resonates with biblical teaching seek peace. And if there's no peace, let it go. And even the decision of whether or not to keep it. If there's anxiety now, let it go.

Like that's how I'm interpreting what you're saying. And if that's the case, boy, you could burn through things pretty quick. It's like boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom.

If you feel that I call it darkness, you call it heaviness. It's just an ugly feeling. And the thing is this, folks, it's literally a visceral feeling.

It's a physical feeling. You can feel it in the pit of your stomach, in your body, because that's the cortisol. That's literally the stress response to your body.

It's this ooh, like, right. If you feel that that could be that that help, that support. Heather, talk to us. Talk to the deniers out there. Talk to those people.

You know, as we land the plane here slowly, like, this is 20,000ft. The pilot's like, hey, we're a half an hour away. We're descending, so we're slowly descending.

Talk to people in denial right now. How do you really know? And if people are listening and open to. Maybe I have a problem potential that I have the cluttering issue.

What are some red flags? How do people who might not recognize it see it? Yeah. You know, so often, well, here's the thing. There's an equation that's out of balance.

We have so much stuff coming into our homes, and we have very little leaving the home. And it makes sense. It's a by now culture. By now with one click, Amazon makes it very, very easy, as do other companies.

And we have been sold this idea that buying things will solve all our problems. Now I'm not anti buying things, I buy things every day. It's the intention, the unintentional buying, the buying on autopilot, the I can't sleep at two in the morning.

So I'm just going to get on Amazon and buy some things. When we hit that buy now button, we get a dopamine hit. It feels good in that moment. And then when the things arrive at our house, we get another dopamine hit.

We open them up. Feels great, and then a week or 2 or 3 weeks later, we look around and we just feel so heavy because we realized we just bought a bunch of stuff that we're never going to use.

That feels heavy. I mean, 80% of the stuff we have, we don't use, and we've got so much that we'll spend a year of our lives looking for things because we can't find them.

Digital Clutter and Email Boundaries

And so. My suggestion is, number one, give yourself some compassion. Your human. Yep. Buy now culture okay. Give yourself compassion and then challenge yourself.

If I don't need something, do I need to buy it to feel better? We will use the act of shopping as a buffer because we don't want to feel whatever, whatever uncomfortable feeling is in front of us.

So, for example, growing up, I played on a softball team. If we won, we went got ice cream. If we lost, guess what we did? We went and got ice cream. Oh you lost.

That's so awful. Let's fix this by getting you some ice cream. The answer has always been you have a problem. Let's fix it by buying something. Well, what if instead, we leaned into the discomfort of possibly losing the softball game, got curious about it?

And when we get curious, maybe we decided to practice harder or learn something new, and then we play better the next time. And so number one, compassion.

Compassion. Number two, get curious about the potential in front of you. We know if we look to the right and the left and it feels heavy, then we've got clutter.

Think about how you feel Eric. When you let's say you go on a trip and you open the door to your hotel room. It's a nice hotel room and you walk in, you feel calm, you feel serene.

You feel that peace, right? Well, those hotel designers know what they're doing there. There's no clutter there. And so that peace is available to us all.

If we get curious about the clutter in our life. That piece, there's a fun acronym. And one of my clients made it up Homo Peace of Missing out. So the peace of not overfilling your calendar.

The peace of not buying the three for one when you only wanted one. The peace of creating a spacious feel, even if where you live is small. This peace is available to us all and is the perfect antidote to the FOMO, or the fear of missing out that is being sold to us by all of the advertising agencies and and and marketing companies out there.

Again, nothing wrong with buying things, but when we do it unintentionally and I'm guilty, there was a time in my life, Eric, I was young, I was in my early 20s.

I lived in an apartment, and there was a laundry machine in the basement, and the basement was icky and scary, and I don't want to go down there. And so do you know what I did instead?

Instead of washing my clothes, I would just drive to the store and buy another top. You know what? The next day, yes. Yes. Buy now culture. So let me tell you, I have evolved since then, have evolved.

I'm so grateful my eyes have opened. But this is available to us all. This, this piece. Some call it Jomo joy of missing out. As the antidote to the FOMO.

And for somebody who's like can it really make a difference? I'll tell you my mom, she's so sweet. She's so fun and she's always been a maximalist. She likes stuff.

She likes buying, she likes shopping and she likes supporting all of her art friends, big large art community. And she's a big supporter. And she told me once, Heather, I kind of need my clutter so that I can be creative.

And this is common. A lot of people will say clutter helps me be creative. What the research says is that you'll be much more creative if you are overloading the optic nerve with all the distracting stuff.

And so I told my mom, why don't you just have one quarter your house and you could call it your clutter corner for your creativity, but let the rest of the house.

Become an street because absolutely impacts our well-being. Absolutely. You're painting this picture in the physical world that I think makes sense. And I hope you agree.

We could translate to the digital. And you mentioned when you said dopamine hit, I immediately went to the research that has shown that the way that our brain works with and responds to notifications and cell phone alerts and what the devices have done through social media.

And just when you look at your screen, just the clutter that you see even having when you look at your screen, 5060 different notifications from 5060 apps, that's clutter.

And what happens is every time you get that notification, every time you get that response to the text message, every time you go on social media and you type, you get that dopamine it and it becomes very addictive.

And so I want to encourage you all to consider decluttering your phones specifically, and your any device that you use that have notifications and turn off all non-essential notifications.

The only notifications. And this has been it was huge for me. And once I learned this several years ago, the only notification I have now, or what I consider not necessary, that would be the message app in my phone app.

So any phone call or any text message. And I've limited my text messages other than the nonstop, spammers that somehow find my phone number, but my phone is reserved typically for my friends and family, so that's important to me.

I want to know when friends and family reach out, and I also want to know when someone calls. But when I go to my phone, you do not see mail, you do not see Facebook, do you do not see any notifications.

But when I go inside the app, I'm giving the app permission to notify me. And that was that was a big moment for me, for a lot of reasons, decluttering my screen.

So any other tips when it comes to technology? Because it appears that technology has been a huge source of clutter for people and a devious one because you don't realize it until next thing you know, your whole world is wrapped up in this thing.

Yes, yes, I love that you turn off your notifications, and I recommend that to everybody. Also decide ahead of time we'll take a moment and decide what relationship do I want with my technology?

Do I want to run my technology or do I want my technology to run me? And so I don't look at email first thing in the morning because my email represents everybody else's priority, not my priorities.

And so I get a clear understanding every morning when I wake up. What are the three most important things to me today to accomplish, to experience, to put in motion?

I think about those three most important things. I think about what I need to do to get those things moving. And then I go to email. And so often we think we have to look at email right away because it's there and we don't we don't.

We get to decide ahead of time what relationship do I want to have with my technology? So I turned off all my notifications. It drives my husband crazy, but he still loves me, he and my kids, so they kind of laugh like, well, I always ha getting a hold of mom.

But we get Ahold of each other when we need to, and so I turn it all off, especially if I need to focus. It just it just all goes off. Often with decluttering physical items, the recommendation is we'll just take a picture of everything because then at least you've got the picture.

I will tell you, I've taken a few pictures. Have I ever gone back to look at pictures that I've taken, of things that I let go of? Not once. And so we want to be careful.

Well, it's a choice. It's it. It's available to us all. We don't have to be careful about how much digital clutter I get. It's

perception. If it feels heavy, maybe there's some some cleaning up to do.

Back to email. There is a goal. Some have called Inbox Zero. Have you heard of that? Oh, I'm that guy. Are you inbox zero? Have you done that? I've been living it.

It's it's I have a reason for it. But that if what I understand I'm probably that guy. That's awesome. That's that's. Well, one of my friends who is a digital decluttering expert, she said something very powerful that really resonated with me.

She said, listen, your email is not designed to be a storage unit. And people will use email as a storage unit. And then it's, oh my gosh, they end up with a hundred thousand emails or more.

Yes. And so decide what what, relationship you want.

Productive Procrastination and Nervous System Reset

Unsubscribe is always an option. And, and think about how the storage unit thing, it goes back to the physical clutter. We will buy these things with hours of our lives and store them.

And they never see the light of day. And so ask yourself, do I want to keep on storing things in my storage unit or in my house? Or can I allow these things to move on to the next person who will actually embrace them, cherish them, use them, and love them?

And so, I believe life is lighter when we don't have a tight grip around our things. It's a more abundant mindset when we know that all of this is just an exchange of energy.

And what kind of energy do you want in your home? I choose light, yeah, light, light, light. Let go of that. The things that have that like low vibrational feel and just keep the things that have that high vibrational feel, you'll feel better.

You'll be healthier and probably happier. I worked at Dow Chemical in a previous life before I went down to Georgia to study chiropractic, and this was in 2007, 2008, 2009, and I had an email management, training, life changing, and something that may resonate with you all.

My inbox is my to do list. And they trained us at Dow Chemical because we would get massive amounts of email like that was that was I live and breathe tech at the time, and they helped us open up our eyes to a way of organizing your inbox so that what's in your inbox is your to do list.

And if you can't get to something immediately, you flag it as important. You got to hit. You got to get this done within 24, 40 hours. But those other things that once you're done or that aren't important, isn't a to do.

Put in a folder. And the folder could be a variety of things. I mean, it could be whatever it is. It could be a folder of any sorts of like an archive, essentially it's not important.

And when you look at my inbox right now, I typically always have less than 25 ish to 50 emails in my inbox. Everything else has been categorized. And typically I'll tell you after doing this for now, since two, you know, 2007 or something, nearing 20 years, I have very little.

Do I ever go back to those emails that I put in folders because they're done, they're checked off my list. But if ever I need something, it's in the archive.

But having when I go to the email and only seeing five to 10 to 15, 20 at the most emails and I have to go through it really helps the maintenance of it.

And if you're looking at 100,000 emails, you might be like, I can never do that. Well, you might just want to start from scratch, in a sense. And and you might need to spend some time, like Heather said, unsubscribing from 15

dozen newsletters other than mine and others.

Because you need our newsletters, by the way. But, a shameless plug. But think about that, because that is one area that I have found very helpful and beneficial.

But also it's a to do list. And Heather, I do this physically. My to do list is my little pile. It's my quote clutter, but it is my to do list. And I hate it so much that it's in front of me.

It's it's in a highly visible area. If I whether it's taxes to file paperwork for taxes or business stuff or whatever, I just keep on thinking taxes for some reason, like property taxes, whatever.

But if there's bills or anything that needs to be done in a timely fashion, I have my little stack and it's right there, front and center, and it's so much uncomfortable that I don't like it. I'm going to get it done really quick.

Sometimes I might, I might procrastinate or dare I say, hold off for a day or 2 or 3, but I do not have a big stack of whatever because it's in a highly visible area.

I don't want it, I don't need it, and it's just like my inbox. Once it's done, I file it away and and it's really helped me prioritize when I need to be doing right now.

And so as a thought, yeah, if you have some physical things that you want done, put it in an area that will bother you to get it done and get it done and give yourself some space and grace to get it done. But, you know, these little tricks overall all started with that email training.

I've been helpful for me. Maybe you y'all listening? I would love to hear your thoughts as well. So reach out to Heather and I because this is the fun thing about this is we share how we are managing because no one is immune to the situation that we're dealing with.

And if there's anything we could do in our home, in our heart and our mind or spirit to declutter and feel lighter, it's only going to help our heart.

It's going to help our body. It's going to help our mind in every way. So beautiful and and I love that you will put your little pile in a spot where you see it, and not forget about it.

That's that's really powerful. That's one of the the tricks of the trade. One thing I want to say is we don't it's it can be very helpful to create that little pile, and we don't have to address it right away.

What I like to call there's this term that I created. I am a productive procrastinator. Yep, I love it. Oh, maybe I don't address the pile of papers right away, but I'm doing other things and while I do those other things, I'm getting my nervous system to a good place so that when I do go to that pile, I can handle it without the overwhelm.

And so for anybody watching, listening, no net negative, no shaming yourself that you didn't take care of all the clutter right away. Listen to your body.

Ask yourself how you're feeling and do it when you feel good. Do it when you feel solid, grounded, and if you never feel grounded or solid, embrace some nervous system tools to get you to a better place.

One of my favorite things changing my state for two minutes. So going outside, putting my face towards the sun. Taking in some nice and house. And after I do that for about two minutes, I can tackle anything.

Yeah, and it can be fun. Remember decluttering lightning? Our lives can be an adventure. It can be fun. One thing I like to recommend go on a treasure hunt.

Instead of looking at all the stuff you need to let go. Go find your favorite things. Find your favorite things. Put them to the side that tells your subconscious brain that you're not going to get rid of anything you might regret, and then

declutter.

This really does get to be a beautiful experience.

Resources, Final Encouragement, and Closing

I love this. Well done. Mission accomplished. You have clearly laid out the path to peace, the path to lightness. I love it everything about this I love.

And folks, this is definitely a discussion you're going to want to listen to again and again and be sure that you hang out and learn more from my dear friend Heather.

Where do you want them to go? How can they learn more from you? Yeah. Give us some parting thoughts. School of living lighter. School of living lighter.

Dot com is my website. There are a number of resources on the website. They are, Facebook, school living lighter.com or same same handle for Facebook.

Instagram is Heather Emma. So anywhere on social or the website reach out the lightness. I want you to know this lightness. It's available to us all if we get curious.

It's there. It's there for us. And this is definitely something to care about. It's awesome. I think you, Heather, I really appreciate you taking the time.

I've learned a lot and I, I have some homework to do and I'm I'm encouraged. I'm going to grow. I'm going to commit to you and everyone listening and everyone listening.

I ask you to commit to me and and a loved one that, hey, this is an area that I want to work on and hold yourself accountable by speaking it by putting it out there, by asking someone even to ask you, hey, how are you doing with this?

1 or 2 things? But I got some homework to do, and I'm really encouraged because we're going to make progress together. What an awesome conversation folks.

Hope you enjoyed it. I know I did, and as always, this is Doctor Eric Zelensky. Open prayers that you and your family truly experiencing abundant life.

We'll talk soon. Bye bye.