

How to Create an Awesome Child's Bedroom..... Without the Clutter!

By Rachel Larkin

Have you had enough of clutter in your kid's bedrooms?

I certainly have! This year I am determined to do something about the clutter in my house. It has got way out of control.

I have spent a lot of time thinking about why we are continuing to have this clutter in our home. I have narrowed it down to three problem areas, in order they are–

1. Paper
2. Books
3. Toys

Your home will have different problem areas, as we are all different. Although it seems very common in home school families that paper and books are high on the list of problem areas. My boys love to write lists and all sorts of ideas onto paper. They also like to pile these “treasures” on their desks. But these “treasures” become too much and they take over until you can't see any desk table top. Books just pile up in the lounge room and bedrooms and take over. It is good to have books, but I found that we don't need to keep all of them. It also seems easy to keep toys that are broken or too babyish but they need to be passed onto other children to play with or thrown out.

So, I thought I would start with the children's bedrooms and then move onto my storage areas and finally to our public areas (lounge, dining room and kitchen). This article will concentrate on the children's bedrooms – keep reading future ezines for more helpful articles on other areas of the home.

So how do we create this wonderful space for your child?

Here is my 5 step process-

1. Establish your goal and vision.

My goal was to “create” a great room. A room that is easy to keep tidy and clean. A room that is set up for the different tasks that I want to have happen in their rooms.

Now, I have used the word “create” deliberately. I chose the concept “creating” over “de-cluttering” because de-cluttering to me sounds destructive. I think it makes the child feel that he owns clutter and that everything is going to be chucked out. I wanted to reassure my boys that there are treasures in their room that we want to keep BUT we need to find them, then organise them so their bedroom remains tidy and that it will be easy to keep tidy.

Creating sounds artistic and it is a higher goal or vision than de-cluttering. It is talking about putting something into the room rather than taking “stuff” out.

2. Include God THE Creator.

God is THE Creator and we so need His input in everything that we do, especially when we work on our homes. This is one area that I hadn't really thought that God wanted to be included in. But I can tell you, when we pray and commit the time period that we have set aside to “create” a new room – it is so amazing how God helps us in creating – He is THE Creator after all.

Now, I realised that what I had been doing, the way that we had been living in our home had NOT been working. Clutter had been building until it has reached the ceilings (well maybe not that far, but it sure felt like it!). So I figured that only God would be able to give me the exact creative solution to our family's problem. He can point us in the right direction. I needed “creative” solutions. Ways and means of storing items creatively and perfectly for MY family and our lifestyle. He knows the best system for organising our children's bedrooms.

Get the children involved with praying for their rooms. Tell them that without God our rooms will just return back to a clutter filled mess. Take time out BEFORE you start to ask Him for creative ideas and new systems of organization. Pray for a good healthy atmosphere in your child's room. Pray for help in deciding what to keep and what to give away or put into the rubbish.

3. Time to Brainstorm

I know that you want to rip into the room right now but after you have finished praying over this time – spend time with the children to brainstorm. Talk about what the issues with your child's room. What are the problem areas? Why is the room so cluttered or messy all the time? Sit with your child in the room and think about it together. Keep encouraging your child; don't let it become a finger-pointing exercise. We are looking at moving forward not focusing on the past. Get excited with the creation process and spending

time with your child. Your attitude will be infectious. If you display negativity or grumpiness with this project there is no way that your child will be positive and helpful.

You may be amazed with some of the points that your child brings up – they are the person who spends the most time in that room after all! God can and will speak to their hearts about the way they have been keeping their own room. Be prepared to be amazed with their ideas and solutions.

4. Prepare!

Now you have to gather your tools and have them handy. Here is a checklist-

- Turn off the phone – put the answer phone on! This shows how important you consider this time to your child. If you want your child to give this time his undivided attention, then you need to commit as well.
- Rubbish Sack for those items that you want to chuck out. Recycle if possible. Where I live, we are able to separate paper and plastic from other items to recycle.
- A box or container that you can place items that belong in another room.
- A second box or container for items that you wish to donate. I actually had my car boot open and it was my boys' job to carry all the donated items and load up the car. Once the car become full we stopped, took a break and drove around dropping off the donated items.
- Vacuum cleaner
- Labels and pen
- Storage containers
- Cleaning cloths
- A happy encouraging attitude and smile

5. Go for it!

Start with the **storage spaces**. I found that once the closets, drawers, cupboards and bookshelves were sorted, it was easier then to turn to the rest of the room. This is the crucial part – how to organise the storage areas.

Toys – I have one place for joint toys (most of our toys are joint). Each type of toy is housed in a big container with a label. My desire is for them to be stacked on shelves in our storage room so that it is easy for the boys to grab a toy container and put it back when finished. Here is a list of types of toys that we have decided is great to keep for our boys- all other types of toys we gave away or threw away.

- Lego and duplo
- Matchbox / Hot Wheels cars plus buildings
- Wooden blocks

- K'nex
- Meccano
- Knights and Castles
- Plastic Animals
- Wooden Thomas Railroad
- Magnetix
- Mega Blocks
- Building Cards

Board games, playing cards and jigsaws live in a hallway cupboard on shelves.

Decide on your list of great worthwhile toys and games to keep. I decided that we couldn't house everything that came on the market but only the best. We want to invest in the best quality toys that we could. Toys that would last. Toys that would cultivate thinking, building and creativity.

Your family will be different to ours. You may have children that love to role play and dress up. You will need an area set aside just for that.

Paper- My boys like to write and write and keep all this paper. But most of it doesn't really need to be kept. So I gave them each a folder then they had to choose what to keep and file and what to put in the rubbish sack. I set them up in an area of the room to concentrate on that while I continued with organising the room.

Books- We took this opportunity to go through all their books and choose the ones that they wanted to keep. We kept ALL the classic picture books— like Dr Seuss and Richard Scarry and all the rest we gave away. It amazed me how many books we had acquired that were not useful or worthy to be kept. We set up space for library books that would be coming and going in the future.

As you go **CLEAN**— include the kids in this. As you move furniture, vacuum or wipe surfaces down. It is a very good opportunity to clean in spots that get forgotten about during the weekly clean. When one corner is perfect – the way you would like it to look, then remark to your child – “wow doesn't this look good now, we are doing a great job of creating an awesome bedroom for you”. This keeps up the enthusiasm and stamina. Keep a close eye on the energy levels. A little break here or there will do wonders. Don't try to do too much at one time. If your child is young maybe just focus on one thing a day, like under the bed or the closet etc. We don't want the kids to hate this “creating an awesome room” before we have finished.

As you tidy you will come across items that do not belong in your child's room. Don't give in to the temptation to run around the house and put them away. You can do one of two things. You can give the items to your child and give him clear instructions on where they belong and they can do the running around OR you can put the items into a container and when you have your next break you can put them

where they belong. I found that it was easier to do this “running around” throughout the time period set aside, rather than leaving it to the end of the day.

I can't stress enough how important it is to keep this time happy and light hearted. If this was an easy task for the kids to do then their bedrooms would not be messy to begin with. They need help in creating systems that will work for them. We need permanent solutions.

I booked in one child each day. We set aside school work completely for a week so we could focus on “creating awesome” rooms. But you ask God for yourself how to tackle this depending on the number of children you have and the work involved. You may just need to do an hour with each child and you could have it done in day. But we needed a big time period set aside for each child.

End of the day- This is a very important part of the day. You want to end on a high note. Grab dad when he has come home and give him the guided tour of the room. Let your child describe the different areas of his room to dad.

When it is time for bedtime prayers – thank God for helping your child, for giving you both great ideas and solutions and for creating an awesome (beautiful for girls) room. Give all thanks to God. This is not just a training ground for keeping a room tidy but also for thinking of solutions and implementing them. It is not just beneficial for practical reasons but also for spiritual reasons. Everything has a spiritual context. We can teach our children about God and his workings with us in everything that we do. By praying and dedicating this work time to God and asking for his wisdom speaks volumes to your child. Encourage your child by teaching him that God will speak to his mind and heart as well. During your “end of day debriefing” remind your child about how God spoke to you both, during the day, and target your praise and thanks to God.

Rachel Larkin resides in New Zealand with her husband and their three boys (aged 10 to 6). Rachel worked in the corporate world for ten years as a Chartered Accountant before coming home to home-school her children. She has a passion for inspiring and encouraging women to partake of all that God has for them. Check out her website <http://www.Rachel-Larkin.com> for more encouraging articles and Freebies.