

Out of sight, out of ... what was I saying?

So I was scampering from job to job on Monday, trying to figure out which tasks that were hanging fire should be extinguished first, when a cheery e-mail came through:

OK, Mary ... the Dave & Cheri road show is getting ready to commence forthwith ... Prepare to pay for all the evil you have perpetrated upon the world, as we threaten to make an appearance in your neck of the woods in the not too distant future.

Holy cats! Company's coming, and I've got to shovel out the house!

Now, I'm eager to see these two. It's been 20 years. We worked together at Stars and Stripes in West Germany. President Reagan was frustrating the Soviets with Star Wars. Russians had trained their missiles on the West. Nothing like today. Ha, ha, ha.

Anyway, months ago, Dave tracked me down at Mizzou, we swapped e-mails, discussed getting together in June and I said sure, knowing I had plenty of time to get my house in order.

Dag.

Perhaps it's time to point out that the last time anyone stayed at my house was during the first term of the Bush administration. The *second* Bush, to be sure, but I'd say it was a good four years ago. Colin Powell was definitely secretary of state.



**MARY
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The point is, I don't entertain much. I generally go to other states to visit people. They generally haven't followed me back here. Nothing against Missouri. It's just been the way things have worked out.

My friends are bringing their trailer and will be parking it in my yard. I suppose they would find it suspicious if we all just camped out there together. I mean they probably would expect to look *inside* the house, don't you think?

It's not that I can't bring order to the clutter in time — and clutter is the main problem. But I'm working against the clock here. This home wasn't filled in a day.

To make matters more interesting, I have Attention Deficit Disorder. This was only recently diagnosed, but it helps explain why being neat and orderly is not second nature to me. Or third. Or even 132nd.

I found a great book, "ADD-Friendly Ways to Organize Your Life" by Judith Kolberg and Kathleen Nadeau, Ph.D. One of the things they point out is that, like many adults with ADD, I am an "OosOom" — an out of sight, out of mind person. I'll leave things out that I'm working on or that I need to get to because if I don't see them, I'll forget them.

They have solutions. Have a basket by the door exclusively for things that need to go to work that day or that are needed for errands. Put a basket in the front seat of your car exclusively for those items. As for other items in your house, store them in attractive see-through containers.

But the bigger clutter problem is "individuals with ADD tend to bring things into their environment on a daily basis — mail, newspapers, groceries, other purchases — never taking the time to find an appropriate place to keep them and rarely taking the time to discard those items that are 'just passing through.'" Yup. A lot more paper comes into this house than goes out.

And if you have ADD, you can easily be distracted from the task of organizing the mess. You can hyperfocus on one little part of it that doesn't matter, while nothing much gets done. Or you can walk away discouraged and do something fun, always a popular choice.

Kolberg and Nadeau say "different levels of focus are appropriate for different problems or goals." If company's coming in an hour, go for macro-focus. Bag up clutter in trash bags. Label each bag and put it in the garage or the basement.

If you have more time, go around the house gathering misplaced items in a laundry basket. Restock the items where they belong.

If you go for detail focus, you work in a single room or a single area.

And you rarely want to go into micro-focus. If you find yourself slipping into that, you need to remind yourself, you don't have that kind of time.

If I just follow this advice, I'll be ready for Dave and Cheri, I think. No, I'm certain I will. Otherwise, I'm going to need to explain why I'm living in that pup tent.

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