

The Life Changing Magic of Tidying Up

By Marie “KonMarie” Kondo

** These are my notes from the book and personal thoughts I had while reading it! I’ve pulled certain parts that resonated with me, so head to the actual book for full quotes!**

Intro

- Have you ever tidied madly, only to find that all too soon your home or workspace is cluttered again? If so, let share with you the secret of success. **Start by discarding. Then, organize your space, thoroughly, completely, in one go.**
- Being messy is not hereditary nor is it related to lack of time. It has far more to do with the accumulation of mistaken notions about tidying, such as “It’s best to tackle one room at a time” or “It’s better to do a little each day” or “storage should follow the flow plan of the house.”
- Once you have experienced what it’s like to have a truly ordered house, you’ll feel your whole world brighten. Never again will you revert to clutter. **This is what I call the magic of tidying.**

Chapter 1: Why can’t I keep my house in order?

- We aren’t taught how to tidy. It’s believed that the ability to tidy is acquired through experience and doesn’t require training.
- We rebound. People think they have tidied thoroughly, but have really only sorted/stored things halfway. Clutter creeps back in.
- Putting things away properly keeps things tidy—even if you are a sloppy/lazy by nature.
- Tidying in one big go works better than tidying a little each day because it changes your mind-set and the way things look and feel. You won’t want to go back after feeling the effects of a big cleaning/purging session.
- 2 parts of tidying:
 - deciding whether or not to dispose of something
 - deciding where to put it.
- **STORAGE IS NOT THE ISSUE.** You’re just concealing the stuff you do not need. Gives the illusions that clutter has been solved. But soon all those storage systems get full and you need more storage. **SO** tidying starts with discarding.
- Tidy by category, not location. Don’t store the same type of item in more than one place.

- **So, tidy by category.** Do all clothes in one day instead of a bedroom in one day. Because you'll have stuff in other places and not get to tidy the clothes all in one go. Can't make an accurate assessment of what you have.
- 2 types of tidying:
 - **daily tidying-** using something and putting it back in its place. Will always be a part of our lives.
 - **special event tidying-** putting your house in order as soon as possible. Sorting through everything you have so you know what you actually own and where it belongs.
 - Once you have done the special event tidying, tidying will be reduced to the very simple task of putting things back where they belong, which then becomes an unconscious habit. (But have to do the special event tidying all at once.)

Chapter 2: Finish Discarding First

- Ask yourself why you want to be tidy. Identify your ideal lifestyle; realize the point of discarding is to keep you happy!
- Instead of learning “rules” for discarding...
 - We should focus on what we want to keep, not what we want to get rid of.
 - Take each item in hand and ask “Does this spark joy?”
 - Keep only the things that speak to your heart. Then take the plunge and discard all the rest.
- Don't start with mementos.
- People have trouble discarding things that...
 - they could still use (functional value)
 - that contain helpful information (informational value)
 - that have sentimental ties (emotional value)

When these things are hard to obtain or replace (rarity), they become even harder to part with.

 - **SO**, start with the things that are easy to make decisions about. Practice the decision making with the easier stuff first.
- **ORDER: CLOTHES > BOOKS > PAPERS > KOMONO (miscellany) > MOMENTOS**
- Don't show your family what you are getting rid of.
- Quietly disposing of your own excess is actually the best way of dealing with a family that doesn't tidy.
- Evaluate things in quiet places. Start early in the morning.
- When it's hard to discard something ask why you have it in the first place. Does it still need to fill the role you had for it when you got it?

- If you don't use it anymore, that's ok. There's a reason why and it has taught you something about what you don't like or need.

Chapter 3: Tidying By Category Works Like Magic

CLOTHING

- **Subcategory breakdown: tops, bottoms, clothes that should be hung, socks, underwear, bags, accessories, clothes for specific events (swimsuits, uniforms) & shoes.**
- Place everything on the floor. (I put it all on our bed. Floor seemed unnecessary.)
- For off season clothes “Do I want to see this outfit again next time it's in season? Or “would I want to wear this right away if the temperature suddenly changed?”
- Don't downgrade stuff to loungewear. Even those pieces should make you feel happy. You probably won't wear it as loungewear either.
- Folding clothes saves space. (You can fit 20-40 pieces of clothing in the space required to hang 10.)
- Folding clothes forces you to handle and inspect clothing, more so than hanging.
- Store things standing up rather than flat so you can see everything in the drawer.
- Fold everything into a simple, smooth rectangle. Things should fit the height of the drawer.
- Fold thin, soft material more tightly, reducing to a small width and height. Fold thick, fluffy materials less.
- ““It's like a sudden revelation—So this is how you always wanted to be folded!”—a historical moment in which your mind and the piece of clothing connect.” HA!
- Hang clothes that look happier hung up: soft materials that flutter in the wind, highly tailored cuts.
- Hang clothes by category side by side
- Don't ball up your socks. (WHOOOPS.) The drawer is their time to rest. ☺ Don't stress and stretch them out by folding over each other. Store socks side by side.

BOOKS

- Put 'em on the floor. (Did not do this.) Helps you see which ones “grab you”.
- Can split them up into: general (books you read for fun), practical (references, cookbooks), visual (photograph collections, etc.) and magazines.
- Keep it if it gives you a thrill of pleasure when you touch it. **DO NOT** start reading it.
- Books you haven't read yet are books you will not read.
- Only by discarding a book will you realize how passionate you are about that subject.
- **KEEP** your “hall of fame” books. Ones you read over and over and could keep reading over and over.

PAPERS

- Papers will never inspire joy. Get rid of anything that is not: currently in use, needed for a limited period of time or must be kept indefinitely.
- Does NOT include sentimental papers.
- 2 piles: papers to keep, papers to be dealt with (for ones that can't be discarded). Keep "deal with" papers in the same spot.
- For papers that need to be saved, categorize into "papers used frequently" and "papers used infrequently"
- Three containers: needs attention, should be saved (contractual docs), and should be saved (others). Goal of "Needs attention" container is to keep it empty.
- Put all warranties in one clear file. Go through them once a year.
- Throw away greeting cards more than 2 years old, unless they spark joy in your heart.

KOMONO (miscellaneous items)

- Small articles, miscellaneous items; accessories; gadgets or small tools, parts or attachments
- Things you keep "just because"
- Order of sorting komono:
- **Cds/dvds > skin care products > makeup > accessories > valuables** (passports, credit cards, etc) > **electrical equipment > household equipment** (stationery, sewing kits) > **household supplies** (medicine, detergents) > **kitchen goods/foods > other** (spare change, figurines)
- If you have a bunch of items relating to one hobby, treat that as a subcategory, too.
- Don't keep gifts out of guilt. Think about the feeling the giver tried to express by giving it.
- Get rid of old bedding, spare buttons, broken appliances, unidentified cords, the boxes electronics came in, health craze products, free novelty goods, small change. (Put that in your wallet so you use it.)
- Sentimental items--if they still spark joy--keep. Don't keep out of guilt/sadness/just for the sake of "hanging on"

PHOTOS

- Take them all out of books, storage places, etc.
- Keep only about 5 per day from a special trip. (Can't do this.) "Really important things are not that great in number." (ouch)
- Don't wait until old age to sort through them. You'll enjoy them so much more throughout your life if you sort through them now.

- Reduce until you find the point that "clicks" for you. Will depend on YOU. Shoe lover might LOVE 100 pairs of shoes.

Chapter 4: Storing Things to Make Your Life Shine

- Have a spot designated for everything. Kills the clutter.
- You only need to designate a place for an item once.
- Storage methods should be as simple as possible.
- Store all items of the same type in the same place and don't scatter storage space.
- Define separate storage spaces for each person in family
- Clutter is caused by a failure to return things to where they belong. Therefore, storage should reduce the effort needed to put things away, not the effort needed to get them out.
- Don't stack things vertically on top of each other. Makes it hard to get stuff out/put away/stuff on bottom gets wear and tear.
- Shoeboxes are great for compartmentalizing drawers/shelves. Lids too.
- Things that take up floor space should go in a closet: golf clubs, suitcases, electrical appliances, guitars.
- Have a "power spot". Top shelf of a bookshelf filled with things that give you energy. (KonMari talks about charms, but we obviously don't do this!)
- Unpack and de-tag new clothes immediately

Chapter 5: The Magic of Tidying Dramatically Transforms your Life

- Tidying can
 - Help you see the types of things you really love.
 - Give you confidence.
 - Let you see the freedom of letting things go.
- "The question of what you want to own is actually the question of how you want to live your life."
- Life goes on if you end up getting rid of something you need in the future.
- When faced with something that brings joy, the response is usually instantaneous---gentle touch and shining eyes.
- "Pour your time and passion into what brings you the most joy, your mission in life." Putting your house in order will help you do this---find your mission and spend more time doing it.

Caitlin's Takeaways

- Loved the order she recommends and the effects of doing one big clean. Enjoyed author's energy for cleaning. Made me want to re-fold my clothes.
- Did not love the talking to the clothes part, although, to be honest, I did try it just for kicks.
- I also don't think we transmit energy into our clothes by folding them. I think we take wrinkles out, make them look nicer and more fresh, but I don't think they gain energy.

- ON getting rid of stuff:
 - o For me, it's not ALL about being surrounded by joyful things, although that is an awesome outlook and definitely better than being surrounded by things that stress you out or make you feel bad. Of course, I don't want stressful things around me-- that wouldn't be healthy. BUT, while things in our home aren't gorgeous or sentimental or rare or my most favorite possessions, they do serve important function, and I think they can be "celebrated" for that reason. Ex:
 - While a big huge farmhouse kitchen table would definitely spark joy for me more than my existing 4 person square kitchen table, it's OK! There are benefits to the 4 person table too, and given our actual space situation, it's the idea size for what we are working with. So it's staying for this season.
 - o Since this book is getting to be so popular, I also feel like it needs to be shared that purging shouldn't be done because it's cool or noble or trendy minimalistic. For me, the discarding is GOOD and FRUITFUL because it
 - Helps me see what I have and be grateful for it.
 - Helps me see what I don't use and think of ways to bless others with it.
 - Makes more room for the more important things or the things that make me happier. (See ya old tshirts that I don't really wear anymore. Hello, front and center sweater that I wear every.single.day. in the winter.)
- On organizing:
 - o Organizing (aka giving everything a very place) helps me spend less time looking for things, more time doing the things that matter. (Ex: There are 4 places where I tend to keep scissors, so I have about a 25% chance of checking the right place every time I look. Not practical!)
 - Waste less time, easier for others to find.