



Spring cleaning... for *mind* and *body*

WHETHER IT'S YOUR
YOUR WARDROBE,
YOUR INBOX
OR EVEN YOUR
RELATIONSHIPS
GETTING YOU DOWN,
DECLUTTERING
YOUR LIFE CAN GIVE
YOU THE SPACE YOU
NEED TO THINK.

ROSIE MULLENDER
FINDS OUT MORE.

For some of us, decluttering has become a way of life. In part thanks to clear-out queen Marie Kondo, decluttering is often now seen as therapeutic and a way to enhance wellbeing and mental health. If you're a bit of a hoarder, is it really worth changing your way?

Marie urges you to ask, "does it bring you joy?"

The "KonMarie" method urges anyone hoping to clear the junk from their homes to ask what role every object plays in their life, and use it to decide what to keep and what to throw away.

But if you're thinking of giving your life a spring-clean, it's not just clutter we need to look at clearing out — we can use similar techniques to ditch the dead wood from our emotional and work lives, too.

"Before approaching a declutter, you need to give yourself time out to do it — a bit as if you were doing a juice detox," says Helen Sanderson, author of *The Home Declutter Kit*. "It's important that you give yourself the time you need, because it can be both physically and emotionally exhausting. Like getting a new hairdo, decluttering can make you feel very different."

Helen specialises in dispensing wisdom on home

decluttering — but her advice applies to whatever area of your life you're aiming to detangle. Decluttering can clear your mind, free physical and emotional space to let new things in, and provide a fresh start, whether you're ending a chapter of your life, or about to embark on a new one. But, says Helen, knowing where to start can be daunting.

"The first step is to be clear about your objective," she advises. "Do you want to downsize your home? Get organised before a career change? Be able to invite people to your home? Once you've decided, you need to keep that vision and goal in mind."

Reminding yourself of why you're decluttering will help you make tricky decisions, such as parting with that dress you've never worn and if you're honest, probably never will.

"In essence, a cluttered house is a series of decisions that haven't been made," Helen adds. "It could be that you have piles of homeless objects around your house, or little bowls of shrapnel — random screws and things. It's important to ask yourself the question 'Do I want to keep this? Does it enhance my life in any way?' If the answer is yes, where does it belong? Making those decisions is the first step towards decluttering."

As well as tackling little details such as allocating your garlic crusher a permanent home, decluttering can also involve looking at the big picture, such as rearranging furniture.

"A lot of people have quite a rigid way of being in a space — for example, by putting all their furniture around the wall," Helen says. "But you don't necessarily need to stick»

to that. Even if you have a tiny space, there might be better ways of using it.”

Decluttering the spaces we live in can be hugely cathartic. But our relationships have an enormous effect on our emotional wellbeing, too — and although this might be the most daunting area of your life to declutter, it can have the biggest impact.

“Check in with yourself when you’re with friends, family or a partner to see how you’re feeling,” says life coach Carole Ann Rice (realcoachingco.com). “If you feel hurt, undermined, ridiculed or overlooked, these are red flags that people aren’t being as respectful to you as they could be. If someone makes you feel bad, or you come away from spending time with them feeling drained or sad or hurt, it’s time for you to declutter, because you’re not being honoured in the relationship.

“People who have low self-esteem tend to have very poor boundaries with others, and these are the people who are routinely disrespected. But you don’t have to expect rude, dismissive or indifferent behaviour. You deserve more — everyone does.”

If you identify a person in your life who’s taking more than they give, it doesn’t mean having to cut them out.

“With family, you might just limit the time you spend with them, or work on some coping mechanisms,” Carole advises.

“And when it comes to friends, you can always give them a second chance. If a friend talks about nothing but work for hours, suggest meeting for a quick coffee and say, ‘How about this time we don’t talk about work?’

“Decluttering the spaces we live in can be hugely cathartic.”

Or, if the last time you saw them they acted unkindly, bring it up calmly and without blame.

“For example, you might say, ‘I don’t like when you mention my size, because it hurts my feelings.’ It can be a scary thing to do, but if the person responds badly, then that’s your sign to reconsider the friendship.

“If you stick to your boundaries, others will start to respect them.” With whichever area of your life you’re hoping to tackle, the key is to take your time. Give yourself space to adapt to the changes you’re making, and the chances are that you’ll stick with them for life.

Once you’ve streamlined your home, it’s time to tackle your inbox. Rashelle Iship, AKA The Order Expert (theorderexpert.com), advises some of New York’s busiest executives on how to tackle the clutter within their work lives.

“There’s no need to keep old or irrelevant information in your inbox,” she begins, cutting straight to the chase. “Remove outdated or one-time emails from your inbox, such as daily news alerts and out-of-office emails, by sorting them by sender and deleting items en masse.”

Next, Rashelle advises tackling day-to-day tasks. “Take an objective look at your responsibilities, like reviewing your job description if you’re still working and considering your past experience in your position. Given the information in front of you, how can you streamline your daily workflow? Could you create a monthly administration checklist, craft a flow chart for recurring projects, or write out a step-by-step plan of action for organising team meetings?”

Whatever’s creating a bottle-neck in your life, it’s time to address the heart of the issue and get organised.



How to declutter ethically

WITH THE RISE OF MINIMALISM, IT CAN BE EASY TO CHUCK OUT OUR OLD JEANS AND ELECTRONICS WITHOUT CONSIDERING THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT. HERE ARE SOME WAYS YOU CAN HAVE A CLEAROUT — AND FEEL GOOD ABOUT YOURSELF AND THE PLANET AT THE SAME TIME.

400 MILLION IN THE UK, WE WASTE **400M DAYS A YEAR** ON UNNECESSARY OFFICE TASKS.

THERE ARE AN ESTIMATED **1.2M HOARDERS** IN THE UK.

1 in 3

of us don't like the idea of giving up our possessions.

HALF

Only half of our perceived friendships are actually mutual.

2/3 Nearly two thirds of women have unworn clothes in their wardrobes.

THE UK HOARDS **FIVE TIMES AS MUCH STUFF** AS ANYONE ELSE IN EUROPE



TRY A CLOTHES SWAP

Take some good quality, but unloved, items along to a community clothes swap, where you can sell and swap your clothing with other people — perfect for picking up vintage gems.

HEAD TO THE HIGH STREET

Many high street shops, including Zara, H&M and Nike, offer clothes and shoes recycling programmes. Levi’s recycling initiative even offers customers a 10% discount on their products in return for any brand of clean, dry clothes or shoes.



BIN YOUR BRA

Bra recycling schemes like the ones organised by againstbreastcancer.org.uk take your unwanted or unloved bras and raise vital funds for pioneering breast cancer research.

CLEAN OUT YOUR MAKE-UP BAG

Companies like Terracycle offer beauty product recycling — for a price, they send an empty box to your house, you fill it with beauty empties and send it back to them to have it recycled. »





“I DON’T FEEL STUCK ANY MORE. I FEEL LIGHTER.”

Alison Kelly (66) from North London decided to declutter her home after retiring from her career as an IT consultant.

“When I retired, it was time to tackle my flat. I’d previously gotten rid of a lot of books, vinyl and CDs,

but still had pockets of clutter around the place. I decided if I paid for help, it would help me focus, so I hired Helen Sanderson.

“We went through all my things and put them in different piles — keep, throw away, recycle, gifts, don’t know. It was a relief for someone to give me permission to say, ‘I don’t really need this.’

“Some of the items, like photographs, were emotional to deal with, so we split them into different time periods, so I could go through them gradually. Throwing away photos of some of my exes was very cathartic!

“Now, I feel that the energy in myself and in my home isn’t stuck any more — it’s flowing better, and I feel lighter. It’s an interesting time, and quite exciting. There are all sorts of possibilities.”

Counsellor and psychotherapist Audrey Stephenson (attheppractice.com) explains why decluttering can feel so good.

“Reflection is a major part of understanding where you’ve been and where you want to go — and decluttering is a physical and metaphorical expression of that.

“Decluttering can help bring order to chaos, and letting go of something that no longer serves its original purpose can become a powerful statement of who you are now, and what you want from the world around you. Decluttering at work can be important, too — entering into a decluttered mindspace is something you can consistently work towards in all areas of your life.

“As well as clutter, relationships can develop in ways that no longer work —



and, like a sock with holes in it, they become no longer fit for purpose. Without reflection, and the structure of decluttering, we’re stuck with something that isn’t right.

“But remember that it’s OK for the dynamics of a relationship to change over time. It’s perfectly natural for us to ‘outgrow’ some of our friendships, and for people to move in different directions. Whatever area of your life you’re decluttering, it can be a useful tool to ground you, and help you to re-evaluate and prioritise your life.”

ESSENTIAL TOOLS

4

FOR 360° DECLUTTERING



1 GETTING STUFF DONE, £28, CGDLONDON.COM

This brilliant daily planner helps you combine your personal and professional to-do lists, with space to list your exercise and work goals, and even how much water you’re drinking. Makes keeping on top of your life fun.



2 EVERNOTE APP, FREE ON ANDROID AND IOS

This organisational app helps its 225 million users plan upcoming meetings, share documents with colleagues and family and set reminders. Helpful for planning.



3 THE HOME DECLUTTER KIT, £36.99, HELENSANDERSON.COM

Helen Sanderson has condensed her know-how into this ingenious kit, which includes a step-by-step guide to sorting out your home, and illustrated cards to help you focus your efforts.



4 TOXIC PEOPLE: DEALING WITH DYSFUNCTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS, £9.99, AMAZON

This self-help book by Dr Tim Cantopher uses real-world examples to help you identify the behaviours you really shouldn’t have to put up with. ■