

## **THE LIFE-CHANGING MAGIC OF TIDYING UP BY MARIE KONDO | BOOK SUMMARY**

The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up is a really interesting read all about being more organised and intentional with what you choose to own and how this can impact your way of thinking and perspectives on life. Tidying up and getting rid of your possessions can seem like a daunting task, but going through the detailed process in this book will help you to surround yourself with things that bring you true joy (instead of clutter, which causes unnecessary stress and headache).

### **Why can't I keep my house in order?**

If you, too, don't know how to tidy, don't be discouraged. Now is the time to learn. By studying and applying the KonMari Method presented in this book, you can escape the vicious cycle of clutter.

"If you tidy your house all at once, you'll rebound. It's better to make it a habit to do a little at a time." Although this advice sounds very tempting, we've already seen that the first part is wrong. How about the suggestion that we should do only a little a day? Although it sounds convincing, don't be fooled. The reason you never seem to finish is precisely because you tidy a little at a time.

"Don't aim for perfection. Start off slowly and discard just one item a day." What lovely words to ease the hearts of those who lack confidence in their ability to tidy.

Putting things away creates the illusion that the clutter problem has been solved. But sooner or later, all the storage units are full, the room once again overflows with things, and some new and "easy" storage method becomes necessary, creating a negative spiral. This is why tidying must start with discarding. We need to exercise self-control and resist storing our belongings until we have finished identifying what we really want and need to keep.

Effective tidying involves only two essential actions: discarding and deciding where to store things. Of the two, discarding must come first. This principle does not change. The rest depends on the level of tidiness you personally want to achieve.

If you think tidying is an endless chore that must be done every day, you are gravely mistaken. There are two types of tidying—"daily tidying" and "special event tidying." Daily tidying, which consists of using something and putting it back in its place, will always be part of our lives as long as we need to use clothes, books, writing materials, and so on. But the purpose of this book is to inspire you to tackle the "special event" of putting your house in order as soon as possible.

## **Finish discarding first**

Do not even think of putting your things away until you have finished the process of discarding. Failure to follow this order is one reason many people never make permanent progress. In the middle of discarding, they start thinking about where to put things. As soon as they think, "I wonder if it will fit in this drawer," the work of discarding comes to a halt. You can think about where to put things when you've finished getting rid of everything you don't need.

The best way to choose what to keep and what to throw away is to take each item in one's hand and ask: "Does this spark joy?" If it does, keep it. If not, dispose of it. This is not only the simplest but also the most accurate yardstick by which to judge.

I recommend that you always think in terms of category, not place. Before choosing what to keep, collect everything that falls within the same category at one time. Take every last item out and lay everything in one spot. To demonstrate the steps involved, let's go back to the example of clothing above. You start by deciding that you are going to organize and put away your clothes. The next step is to search every room of the house. Bring every piece of clothing you find to the same place, and spread them out on the floor. Then pick up each outfit and see if it sparks joy. Those and only those are the ones to keep. Follow this procedure for every category. If you have too many clothes, you can make subcategories such as tops, bottoms, socks, and so on, and examine your clothes, one subcategory at a time.

To quietly work away at disposing of your own excess is actually the best way of dealing with a family that doesn't tidy. As if drawn into your wake, they will begin weeding out unnecessary belongings and tidying without your having to utter a single complaint. It may sound incredible, but when someone starts tidying it sets off a chain reaction.

To truly cherish the things that are important to you, you must first discard those that have outlived their purpose. To get rid of what you no longer need is neither wasteful nor shameful. Can you truthfully say that you treasure something buried so deeply in a closet or drawer that you have forgotten its existence?

## **Tidying by category works like magic**

Start with clothes, then move on to books, papers, komono (miscellany), and finally things with sentimental value. If you reduce what you own in this order, your work will proceed with surprising ease. By starting with the easy things first and leaving the hardest for last, you can gradually hone your decision-making skills, so that by the end, it seems simple.

- **Clothing: place every item of clothing in the house on the floor.** The most important points to remember are these: Make sure you gather every piece of clothing in the house and be sure to handle each one.
- **Loungewear: downgrading to “loungewear” is taboo.** To me, it doesn't seem right to keep clothes we don't enjoy for relaxing around the house. This time at home is still a precious part of living. Its value should not change just because nobody sees us.
- **Clothing storage: fold it right and solve your storage problems.** If she had folded them, she would have had no problem fitting them into her storage space. By neatly folding your clothes, you can solve almost every problem related to storage.
- **How to fold: the best way to fold for perfect appearance.** The goal should be to organize the contents so that you can see where every item is at a glance, just as you can see the spines of the books on your bookshelves. The key is to store things standing up rather than laid flat.
- **Arranging clothes: the secret to energizing your closet.** Hang heavy items on the left side of the closet and light items on the right. Heavy items include those with length, those made from heavier material, and those that are dark in color. As you move toward the right side of the closet, the length of the clothing grows shorter, the material thinner, and the color lighter. By category, coats would be on the far left, followed by dresses, jackets, pants, skirts, and blouses.
- **Storing socks: treat your socks and stockings with respect.** Folding socks is even easier. If you've folded back the tops, start by unfolding them. Place one sock on top of the other and follow the same principles as those for folding clothing. For low-cut socks that just cover the feet, folding twice is enough; for ankle socks, three times; for knee socks and over-knee socks, four to six times. You can adjust the number of folds to achieve the height that best suits the

drawer. It's easy. Just aim to make a simple rectangle, the key to folding. Store the socks on edge, just as you did for clothing.

- **Seasonal clothes: eliminate the need to store off-season clothes.** The trick is not to overcategorize. Divide your clothes roughly into “cotton-like” and “wool-like” materials when you put them in the drawer. Categorizing by season—summer, winter, fall-and-spring—or by activity, such as work and leisure, should be avoided because it is too vague.
- **Storing books: put all your books on the floor.** If you ask yourself, “Does this spark joy?” when you are just looking at the things on your shelves or in your drawers, the question won't mean much to you. To truly decide whether you want to keep something or to dispose of it, you must take your things out of hibernation. Even the piles of books already on the floor will be easier to assess if you move them to a different part of the floor or restack them.
- **Unread books: “sometime” means “never”.** If you missed your chance to read a particular book, even if it was recommended to you or is one you have been intending to read for ages, this is your chance to let it go.
- **Books to keep: those that belong in the hall of fame.** Recently, I have noticed that having fewer books actually increases the impact of the information I read. I recognize necessary information much more easily. Many of my clients, particularly those who have disposed of a substantial number of books and papers, have also mentioned this. For books, timing is everything. The moment you first encounter a particular book is the right time to read it. To avoid missing that moment, I recommend that you keep your collection small.
- **Sorting papers: rule of thumb—discard everything.** I recommend you dispose of anything that does not fall into one of three categories: currently in use, needed for a limited period of time, or must be kept indefinitely.
- **Komono (miscellaneous items): keep things because you love them—not “just because”.** Too many people live surrounded by things they don't need “just because.” I urge you to take stock of your komono and save only, and I mean only, those that bring you joy.
- **Small change: make “into my wallet” your motto.** Despite the fact that coins are perfectly good cash, they are treated with far less respect than paper money. It seems strange that they should be left lying around the house where they are of no use at all.
- **Sentimental items: your parents' home is not a haven for mementos.** No matter how wonderful things used to be, we cannot live in the past. The joy and excitement we feel here and now are more important. So, once again, the way to decide what to keep is to pick up each item and ask yourself, “Does this spark joy?”
- **Photos: cherish who you are now.** There is only one way to sort photos, and you should keep in mind that it takes a little time. The correct method is to

remove all your photos from their albums and look at them one by one. Those who protest that this is far too much work are people who have never truly sorted photos. Photographs exist only to show a specific event or time. For this reason, they must be looked at one by one. When you do this, you will be surprised at how clearly you can tell the difference between those that touch your heart and those that don't. As always, only keep the ones that inspire joy.

As you reduce your belongings through the process of tidying, you will come to a point where you suddenly know how much is just right for you. You will feel it as clearly as if something has clicked inside your head and said, "Ah! This is just the amount I need to live comfortably. This is all I need to be happy. I don't need anything more."

The fact that you possess a surplus of things that you can't bring yourself to discard doesn't mean you are taking good care of them. In fact, it is quite the opposite. By paring down to the volume that you can properly handle, you revitalize your relationship with your belongings.

## **Storing your things to make your life shine**

The point in deciding specific places to keep things is to designate a spot for every thing. You may think, "It would take me forever to do that," but you don't need to worry. Although it seems like deciding on a place for every item must be complicated, it's far simpler than deciding what to keep and what to discard.

Once you learn to choose your belongings properly, you will be left only with the amount that fits perfectly in the space you currently own. This is the true magic of tidying.

The secret to maintaining an uncluttered room is to pursue ultimate simplicity in storage so that you can tell at a glance how much you have. I say "ultimate simplicity" for a reason. It is impossible to remember the existence of every item we own even when we simplify our storage methods.

I have only two rules: store all items of the same type in the same place and don't scatter storage space.

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.

I store things vertically and avoid stacking for two reasons. First, if you stack things, you end up with what seems like inexhaustible storage space. Things can be stacked forever and endlessly on top, which makes it harder to notice the increasing volume. The other reason is this: stacking is very hard on the things at the bottom. When things are piled on top of one another, the things underneath get squished.

One of the homework assignments I give my clients is to appreciate their belongings. For example, I urge them to try saying, “Thank you for keeping me warm all day,” when they hang up their clothes after returning home. Or, when removing their accessories, I suggest they say, “Thank you for making me beautiful,” and when putting their bag in the closet, to say, “It’s thanks to you that I got so much work done today.” Express your appreciation to every item that supported you during the day. If you find this hard to do daily, then at least do it whenever you can.

## **The magic of tidying dramatically transforms your life**

Tidying dramatically changes one’s life. This is true for everyone, 100 percent. The impact of this effect, which I have dubbed “the magic of tidying,” is phenomenal. Sometimes I ask my clients how their lives changed after taking the course. Although I have grown accustomed to their answers, in the beginning even I was surprised. The lives of those who tidy thoroughly and completely, in a single shot, are without exception dramatically altered.

“Discard anything that doesn’t spark joy.” If you have tried this method even a little, you have realized by now that it is not that difficult to identify something that brings you joy. The moment you touch it, you know the answer.

The question of what you want to own is actually the question of how you want to live your life. Attachment to the past and fears concerning the future not only govern the way you select the things you own but also represent the criteria by which you make choices in every aspect of your life, including your relationships with people and your job.

Life becomes far easier once you know that things will still work out even if you are lacking something.

Once the process of tidying is under way, many of my clients remark that they have lost weight or that they have firmed up their tummies. It's a very strange phenomenon, but when we reduce what we own and essentially "detox" our house, it has a detox effect on our bodies as well.

Being surrounded by things that spark joy makes you happy.