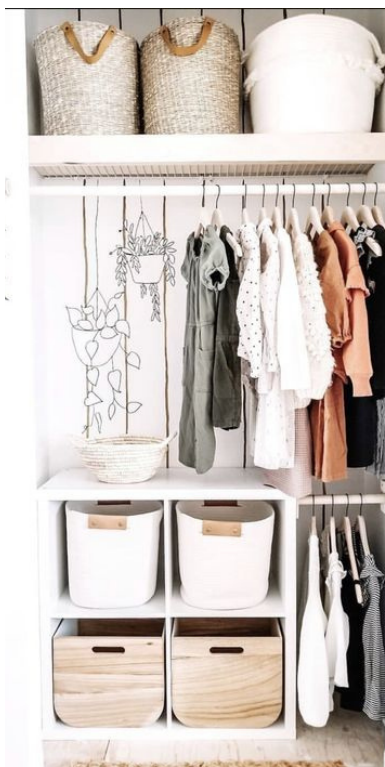




The SHIP SHAPE SHACK

How to Decide What to Keep When Decluttering



THE FIRST STEP



Every item you own—from clothes and small appliances to paper and knickknacks—takes up valuable real estate in your home.

It's challenging to decide what to keep when going through the process of decluttering. I thought I was a minimalist until we downsized! It made me appreciate just how much stuff we both had. Fortunately, I'm not a huge sentimentalist, so letting go wasn't an issue for me.

But, for many of my clients, this process isn't so easy. They are afraid those memories will be lost forever. These items, sit in boxes or closets for years never being looked at, yet still being dragged to every new home when they moved.

Every decluttering attempt was slow and painful (and often complete failures) because they constantly faced overwhelming decisions and they didn't know how to manage their conflict. So, back in the wardrobe, cupboard, spare room or garage they went.

I know from the many emails I get each week that you're not alone in feeling this way. The number one question I'm asked, is how to decide what to keep?

I'll answer this today by sharing what I've learned about decision making – and this goes well beyond decluttering; from your closet to your career, here are a few tips to make difficult choices easier.

HIT PAUSE + CREATE SPACE TO REFLECT

The first and most important thing I do when I'm facing a difficult decision is to pause, take a deep breath and step back from the emotion. It's easy to get lost in our thoughts and lose sight of the big picture.

For example, when decluttering I sometimes struggle with:

1.

GUILT

about past mistakes (ahem ... like spending over \$400 on a jacket I've never worn!)

2.

SELF ACCEPTANCE

Accepting I'm beautiful because of who I am and not because of my possessions.

3.

EXTERNAL OBLIGATIONS

Feeling obliged to keep or do things because I don't want to let anyone down.

4.

DEEP EMOTIONS

Letting strong memories overwhelm me and cloud my judgement.



Pausing and taking a moment to remove ourselves from the emotion creates space to make rational decisions and to think about the big picture.

DEFINE + PLAN



With any decision, focusing on your vision and using it to define a plan can help you make better choices

Speaking of the big picture, one of the most powerful things I've learned is to create a plan to help make the decision process easy.

Let's look at a home art studio declutter and organisation I recently completed. There were decades of collected mixed medium art, completed works to current projects, reams of assignments from her uni days and everything else you can throw in the art pot. It was a massive challenge!

It started with a plan. I categorised each art genre and sorted the items into each group. We stored everything she accesses regularly in the art studio, while other items she uses occasionally was organised in the roof-top storage that she could easily access.

Using the information during the Home Organisation consultation, I defined her goals and outcomes and worked within those guidelines to achieve her ultimate art studio and under house storage solutions.



I knew ahead of time what things she no longer wanted or were to be stored elsewhere. For example, listed storage items included:



University papers, completed art work, major works, and old magazines were stored in areas that were not considered prime real estate access areas.



Excess fabric, wool and other mixed media supplies were relegated to another easily accessible area in roof-top storage.



Shopping bags, household items, anything that wasn't art related were moved to more appropriate areas



Create a vision for your declutter and then used this vision to define a plan.

Doing this takes the stress and emotion out of decision making, and it also helped with decision fatigue (the overwhelm we feel when faced with too many choices!)

This simple system can be applied to so many areas of your life.

BEDROOM

If you're decluttering your bedroom, decide the purpose of your space and then define what belongs in this space.

SCHEDULE

If you're decluttering your schedule, ask what you want to get done and then define your priorities.

CAREER

If you're thinking of changing careers, ask why you work and what you want to achieve, then define your search criteria.

LIFESTYLE

If you're thinking of improving your lifestyle, ask yourself what dietary and exercises I need to change to meet my health needs.



With any decision, focusing on your vision and using it to define a plan can help you make better choices.

ACKNOWLEDGE + ADDRESS YOUR FEARS



Even with your big picture in mind and clearly defined vision and plan, you might still struggle to make decluttering decisions. When this happens, it's often because there's a fear that needs to be acknowledged and addressed.



Usually, this fear manifests itself as a general fear of 'making the wrong decision', but if we dig deeper, we can usually get more specific:

- ✓ I'm afraid to get rid of my wedding dress because I might have a daughter who will one day wear it.
- ✓ I'm afraid to get rid of my extra dinner plates because I might start entertaining.
- ✓ I'm afraid to resign from my job because maybe after 5 years I'll finally get that promotion.



From the trivial to the important, specifically acknowledging your fear will help you make a better decision. Now that you know what's holding you back you can address it.

Consider the worst-case scenario. Then the best-case scenario.

Then the likelihood of each scenario happening and what you can do to change the outcomes to suit your goals.

Armed with this information, we're better equipped to face our fears and make a decision. After all, acknowledging the worst-case scenario could be borrowing a dining set from your neighbour, might give you the perspective you need to move forward.

Finally, when faced with a tough decision, sometimes we need to accept there isn't a clear right or wrong answer. You might not be able to predict how many dinner plates you'll need in the future, or if you'll regret selling your wedding dress, or if three sets of sheets are really enough.

But this isn't a bad thing. Instead, we're given an amazing opportunity to redefine ourselves.

As the philosopher Ruth Chang tells us in her [TED Talk](#)

“When we create reasons for ourselves to become this kind of person rather than that, we wholeheartedly become the people that we are. You might say that we become the authors of our own lives.

To me, this means that when decluttering (or making any difficult decision), we have the opportunity to redefine who we are. Instead of worrying which pair of boots to keep, we can decide to be someone who throws any pair of shoes on her feet on the way to new and exciting adventures.

What are your biggest challenges when making decisions about clutter? Join our [Facebook group](#) and let me know!



TOOLS + RESOURCES

Now that you've read 'How to Decide What to Keep When Decluttering', you might be wondering what to do next. You've discovered some great ideas and built up some good decluttering habits, you're on a roll, and now, you want more decluttering strategies to become an advanced decluttering expert. You want to move up to the next level of decluttering excellence!

To help you continue to take advantage of your momentum, here are some ideas for further decluttering and organising projects.

NEXT STEPS

1.

Keep decluttering for 15 minutes a day. Pick areas that are bothering you, and work on them. Just for 15 minutes each day

2.

Stay consistent with your goals for decluttering items from your house. My favourite resource is an "outgoing box" I keep in the garage for items to donate, regift, or recycle. Once it's full, I put it in the car so I can drop it off the next time I'm out.

3.

Consider adding cleaning to your repertoire. I love cleaning, so I can attest it makes a huge difference to the quality of your living spaces. Especially if you've cleared away enough stuff to realise that you really need to clean as well.

4.

Don't get discouraged if your progress is slower than you anticipated. It happens. Stay consistent with your decluttering routine, and you will see progress over time!

RESOURCES

Get motivated by reading about decluttering, simplifying, and organizing.



ROUTINES & HABITS TO MAINTAIN A CLUTTER FREE HOME

As important as decluttering and organising your home is, it's only the first step.

[READ NOW](#)



HOW TO DECIDE WHAT TO KEEP OR TOSS WHEN DECLUTTERING

It's challenging to decide what to keep when going through the process of decluttering.

[READ NOW](#)



CLUTTER & THE NEGATIVE IMPACT ON YOUR HEALTH

There is a growing body of evidence to suggest that clutter and chaotic homes can negatively impact mental well-being particularly amongst women

[READ NOW](#)



10 GENIUS KITCHEN STORAGE HACKS

The big difference between a cluttered, messy kitchen, begins with effective storage solutions.

[READ NOW](#)

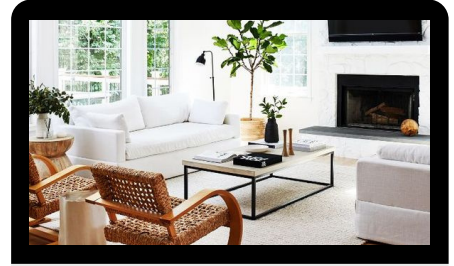
RESOURCES



7 TIPS TO SUSTAINABLE DECLUTTERING & WHY IT MATTERS

When you declutter and spring clean, what happens to the things you no longer want or need?

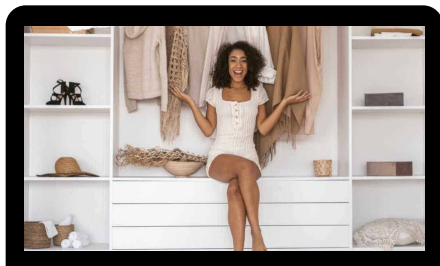
[READ NOW](#)



DECLUTTER 101 START, FINISH & MAINTAIN A CLUTTER FREE HOME

Are you wondering where to start decluttering, when/if you'll ever finish and how you'll maintain a clutter free home?

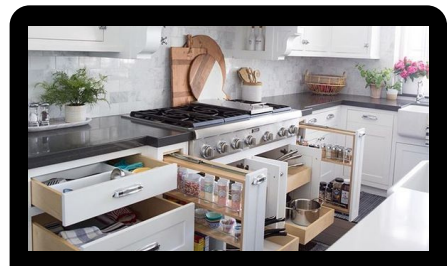
[DOWNLOAD](#)



WARDROBE DECLUTTER & MAKEOVER IN 2HRS OR LESS

Can't fit another thing in your wardrobe because it's bursting at the seams.

[DOWNLOAD](#)



DECLUTTERING YOUR KITCHEN DRAWERS

Can't find what you're looking for in your kitchen drawers? Don't fret - we have the fix!

[DOWNLOAD](#)