

Decide to Discard

Many people I counsel have started having a relationship before letting go of things that should be discarded. I call this condition “spiritual necrophilia.” You likely know that necrophilia describes people who have intimate relationships with dead people. Yuck! Who wants to sleep with dead people, you ask? People do it every day—maybe not literally, but they do it figuratively when they hold on to dead issues, past experiences, or unhealthy unforgiveness. How can someone love you when you are in love with the dead? As dank as a corpse, these people are emotionally reeking of the remains of toxic issues that they seem unwilling to release. They keep the drama alive by rehearsing it, reliving it, or doing whatever they can do to keep the fire burning on the dead issues, a relentless funeral pyre that emits a putrid smell whenever someone new tries to come around.

Often on “Clean House,” homeowners have a difficult time relinquishing grandma’s pink plaid sofa or the set of dishes they received as a wedding present for their first marriage. The items no longer serve any real purpose other than to hold the husk of a memory that has faded like a dried flower pressed between the pages of a book. Once the homeowners are challenged and confronted with the reality of their sentimental souvenirs, items that only collect emotional dust, they usually let go and allow the item to be sold or given away.

Unforgiveness. Some people think that unforgiveness punishes the person who hurt you. It does not. What it does do is keep your heart filled with anger, hostility, and bitterness. Forgiveness is not for the benefit of the person who hurt you. Forgiveness is a gift you give yourself. Through it, you unhook yourself from the past and free your soul to escape the dismal and experience the delightful again.

Who can help you with your junk?

Dealing with junk isn't as easy as it sounds. Ancient Eastern philosophies like Feng Shui propose that physical things have energy. They can represent old relationships, which could mean old hurts and disappointments. For example, if you are holding on to a photo of an old love who lied to you, or jewelry from the man who left you for another woman, each time you look at the physical item, whether you are conscious of it or not, you are reminded of sadness and pain. You may be holding on to other items, given to you by people you love, your parents or siblings for example, out of obligation, even though you don't have room for them or they don't really reflect who you are now in your life.

If you have made the decision to clear away your physical junk, you don't have to do it alone. Ask an impartial party for help. Choose someone who has no emotional attachment to your items such as a professional organizer or even an honest, straightforward friend, and let them help you identify items that no longer serve you and help you let them go. So many organizations and causes in the world need all of the clothes, books, CD's and other items that you may have to give away. It is often helpful to think of purging our physical junk as a way to give to others who are less fortunate. After all, you probably don't really need four black wool sweaters, but a homeless person somewhere definitely does.

Mental junk like a divorce, death of a loved one, serious illness, depression or childhood traumas often leave us feeling angry, hopeless or weighed down. The only way to release ourselves from the burden of carrying these pains with us in our lives is to make an active decision to do so. And sometimes we need help. Of course the love, listening and support of a good friend or family member may be all you need. Like the Beatles song says “I get by with the help of my friends.”

Test your mind for worry. If you find that you are thinking the same thoughts several days in a row, you aren't thinking, you are worrying. Stop that right now and make the decision in your mind to move from you may need to have your own inner garage sale. I challenge you to look in your emotional closets and see what needs clearing out. I hope that you have no dead relationships lingering, but if you do, then I admonish you to let them go and bury them. You must make room for new life, sometimes this new space requires removing items, relationships, and obligations that no longer serve the purpose for which they were originally intended.

The last closet to clean is the one between your ears. It gathers more debris than any attic, more soot than an old chimney.

Worse, no one but you knows what is there. Clean out old memories that attract rehearsing the same thoughts to resting your mind until something fresh comes. Like the show demonstrates, when people find it hard to sell old memorabilia, it may be painful to part with old emotional habits. Ultimately, however, the release is liberating and allows you to have a new experience.

This is a moment in your life to consent to discard the ills that afflict you. You can only find the power to do that as you become convinced that there is more life in front of you than there is behind you!

But friends, while often well meaning, often bring their own issues to the table and aren't always the best at giving us unconditional support. So if chatting with your best friend over an afternoon cup of tea doesn't work, and you find that your mental or emotional junk has you feeling out of sorts, consider talking to a member of your clergy, a mental health professional such as a therapist or counselor, or joining a support group.

Talking is often the best way to purge the hold of painful or emotional junk. Knowing that there are others who understand your feelings and support you unconditionally can be very cathartic and leave you feeling like you've lost the burden of carrying 50 extra pounds!