



Space to Breathe

organize ~ simplify ~ create breathing space



In her very popular, yet controversial new book, *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up: The Japanese Art of Decluttering and Organizing*, Marie Kondo has attracted much attention to her "KonMari" method - a way of putting our houses in

order and transforming our lives at the same time.

Some feel that Kondo has written the ultimate Zen of organizing, a book that teaches us how to transform our homes into spaces of serenity and

inspiration. They find it a charming, motivating book, one that is short, sweet, and user-friendly. **Others find her idealistic and much too "out there."** For example, she personifies our possessions, encouraging us to treat them with kindness and thank them for serving us. My point of view is that this book was originally written for a Japanese audience, and that Kondo has her own cultural and spiritual perspective. If we can put aside any discomfort about these differences, **I think that there is a lot of good advice and inspiration in this book.**

Here are some of the main points of Kondo's method:

- **As you start the process, visualize the way you want to live,** and set your intention to have a happier, more peaceful life.
- **Work on one category of items at a time** (e.g. clothing first, books next, etc.). Take everything out, then **touch each item and see if it "sparks joy,"** i.e. if it touches your heart and you intuitively know you should keep it. Everything else, unless it serves an essential practical purpose, is donated, recycled or discarded.
- **Work your way through all of your belongings,** if need be over a period of 6 months to a year. Beware of holding on to things out of undo attachment to the past, or worries about the future. The things that stay, the things you love, will reflect back to you who you are, what your passions are, and what your path is.
- **Store items in a "respectful" manner, like with like, and be able to see everything you have stored.** Kondo feels there should be little need for commercial storage products - that we can use what we have (e.g. shoe boxes and lids, trays, check register boxes, etc.) and even fold things a certain way to make the best use of space. (More on this later.)
- **If you do this process thoroughly, Kondo says you won't have to do it again** - that you will have created easily accessible homes for



everything, your shopping habits will have changed, and that keeping your home “tidy” will become second nature.



If you are interested in her perspective, you might even try pursuing some of these ideas further. Kondo claims that by using her **folding techniques**, clothing items take up less room, will be easier to see and locate, and will even last longer. (You can check out her YouTube folding

videos!) Also, you can try **“thanking your possessions”** for their services. In the least this notion could inspire you to take better care of your things, could make the process of letting go and donating easier, and perhaps will even make you more grateful in general (which is a good thing for your mental health!)

Keeping Kondo’s principles in mind, I tackled my own clothes closet. Two huge garbage bags of stuff to donate later, I was rewarded with a peaceful, orderly space that makes me smile every time I open the door. **Her advice about keeping only the items that “spark joy” was a challenge that proved very useful,** and helped me to let go of misguided notions about why I needed to save certain things.

Whether or not you are inclined to thank your dishtowels for drying, or to fold your socks like sushi rolls – **I think that this book holds some worthy insights into decluttering and creating peaceful environments.** Hopefully it will offer you inspiration, and afford you space to breathe!

