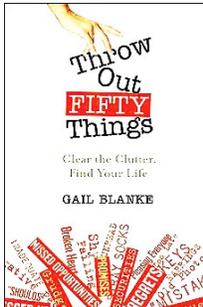


Throw Out Fifty Things



If you need motivation to do some decluttering, check out Gail Blanke's book: ***Throw Out Fifty Things: Clear the Clutter, Find your Life***. With inspiring stories and helpful advice, life coach Blanke encourages us to go through our homes, room by room, and let go of everything that no longer serves us. In these materialistic and technologically-driven times, we need to continually weed out and let go – getting rid of what she calls the "plaque" of life.

Blanke describes her "Michelangelo Method" – taken from the legend of the artist being asked to explain how he sculpted the magnificent statue of David. Michelangelo allegedly replied: "David was always there in the marble. I just took away everything that was not David." Similarly, she advises us to ruthlessly and bravely chisel away at the clutter that stands in the way of finding our best selves and of moving forward in our lives.



I have been giving this method a try myself and I am enjoying the process. Even professional organizers have things they are holding on to for the wrong reasons, and I appreciated this new perspective about letting go. I started small, with books and magazines I hadn't looked at for years, dressy shoes I'll probably never wear again, and sheets and bedding that had "seen better days." Soon the process really took off and became surprisingly addictive . . . sort of like a treasure hunt, in reverse!



Fifty things may seem easy, but Blanke challenges us further by saying that each category of items counts as *one* thing – e.g. those 25 old *Real Simple* magazines collecting dust only counted as *one*. This makes the process a little harder, but the results are ultimately more rewarding. I've already let go of more than 50 things, and I plan to continue. I love all my new *space to breathe!*

Blanke doesn't stop with the physical items, however. She encourages us to take on our "mental clutter" as well – the dysfunctional thoughts and attitudes that also hold us back. Needless to say, mental clutter is a whole lot more challenging to deal with than physical – and from my perspective as a former psychotherapist, I see this kind of "throwing out/letting go" as much more complicated than is presented. Still, you might find some of her perspective in this area helpful.

Here's how to go about *throwing out 50 things*:

- **Systematically move through your home and office, looking at each room from the "eyes of a stranger" and noticing how each space makes you feel.** Let go of anything that you don't love or use, and anything that weighs you down or has negative associations.
- **Keep a written list of what you've let go.** This will help to motivate you. Celebrate your accomplishments often!



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- **Be ruthless and brave about what you decide to "throw" and what you decide to keep around you.** Accept that the letting go may sometimes make you anxious, but remember that it is probably good to do it anyway!
- **Don't put off making these decisions.** Decide now what supports you going forward.
- **In case you were wondering, Blanke doesn't mean only *throwing out all of these things!*** She encourages us, as I do, to take care of our planet, too – to recycle, donate, sell, or pass along items whenever possible.



For more support with decluttering and letting go, check out the Advice page of my website where you will find many articles including: **Motivating Yourself to Get Organized, Clutter Prevention Habits, The Challenge of Sentimental Items, and Have Fun Getting Organized.** For more about the "50 Things" process, see Blanke's website: www.throwoutfiftythings.com.