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**Simplifying**

**INTRODUCTION**

Eliminating stuff you don’t use. Learn what to keep (those items that bring you joy and value) and what to do with stuff you get rid of. Remember that organizing isn’t simplifying. Organized clutter is still clutter.

**Definition**

According to Merriam Webster, *Simplify* is a verb meaning to make simple, to reduce to basic essentials or to diminish in scope or complexity (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/simplify>). For the purposes of this lesson, we are discussing simplifying our lives by reducing the clutter of stuff.

**Situation:**

Why would anyone want to simplify? Simplifying your life by reducing clutter may reduce stress, increase happiness, and save money. There is enough self-storage space in the United States for an average of 5.4 square feet per person in this country. It is a $38 billion dollar business and the average monthly cost for a self-storage unit is $88.85. (The Spare Foot Storage Beat: <https://www.sparefoot.com/arkansas-storage.html>)

Research indicates that home environment influences psychological processes, mental health, stress, and behavior. We might say that simplifying or decluttering can make you happier, healthier, and smarter. For older adults who may be planning to move to a smaller home, simplifying is a great way to prepare for downsizing.

**HOW TO SIMPLIFY YOUR STUFF**

A quick internet search will reveal many sources of information for how to simplify, declutter, minimize, and organize your stuff. Here are some tips from three of the most visible leaders in the arena: *The FlyLady, The Minimalists, and Marie Kondo*.

**The FlyLady. Take baby steps.**

Marla Cilley is The FlyLady. Marla’s followers say Fly stands for Finally Loving Yourself. The FlyLady offers guidance to help people set up routines, get rid of clutter, and put their homes in order. FlyLady’s basic strategy is to take baby steps toward decluttering, cleaning, and organizing your home. She has 31 Baby Steps that are available in her book and on the website. FlyLady offers daily mentoring, checklists, journals, email reminders and other resources.

Here’s a FLYing Lesson to start decluttering your home: Declutter for 15 Minutes a Day (because anyone can do anything for 15 minutes a day).One declutter method is the 27-Fling Boogie. As fast as you can, walk through the house with a garbage bag and collect 27 things to throw away. Put it in the trash as soon as you are finished. OR collect 27 things to give away and take the bag or box to the car as soon as you are finished.

FlyLady’s 11 Commandments

1. Keep your sink clean and shiny.
2. Get dressed every morning, even if you don’t feel like it. Don’t forget your lace-up shoes.
3. Do your morning and before-bedtime routine everyday.
4. Don’t allow yourself to be sidetracked by the computer.
5. Pick up after yourself. If you get it out, put it away.
6. Don’t try to do two projects at once. ONE JOB AT A TIME.
7. Don’t pull out more than you can put back in one hour.
8. Do something for yourself everyday, maybe every morning and night.
9. Work as fast as you can to get the job done. This will give you more time to play later.
10. Smile even when you don’t feel like it. It is contagious. Make your mind up to be happy, and you will be.
11. Don’t forget to laugh everyday. Pamper yourself; you deserve it!

Website: <http://www.flylady.net/>

Books by Marla Cilley-The FlyLady:

* Sink Reflections
* Chaos to Clean
* Body Clutter

**The Minimalists**

**Make room for meaningful life.**

Josh Fields and Ryan Nicodemus, two 30-something guys who ditched lucrative corporate careers for simpler lifestyles, are The Minimalists. You may have seen their movie, read the blog, visited the website, listened to the podcast or seen the challenge on Facebook. According to Fields and Nicodemus, minimalists search for happiness not through things, but through life itself; thus, it’s up to each person to determine what is necessary and what is superfluous in life.

They see a problem with the meaning we assign to stuff - often giving priority to material possessions while forsaking health, relationships, passions, personal growth, and desire to contribute beyond ourselves. The Minimalists invite readers to be conscientious about the stuff they bring into their homes and keep only what adds value to their lives. The Minimalists created the Minimalism Game to help people declutter.

The 30 Day Minimalism Game

You can do this alone but The Minimalists recommend you find a friend, family member, or coworker who’s willing to minimize their stuff too. Each person gets rid of one thing on the first day of the month. Two things on the second. Three things on the third. So forth and so on. Focus on what brings value to your life.

The list of suggested items for consideration includes: collectables, decorations, kitchenware, electronics, furniture, bedding, clothes, towels, and tools; buy you aren’t limited to these categories. Donate, sell, or trash the items you remove. Items must be out of your house by midnight each day. It’s easy at first. Anyone can purge a few items. By week two, you’re up to more than a dozen items per day. It keeps getting more difficult as the month progresses. If you’re playing with a friend, whoever keeps it going the longest, wins.

The Minimalism Game video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s64GiwN3hCs>

The Minimalists website: <https://www.theminimalists.com/>

Books by Millburn and Nicodemus:

* Everything That Remains
* Minimalism
* Essential

**Marie Kondo**

**Choose joy.**

Marie Kondo is a popular media personality known for her expertise in tidying or organizing. She labeled her method for decluttering the KonMari Method. The KonMari Method™ encourages tidying by category – not by location – beginning with clothes, then moving on to books, papers, miscellaneous items (she calls these komono), and, finally, sentimental items. Keep only those things that speak to the heart, and discard items that no longer spark joy. Marie recommends thanking items for their service before letting them go. There’s an opportunity to learn from all the things in your life, including the ones that you discard. If you let go of a belonging you never used, it taught that you have no purpose for something like this in your life. Thinking deeply about each item you discard will affect how you live and acquire new things moving forward.

Rule 1. Commit yourself to tidying up.

Rule 2. Imagine your ideal lifestyle.

Rule 3. Finish discarding first.

Rule 4. Tidy by category, not by location.

Rule 5. Follow the right order.

Rule 6. Ask yourself if it sparks joy.

Website: <https://konmari.com/>

Netflix:

Books by Marie Kondo:

* The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up: The Japanese Art of Decluttering and Organizing
* Spark Joy: An Illustrated Master Class on the Art of Organizing and Tidying Up
* The Life-Changing Manga of Tidying Up: A Magical Story

**ACTIVITY WORKSHEET: Action Steps to Simplify Stuff**

Whatever method you choose to simplify, it will require time and effort. It won’t happen by itself. The more stuff you’ve accumulated, the more time and effort will be required to declutter. Success demands commitment.

**Find motivation.** Simplifying can open space for the life you’ve always imagined. Close your eyes. Envision your ideal lifestyle. Use decluttering as a way to reach that goal. Why do you need or want to simplify? What will be the specific benefits to you when you have eliminate clutter?

**Choose a method.** Whether it’s FlyLady’s babysteps, The Minimalist Challenge, KonMari, some other method, a blend of methods, or make up your own method – find something that works for you.

**Detail strategies.** Write down a specific plan of action. A written plan will help you stay on task. Are you starting with a room or a category? Where will you start? What will be next? Clothing, books, papers, and kitchen are top categories that need decluttering. Where will you take items to discard or give away? Selling items can generate funds. Donating items can help others. Remember that organizing isn’t simplifying. Organized clutter is still clutter. First eliminate clutter. Then, organize the items that bring value or joy.

**Prepare for challenges.** Letting go can be tough. You will need to prepare in advance to deal with values and emotions that keep you stuck with clutter. Are you feeling sentimental about a memory associated with an item? Do you feel guilty about not using an item that you purchased or that was given to you? Do you feel fear that you may need the item after you have given it away? Decide how you will deal with these emotions so they can’t derail your progress. Is procrastination preventing you from moving forward? If you continue to struggle with letting go of clutter, therapy or a support group may help.

**Schedule time.** Block time in your schedule to devote to eliminating clutter. You will actually gain more time once your home is clutter-free. It takes less time to clean a house that has less stuff and is better organized. The time you devote to declutter may be related to the method you choose. One expert recommends devoting 15 minutes a day to decluttering. Another expert uses bigger blocks of time to tackle categories of clutter. Schedule time on your calendar to accommodate the method you are using.

**Be pro-active.** Once you eliminate stuff you don’t need, how will you prevent stuff from cluttering your life again? Consider carefully before bringing more stuff back into your home. Will this add value? Does this spark joy? Does this fit with the vision I have for my life?

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