



KARYN SHANKS MD
Heart, Hope, Healing

Declutter: Create Space to Heal

BY KARYN SHANKS MD | MARCH 30, 2019



You've heard me say it a thousand times: We've got to create space for healing to occur.

No matter what ails us, we go no where without focused attention to our problem and freedom from the toxins, irritants, and negative energy that get in our way.

An easy start is removing the clutter from our living spaces.

"Does it spark joy?"

You've heard those words, right?

The stuff whisperer, [Marie Kondo](#), encourages us to tidy up and let go of the stuff we no longer need, that gets in our way, that muddles and confuses us, through her signature art of decluttering and organizing.

I just finished applying her essential question, "does it spark joy," to every item in my walk-in closet. One at a time. No drawer or shelf left behind.

Then, following her cue, I expressed my gratitude to each discarded item for what it contributed to my life. And added a blessing for the next owner who discovers treasure.

Ten garbage bags-full later...

I'm exhausted.

I've been beat up.

I've had my comfort stripped away.

I've survived a series of come-to-Jesus experiences.

And I feel... buoyant. Free. Elated. Spacious.

I had to be honest. Freaking painfully honest as I stepped up to my guilt for spending money on things I didn't love (how did that happen... again?). As I shed bits and pieces of my identity (maybe who I was before, but not now). As I let go of expectations that are not my own. As I let go of things I *did* truly love, but no longer fit me. Telling the brutal truth. Gently letting them go.

Each one of those pieces I touched represented an essential truth.

That powerful question stripped me down. Right down to my essential self. And the stuff I truly need to support and nourish that.

Then, enter my cynical husband to whom I shared my pain and joy: "That's not the problem. The problem isn't letting go, it's how you keep the stuff from reaccumulating."

He's partially wrong, partially right. Make no mistake, the letting go is *huge*. But how do we protect the precious space we just created? How do we stop saying yes to stuff we don't need or love? How do we resist the powerful enticements to consume?

I plan to apply the same principle through the question, *does it spark joy?* Not a dopamine rush, not a temporary quick-fix gotta-have-it, not a delicious consumeristic experience. No, rather a sink-into-my-heart-of-hearts wise inner knowing of what I need and love.

Take the journey, my friends. It's not for the feint of heart. But no worthwhile journey ever is.

Tell me, please, how do manage your stuff? How do you make decisions about what comes in? What stays? What get the boot?

Have a Beautiful day!

Karyn

Marie Kondo. [***The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up: The Japanese Art of Decluttering and Organizing.***](#) 2014.

From my Archives:

[*Clear Clutter for a More Peaceful and Focused Mind.*](#) 2017.

[*Great Ideas—One Drawer at a Time.*](#) 2018.

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Karyn Shanks, MD, is a physician who lives and practices in Iowa City. Her work is inspired by the science of Functional Medicine, body-mind principles, and wisdom gleaned from the transformational journeys of thousands of clients over her twenty-five-year career. Her work honors each individual and the power of their stories, their inner wisdom, and innate healing potential. She believes that the bones of healing are in what we do for ourselves. She is the author of *Liftoff*, a manual of energy recovery and healing through essential self-care practices.

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