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Linda's Organizing Tip for February 2007:

Letting Go: Do We Own the Stuff or Does the Stuff Own Us!

Last month I described "Simple Steps to Getting Organized", and a procedure to follow for accomplishing a small goal. This month I am going to focus on overcoming one of the most difficult obstacles in anyone's organizing plan.

Deciding to get rid of one's possessions is one of the most challenging tasks. Often there are decisions to be made at various levels. In the first level, the decision is made fairly quickly. Do I or don't I like this thing? If we like it and enjoy it the answer usually quickly yes. If we do not like it, the answer may sound like this "Noooo, but dear old Aunt Ginny gave that thing to me." Our further thought may be that we've never used that thing and probably never will, however, we perceive that dear old Aunt Ginny would not only be upset with us for giving it away, but that somehow we would be harming her, if in fact, we did. So instead, we stuff it back into the drawer where it was and keep it "just in case". What is funny is that maybe even Aunt Ginny would not use it, if she still had it. In fact, the reason you have it, may be because *she* was not using it! Another irony could be that Aunt Ginny gave the gift out of love, and would never want you to keep something that did not give you joy to use. Another possibility may be that she doesn't even remember giving it.

There are several things that people have given me that have wonderful memories for me, and I feel happy and fulfilled when enjoy using them. An example of this is a beautiful china mantel clock, which I have displayed in my dining room. This was a clock that my grandmother had, and her mother received as a wedding gift. It sat for as long as I could remember, in my grandmother's cluttered living room, in the back of a table, and did not work. When my grandmother passed away, I asked for the clock, took it to a clock maker and had it restored to working order. I love this clock. I love the way it looks and I love the way it chimes. This possession generates a huge amount of positive energy for me.

By contrast, I have received other gifts, or purchased other things, which did not end up creating such positive energy. I feel this negative energy, as well. The negative energy may be generated for many reasons. For example it's too big, it's difficult to maintain, it doesn't match anything, it's not my style, it doesn't work the way it's supposed to, it's not what I expected, I didn't really want it in the first place, it doesn't go in the washer/ dishwasher/microwave, etc., etc. There is an amazing difference in how I am affected by this negative energy and this positive energy.

Karen Kingston wrote a book called *Clear Your Clutter with Feng Shui*, which provides an excellent description of this tangible energy in our lives and how it can either energize or

paralyze us. Karen states that even when we hide our clutter, or ignore it in our closets and cupboards, we still feel the negative energy coming from those possessions. She insists that until we let those things go, their negative energy eats away at us and may cause us to feel physical symptoms of stress, anxiety and depression. I also think it ties up mental energy that could be better spent on other things.

Another example of this is about three years ago I purchased a newfangled front-loading washing machine, which I thought would be great! I was impressed with the advertisements in couldn't wait to own a machine like it. However, after I got it, I realized some drawbacks, such as, my laundry still had cat hair on it, even after it was "clean" and it often ended up on the floor as I transferred it to the dryer. I was suspicious that the combination of my soft water with the reduced water used in loads was leaving dirt spots behind on my clothing. I couldn't get these thoughts out of my mind. I found that I was increasingly frustrated with it and that every time I did the laundry, I felt bad. I finally decided to buy another new machine that was more traditional and sell the other one. After my new (traditional) washer was installed, I immediately found a difference in the way I felt as I did the laundry. I no longer tormented myself every time I sorted the clothes. I actually enjoyed doing the laundry again. I didn't realize how much negative energy was stored up in my brain, and thus in my laundry room, for years! My family thought I was nuts to be selling a brand-new washer, but my intuition told me it was the right thing to do. And although *it was as difficult to make the decision to let go of the washer as it was to actually do it* I am very glad that I pushed myself through.

When we're afraid to get rid of something, it may be because we have internalized a message that for some reason, we will not be okay without that thing. Try to challenge yourself to think that you will be okay. You know yourself better than anyone and your intuition is strong. Use it! Lean on it! Trust it! Connect with that energy; identify if it is positive or negative and act accordingly. When you free yourself up to let go of the negative energy, it lets newer, fresher energy come into your life, and, perhaps may open you up to new ideas, directions, experiences and even people that you would not have otherwise connected with!

So choose another project, one that you can complete in approximately three hours or less, and apply these new thoughts to the procedure in the previous month's tip. See if you are better able to make decisions to get rid of things, either through donating, recycling, or chucking, after digesting some of these thoughts.

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