



Secrets of Simplicity

By Mary Carlomagno

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Bulging in-boxes, out-of-control stress, and even climate change serve as reminders that when it comes to being happy and healthy, less is more. In this interactive journal, organization expert Mary Carlomagno leads readers on a journey toward release and discovery. Guided by the principle that the way you spend your time and money should reflect your true priorities, *Secrets of Simplicity* shows how to make practical changes to unburden your closets and calendars and make room for what's really important. Readers can record their successes, as they de-clutter their homes and in the process, their minds.

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Secrets of Simplicity By Mary Carlomagno Bibliography

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Editorial Review

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Book Description:

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Mary Carlomagno's Ten Tips for Treasuring What Is Truly Important

My father grew up during the Great Depression. His attitude about stuff is a product of those times and his upbringing by immigrant parents making their way in a new country. Waste was considered a luxury for the rich, a philosophy he maintains today. One summer, while helping him find something in the attic, I discovered that my father is a clutterer. It turns out that he likes to save things, lots of things. He has all the classic symptoms: saving multiple copies of the same document, keeping copious notes to accompany every transaction, and storing newspaper clippings, magazines, and manuals, most so outdated that they have surpassed any relevance, other than family trivia. He had carefully stored decades-old tax returns, old issues of *Consumer*, and toys that had belonged to my siblings and me. I asked my father why he kept these things. "I might need them some day. Why throw them away? They're not bothering anyone," he responded. My mother put up several strong arguments about fire hazards and messiness, but his piles were carefully maintained, exquisitely labeled, and seemingly not combustible.

Among the collection were some definite keepers: my brother's Rock 'Em Sock 'Em Robots, a red Schwinn bicycle, my Barbie collection, and classic *Golf Digest* magazines, including the first issue that featured Jack Nicklaus on the cover (a discovery that earned me high-fives from all the men in my family). Now that's worth keeping, I thought, realizing that these treasures said more about my dad than any old energy bill could.

Ironically, my "clutterer" father had unwittingly taught me the secret to organizing and simplifying: it is not what you discard, but what you keep.

As we go through life, we are all challenged to carve out a healthy relationship with our things. Below are ten tips for treasuring what is truly important, so you can do what you were meant to do: enjoy your life!

1. Value the relationship, not the item. Let's talk about what's really important. Can a chest of drawers really replace a loved one? It is nice to keep reminders, mementos, and family heirlooms, but not if they are keeping you from getting on with your future.
2. Know your local antique dealer. Consulting an expert regarding collectibles and antiques will help you better understand what you have, even if you do not want to sell it.
3. Consider local consignment, antique and resale opportunities to recoup money on bad purchases, unused items, and duplicates. Take the money and donate it to a good cause to honor the memory of a loved one.

That's a legacy that will outlast any piece of furniture.

4. Protect what is valuable. Whether you are storing a collection of Hummel figurines or your passports, making space for the things you value will allow you to enjoy them and find them when needed. Consider adding the most valuable possessions to your homeowner's insurance policy to protect their value.

5. Not sure where to begin with a completely cluttered room? Start with the raw space. Take everything out of the room and before placing it back in. Be brutal, making each item earn its readmission to the room. Invite a friend or family member over to act as judge and jury.

6. The best time to get rid of things you do not need is before you move. Do not fall into the trap of thinking you will get organized at the new place—this is unrealistic and costly. Why pay money to move things you will likely throw away anyway?

7. Consider weather when storing items. Garages and basements are not always weather or moisture proof. Use airtight storage containers, and keep clothing linens, pictures, and documents where they won't get damaged by the elements.

8. Make a home headquarters for keys, mail, and cell phones. Create involvement by including the family in the project. Inviting input and encouraging consistency from everyone will help ensure that the spot gets used and stays tidy over time.

9. Beware of becoming a replacer, someone who constantly churns items in and out of the house looking for the latest and newest design. Understand that the job of retailers is to persuade you that you need to buy more. Demystify the sales pitch, take stock of what you have, and only buy what you absolutely need.

10. Make sure you purge your home of unneeded items before you buy storage bins and containers; nothing says waste of money better than buying bins to hold stuff that really should be discarded. Purge first, determine what you need, and then head out to shop for storage containers.

--Mary Carlomagno

About the Author

Mary Carlomagno is the founder and owner of Order, a company that specializes in clutter control. Her philosophy has been featured in Woman's Day, Redbook, and the Washington Post. She lives in New Jersey.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

William Petterson:

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