

Life SPACES

Ideas to help you claim more time and space on life's journey • Published by Space4U • Volume 4, Spring 2008

Not Your Mother's Method, But ... Spring Cleaning Still Has A Place In Modern Life

When you think back to childhood, can you remember that first, fresh smell of Spring? By now, you've seen a few bulbs flower or trees blossom. Shortly, they will be in full flower and buds will be replaced by the next wave of color. School year madness will soon be replaced by the easier Summertime schedule. Sad memories of a loved one's passing are gradually replaced by good memories. The room that was your child's is now not *replaced* so much as *shared* with your photo album project, or your sewing and quilting space. And maybe, just maybe, you've got the "urge to purge."

How do we move from one season to the next? How do we clear mental and physical space for what's coming up? How do we let go of things, without letting go of what they once meant?

You've inherited 50 cookbooks from your mother. You keep them because they were hers and she was all about good cooking. How do you keep the memories alive, honor who she was, but not keep every book?



Reduce, not eliminate

Consider which recipes you loved as a child and the ones you have already made. How many books does that mean? Probably just a few. And there may be one or two you don't use, but she used them when you cooked and baked together. Keep those important few. The others could be given to: a young relative who has your mother's knack and interest in cooking; a local cooking school; a women in transition program; the library. Think about who would love the recipes and use them as your mother did.

You've quilted for years but realize you have more fabric than you will ever use. But the fabrics were expensive. Some are related to specific projects you'd still like to work on. And you love fabric!

Keep the fabrics related to projects you truly believe will get done soon. Consider, too, that fabrics will crease, fade, and become unusable. Look to your quilting club, virtual groups, neighborhood quilting stores, and non-profit groups who want the

"I have learned that what the next generation will value most is not what we owned but the evidence of who we were and the tales of how we loved."

- Ellen Goodman, Boston Globe/Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist.

Staggering Responsibilities of the Job Title: Mother

Stay-at-home mom's salary: \$138,095
Average workweek: 92 hours
Working mom's salary for at-home responsibilities: \$85,939
Working mom's at-home responsibilities: 49 hours



Salary.com's 2007 survey of 40,000 households revealed the new numbers above. Each year 40,000 households examine the hours spent on household management responsibilities. The survey breaks down 10 household management functions: cook, housekeeper, day care center teacher, computer operator, laundry machine operator, psychologist, CEO, van driver, facilities manager, and janitor.

Do your own survey and you will find people who don't have enough time in their days, want more family time, and less time at work. More and more we hire out household services.

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Spacing Things Out

Let Go Without Letting Go

How do we let go without letting go? Recently, this became a personal question for me yet again. Yvette Enos died, a strong, faith-filled, feisty, family-focused woman who taught me so much in the 7 short years I knew her.

Her husband reacted the way I've seen before. As he walked through their home, he'd ask if we wanted her sweatshirts. She wore a sweatshirt every day. Which ring did you want? Or her black slippers she never got to wear. The China: what will he do with that?

Some people can make a few quick decisions right away, and can continue over time to go through her things. Some of us will want to keep Yvette's things around us for comfort, for a long while, until we are sure we can keep her memories in our hearts, and let go of the objects. How long that takes is a relative feeling; let nobody push you faster than you want to go. It is cathartic to decide what to keep around us

and what to part with; just be wary of making rash decisions.



Sue West, Owner, Space4U

No regrets decisions.

“When one door closes, another opens; but we often look so long and so regretfully upon the closed door that we do not see the one which has opened for us.”
—Alexander Graham Bell, inventor

Have someone help you and start to give away things only after you decide the following: Who would love this as much as she did? Who would Yvette have wanted to give this to? Was it something special? To see someone wearing one of her sweatshirts helps you remember. Make a quilt of her favorite sweatshirts. Give away her stuffed animals to children the age of her grandchildren, but keep a few. You're letting go of the things. But you're creating new memories

and honoring who she was. And doesn't that make you smile amidst the sorrow?

Keeping Memories Alive,

Spring Cleaning *from page 1*

materials to make quilts for babies at the hospital, for example. Isn't it better to know the materials will be put to good use, and not fade or never get used?

Make room for the new!

If that doesn't work, think about projects you would *like* to start. You don't have the space to bring in new materials that you've seen online or in the stores and catalogs. Create the space by cycling out older materials; you probably know just when you bought most materials, so you'll know their age. Keep your friends around; let your acquaintances you haven't kept up with in awhile move onto somewhere else.

These principles can also apply to woodworking tools, nuts and bolts, and other hobby items like fishing gear, hockey equipment, older ski gear, even older computer parts!

Then there are the expensive knick-knacks.

The Hummel collections, for instance: It's not as fun to add to anymore. It's gotten bigger than the shelves. How about keeping your favorite five? Have the collection evaluated to decide how or whether to sell it. Take a photograph of all pieces together, or even each individual one, as you say goodbye. Notice what happens when you have a shelf of just a few Hummels instead of many; you will see more of the ones you do have. Apply this principle to coins, rocks, dolls—just about any collectible!

Letting go is never easy. But, when you retain the memories using the ideas in this article, you're only letting go of an object, not its sentimental value. Keep thinking about how you will feel when you have less around you. And see what happens when you simplify while you organize.



Welcome to our fourth issue of *Life Spaces*. Seldom do we think ahead about the chaos created by the change of seasons in our lives — family grows or changes, business grows, we move, or a family illness might set us back in other areas. Space4U helps equip people and small businesses with new ideas, advice, creative problem solving, and hands-on assistance to best handle what life throws our way. If you missed out on earlier editions of *Life Spaces*, contact Sue at www.OrganizeNH.com. Sign up a friend or colleague to receive *Life Spaces* and you'll receive a FREE home or business tip sheet from Space 4U!

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Editor/Writer: Sue West

Marketing Consultant/Copywriter/Editor: Jean Rogers

Graphic Design/Production: Laura Gardner



This is that spot where everything gets piled when you want the rest of the house to look neat. But, it still bugs you!



Use Sue's methods to make the space yours again.



Because you read *Life Spaces* . . .

Some of you know organizing can be fun and therapeutic. Others are good at it, but just don't have the time. Either way, most *Life Spaces* readers agree it's hard to stay on track. Our Follow-Up Special makes it simple. Book anywhere from 3 to 6 sessions in a 6-month period and receive a FREE monthly follow-up call from Sue. Checking in and reviewing goals can be a valuable tool in moving forward! Call Sue at 603-765-9267 or visit www.OrganizeNH.com. ❀

❀ *Staggering Responsibilities of a Mother* from page 1

Gone are the days when your Spring cleaning list included washing windows inside and out, washing and putting up this season's curtains, repapering and cleaning kitchen cupboard shelves, doing lawn and garden work as a family, airing out the house and the linens from the long winter, even storing away the off season clothes.

Before you were married or had children, you may have had a very organized system for getting bills paid. It was easy to keep up with cycling out children's artwork when there was only one child. Now with three and a dog, too, it is so much harder. Things aren't as organized or running as smoothly now.

Consider letting go of standards which are no longer reasonable to maintain. The following cultural and societal changes illustrate the need to let go:

One. Unrealistic expectations.

Even though the working mom does not do a full-time mom's 92 hours of household management, she still has 49 hours —that might include keeping the house clean and

comfortable, preparing home-cooked meals, checking homework, and managing the family calendar — in addition to her career hours.

Two. Two-career necessity.

Because of our love of "things," it is almost a requirement that there be two parents who both work. Since this is not the typical family structure, imagine how complex the single income is, juggling the "10 jobs" listed above, and the many support people needed – family, friends, professionals.

Three. Safety concerns. Today, a grandparent brings the new car seat to the police station to have it installed properly. Think back: what did you use for your children as a car seat? Or what did your parents use for your seat? Did you ever wear a bicycle helmet? Because of the faster pace of our world, we are more cautious. We also know more about potential risks and tend to be more protective as a result.

Four. Technology impact.

Television, internet, and cell phones make parenting a more

complex job than it was even a decade ago. Multiple media options force parents to re-educate themselves and constantly monitor the content and amount of media that is shaping their children's futures. More families are opting to simplify, have less stuff, and have more time to focus on their relationships, their hobbies, or their work.

Whether you believe wholeheartedly in the numbers above or not, the job of "household/family manager" is critical. Set your own reasonable standards. Let go of the standards you were raised with; the environment is far too different and complex to compare then to now. Decide how much time you are personally willing to spend on those 10 jobs. Which jobs can be shared or delegated? There is no question that a mother's time is precious, no matter what her circumstances. Working with a professional organizer to develop a practical time map and prioritize can be invaluable. Permission to let go! ❀

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Space4U
P.O. Box 231
Amherst, NH 03031

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Parting with Treasured Possessions

I brought a lamp to the dump today. It was a Tiffany lamp. I inherited it from my Grandmother, Regina. As soon as I placed it on the picnic table in the swap area, a man put his hand on it. "May I have that?" he asked. "Sure," I responded. "Enjoy it."

Then I hesitated. Butterflies in my stomach caused me to say, "It may need to be rewired. But, enjoy it." The lamp's history flashed briefly before me. Its pitted glass shade was dull with age, but painted with a pastoral scene of trees, grass and a lake. The base was finished with a gold-colored paint that had chipped and shredded. The cord, long to my dismay, was the old cloth-thread-covered kind and had always looked to me like a fire hazard. Besides the fact that it belonged to Regina I know very little about it. I don't even remember it in her home. I don't even remember when in my adult life I received it from my Mom or in which of my 5 homes it looked good at one time.

Yet, when this man put his hand on it, I thought, "Oh, should I have kept it? Should I have brought it to Antiques Road Show? What was the real history anyway? What if it came from Armenia and through Ellis Island with her? It could have come from the original Sears catalog." This morning, I was so proud of myself when I took the lamp off the storage shelf it had been sitting on for years and put it in my car. How many times had I moved it and not found the perfect spot for it? It's really not my style anymore. I could really use that space for something else.

The man who picked it up looked like an artist type, longish hair, oval glasses, sandals. I watched him take the lamp to the rear of his car, a hatch-back which, to my surprise, was filled with other lamps of various styles, a metal birdcage, a white wicker basket. I felt better thinking that he might restore it to a new life in a gallery or shop. But, I didn't ask. I

prefer to weave a fantasy that will help me move on, make better use of my space, and make room for new decorations that reflect my life now. We all know we can't keep everything. But some things are harder to part with than others and reflect significant passages when we do.

 by Jean Rogers

Have a story?

If you have a story to share with *Life Spaces* readers, you could win 20% off your next organizing consultation with Sue. For our Summer issue, we're looking for reflections on children's artwork or sports memorabilia or how you fit your office into your living space. Write an essay of 350 words or less (about four paragraphs) and submit it to Sue@OrganizeNH.com by July 15, 2008. ✿