

One Way To Minimize Anxiety

There is a lot of talk lately about being a minimalist. In other words, not having tons of stuff. Some people even give away most of their belongings & moving into a tiny house or tiny house trailer.

By their definition, I'm not a minimalist. I need a slightly larger house than that! However, I've always been of the mindset I don't need a lot & regularly clean out some of my belongings.

Since I periodically help my husband with the unpleasant task of emptying his late parents' home & am in the process of doing the same to my late parents' home, I've realized this minimalist thing needs to be taken up a notch in my life. No, I won't sell my home & replace it with a 300 square foot tiny house, but I am cleaning out.

I've found a great deal of pleasure in downsizing. Recently I went through our entire CD collection. Somehow it grew to just over 300 CDs! Since I'd ripped most of them & safely stored those mp3 files on online storage, I figured this is ridiculous. They take up a lot of space in my small house & I'd like my space back. I made sure everything was ripped & got rid of all but 31 CDs that have some sort of sentimental value. They now fit in a storage box that's slightly larger than a shoe box! I can't tell you how good it feels not to have that big collection anymore!

I realized that my paternal grandmother was right. Too much stuff is just more to maintain & clean, which takes up precious time that could be put to more pleasant uses. Some of those uses are hobbies, hanging out with people you love, volunteering... I'd love more time for those things, wouldn't you?

Too much stuff also can create anxiety. Something about living in a cluttered space makes me VERY anxious, as no doubt it does many other people. Since those of us who survived narcissistic abuse usually deal with a lot of anxiety, that is what made me think writing about this topic may be a good idea.

If you're considering downsizing, I have some tips to help you get started.

When considering getting rid of an item, ask yourself what function it has in your life. Does it make your life easier? Does it bring you joy? If the answers are no, it may be time to let that go.

When was the last time you used/wore the item in question? If it's been a while, it may be time to let it go. But, if it's something you do use, just only maybe once or twice a year, that may be an item to keep. As an example, not everyone needs a deviled egg plate daily, but sometimes it can be useful.

Consider what your life would be like without the item in question. Do you think you would feel better or worse without it? If better, send it to a new home!

If you're going through items like books, scrapbooks, pictures, movies or music, do you enjoy the hard copy or could you be content with digital only versions? Digital versions don't take up space like hard copies do & can be right at your finger tips, so they have a big advantage like that. However, some things are irreplaceable, so it would be very hard & even depressing to get rid of them. Use wisdom & balance in these situations. I have a ton of pictures stored online, but I also have quite a few printed pictures from years ago. Also, if you opt to keep digital versions, remember - phones, computers, & external hard drives crash. I recommend using a reputable cloud storage for such things to be sure nothing gets lost. I like Dropbox but there are also Google Drive & other online storage options.

Is the item a one of a kind item? That can make it trickier to give away. If the item has sentimental value because it once belonged to someone you love that has passed on, I recommend keeping it if you can. If you don't feel peace about that though, find someone special to pass it along to that you know will love it as you have.

I firmly believe in downsizing, balance is the key. Clean out! Give away things that don't serve you well, but keep things that do serve you & bring you joy. You may be surprised how much less anxious you are when you realize you have a lot less stuff in your home than you once did.