

Emotional Sorting



Things

*What happened is, we grew lonely
living among the things,
so we gave the clock a face,
the chair a back,
the table four stout legs
which will never suffer fatigue.*

*We fitted our shoes with tongues
as smooth as our own
and hung tongues inside bells
so we could listen
to their emotional language,*

*and because we loved graceful profiles
the pitcher received a lip,
the bottle a long, slender neck.*

*Even what was beyond us
was recast in our image,*

*we gave the country a heart,
the storm an eye,
the cave a mouth
so we could pass into safety.*

-Lisel Mueller – copyrighted material used for educational purposes

Being in relationship with our possessions is not a sign of mental illness. It's part of being human to project meanings onto at least some of the items that live in our homes. Our things carry history, remind us of loved ones, and reflect back to us who we are. And, depending on your history, sensibilities, and current circumstances, your relationship with your things might be extra intense.

No matter what the reason, if you have an intensified relationship with your things, it can make clutter clearing especially challenging. Here are some options for ways to address it.

1. Put your head in charge and force yourself to discern what to keep and what to let go purely based on what seems practical.
2. Let your heart convince you that you should never get rid of anything ever again.
3. Invite your head and your heart to work together to decide what should stay and what should go.

You can probably guess that I would recommend the third option.

I like to use these three questions to check in with my head and my heart.

1. Do I love it?
2. Do I need it?
3. Does it resonate with who I am today?

If you don't get a resounding YES to at least one of those questions, it's probably time to let it go.

And when you're sorting through your stuff, I recommend you have an EMOTIONAL box nearby. If you come across an item that confuses you or threatens to take you into overwhelming emotional territory, don't force a choice in the moment. Don't try and figure out why it's so hard for you to make a decision or what deep meanings the object has for you. Just get it into the EMOTIONAL box as quickly as possible.

This process frees you to keep moving, making clear and efficient decisions with the items that are less emotionally fraught. It also allows you to

postpone addressing the more emotional items to a time when you can give them the slower, deeper, more mindful attention they deserve.

Sending you gentle support.



Carolyn

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