



How a tidy home can mean more than just a tidy mind.

Our homes are working overtime as we've all spent more time indoors – a place to work out, explore new hobbies and try home schooling. So it's no wonder that we've had it with the clutter tripping us during a yoga session or crowding the background of a Zoom call.

The truth is, most of us are drowning in stuff. According to comparethemarket.com “the UK stores more clutter than the rest of Europe” combined, that's more than five times the storage per person than our European counterparts. And that was before adult children moved back home. Last year, 60% of young adults moved back in with their parents and thus became Britain's ‘boomerang’ children, according to a study by Loughborough University – and that trend is here to stay.

Enter the rise of the organising guru. From Amazon Prime's “Hot Mess House” with Cassandra Aarssen to Netflix series “Tidying Up with Marie Kondo” and its new cousin, “Get Organized with The Home Edit,” there are plenty of shows to inspire you to “let it go” in the name of downsizing, moving or simply making your space a more calming retreat. We've collected their savviest advice for you to unpack, from what to do with family heirlooms to how to sort through excess clutter.

PRESERVE THE STORY

Your home's treasures are ready for their close-up. It's time to make a video inventory (also important for insurance reasons). But there's a twist. As you capture each object, tell the story as well: “This belonged to Great Aunt Mary and it survived a war.” Share this video with children or loved ones you want to pass along heirlooms to, then give them a deadline, say a month, to decide what they want. What's left over you can sell without guilt, but do some homework first. A search of “sold” listings on

eBay can help you peg an item's value or if you're still unsure, get it valued by an expert. You never know when you might come across an Antiques Roadshow-type gem.

CREATE A MASTERPIECE

If you come across an item with sentimental value that otherwise is just taking up space, honour it with a photo shoot and let go of it. The Heirloomist is a US-based company which specialises in digitising sentimental items and, as such, immortalising them. Founder Shana Novak told Oprah magazine: “These items are heirlooms because someone says they are – and because they have stories to tell.” Anything from key chains to dog accessories might have priceless value but are not worth storing. You could also repurpose vintage clothing or hankies by having them sewn into a quilt, or old costume jewellery into hair pins – whatever new form sparks joy.

Stuff your kids want to inherit:

- Mid-century furniture
- Persian rugs
- Vintage Christmas decor
- Wedding rings, watches and sentimental jewellery
- Relics with a long family history

SQUABBLE-PROOF YOUR ESTATE

Your stuff with sentimental value (grandpa's watch, granny's ring) can cause conflict if you haven't spelled out who gets what in the event of your passing. Blended families and ones with estranged siblings are especially at risk of squabbles.

Here are some ideas on how to prevent a fuss:

- Give these items away while you're living.
- Send a list of mementos and their intended heirs to your estate's executor for safekeeping.
- Make a video inventory of the items and who they go to, and store the file with your will.
- Put the heir's name on a piece of tape and stick it to the bottom or back of an item.

SORT LIKE A PRO

Now that you've got a plan for your keepsakes, it's time to tackle the rest. If you're working room by room (you can also take it a counter or shelf at a time), take everything out of closets, drawers and containers so you can "macro" sort and put everything back in an organised way. "Perfection can be paralyzing," Aarssen says, so it's best to keep it simple with piles for keep, toss and give away. Once you've whittled down your belongings, storing items in broad categories or "zones" that you intuitively understand will help keep your home neat, according to The Home Edit's blog.

GET A SECOND OPINION

If organising on your own sounds too daunting, enlist a friend or family member to help you make decisions about what to let go. If you're downsizing and giving items to loved ones, it makes sense to involve them in decluttering, even if it's over video chat. Some removal companies offer a "move manager" service, appointing someone who will oversee every aspect or depending on the complexity, you could hire a personal assistant to help you.

LET THINGS BREATHE

When you're putting the items you're keeping away, it can be tempting to cram your closets to the rafters. Organisers know that will only set you up for failure when it's difficult to find things. Instead, leave a bit of space between objects so your storage is both functional and beautiful.

CONTAIN YOURSELF

When you have too much stuff, buying more things – even as storage – is not the solution. Resist the siren song of the shiny new drawer organisers and bins until you know what you are going to keep. You might find you have all the containers you need – or not. Rolling racks were the perfect solution for one oddly shaped closet on "Hot Mess House;" clear bins were the ticket for a highly visual "Get Organized with The Home Edit" client. There are many solutions out there. Search "storage" container flow chart" to get ideas.

FEELING FREE

In the words of Naturalist Henry Thoreau, "The price of anything is the amount of life you exchange for it." If it feels like your objects own you, and not the other way around, try some of the tips above to free yourself. You might be surprised at how letting go of the past makes way for the future you've pictured for yourself.

You're tossing, they're taking:

If you'd like the help of a local professional to value your belongings, do your research or ask around – personal recommendations are often the most reliable. If you'd like to DIY, here are some places that might help:

- Auction sites (eBay.com, John Pye Auctions, the-saleroom.com)
- Forums like Gumtree, Facebook Marketplace and Nextdoor
- Online thrift shops (Beyond Retro, etsy.com or apps like Depop, Vinted)
- High street charity or vintage shops

Sources: comparethemarket.com; selfstorage.org; Centre for Research in Social Policy, Loughborough University; Oprah magazine; thehomeedit.com; apartmenttherapy.com; nextavenue.org; ThinkAdvisor, Wayforth.com, Reddit