

An Hachette UK Company
www.hachette.co.uk

First published in Great Britain in 2017 by Gaia Books,
a division of Octopus Publishing Group Ltd, Carmelite House
50 Victoria Embankment, London EC4Y 0DZ
www.octopusbooks.co.uk
www.octopusbooksusa.com

Text copyright © Beth Penn 2017
Design, layout and illustrations copyright © Octopus Publishing Group Ltd 2017

Distributed in the US by Hachette Book Group USA, 1290 Avenue
of the Americas, 4th and 5th Floors, New York, NY 10020

Distributed in Canada by Canadian Manda Group, 664 Annette Street
Toronto, Ontario, Canada M6S 2C8

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or utilized
in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying,
recording or by any information storage and retrieval system, without the prior written
permission of the publisher.

Beth Penn asserts the moral right to be identified as the author of this work.

ISBN 978-1-85675-369-2

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

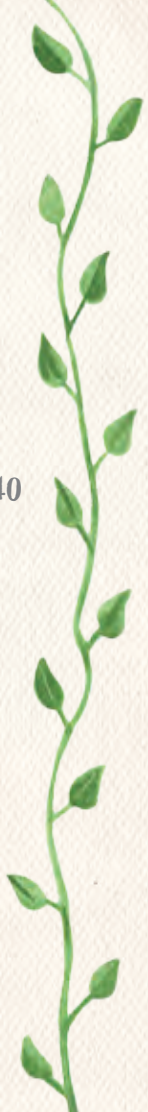
Printed and bound in China
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Commissioning Editor Leanne Bryan
Art Director Juliette Norsworthy
Senior Editor Alex Stetter
Copy Editor Marion Paull
Designer Sally Bond
Illustrator Grace Helmer
Senior Production Controller Allison Gonsalves



Contents

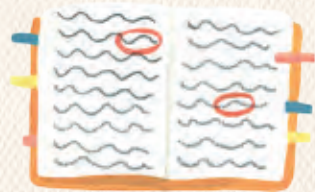
Introduction	6
1	
What is Clutter?	17
2	
The Act of Tidying	26
3	
How to Maintain Your Tidy Space	40
4	
Creating Boundaries	51
5	
Where Does Your Time Go?	63
6	
Setting Your Intentions	76
7	
Adopting a New Attitude	87
Endnotes	95
Acknowledgements	96



How to use this book

Even though this guide is bite-sized, I invite you to take your time reading it. There are many concepts here to mull over while reflecting on the world that surrounds you. Each chapter introduces you to a tidying concept with activities and inspiration to help guide you on your personal tidying journey. I suggest reading this book once through and then coming back and focusing on the activities in the order that they are presented.

Parting ways with clutter feels great but try to focus on all the new space that you will create in your life by living tidily.



1

What is Clutter?

“Everything you own, owns you right back.”

Courtney Carver, decluttering guru





ACTIVITY: Tell a story

During the decluttering process, unanticipated emotions often surface. A collection of workout DVDs represents unachieved weight-loss goals. A plaid button-down shirt symbolizes a first date for a couple who are now married.

I ask people to tell me stories related to each object, honouring these items with a sort of eulogy before letting them go. By hearing how the belongings came to be there, I am a witness to their past. This act becomes part of the tidying process and makes it okay to say goodbye. One lady said: “The act of object storytelling not only helps release the object but it cements the memory of it, which you’ll have forever.”

“Reduce the complexity of life by eliminating the needless wants of life, and the labors of life reduce themselves.”

Edwin Way Teale, American naturalist and author



ACTIVITY: Recommit to using

As you process your stuff, you’ll probably hear yourself say, “I forgot I even had this!” Although you haven’t been using it, you may be hesitant to see it disappear again.

For items like these, ask yourself: does this replace something I already own? If it’s a better version of some office equipment, cooking utensil or garment, get rid of the lesser item. If it’s a stand-alone find, recommit to using it. Give yourself a date by which you must fully incorporate it back into your world. If you aren’t able to put it to use, don’t worry. Pat yourself on the back. You did your best and now you can confidently say goodbye.



The more frequently you declutter the better

When you tidy consistently, you take into account the items you have and have not used between now and the last time you tidied. Things you never thought you could part with are let go with confidence on the second and third tidying sessions.

That ongoing process is well worth the payoff. To me, the feeling engendered by a newly tidied space is equivalent to the wonder of seeing a sunset that you didn't think you'd catch. You wish all your friends could see what you are witnessing and feel what you are experiencing.

Beware of the “organizing tools” aisle

To kick-start or maintain the emotional high that comes with tidying, many people focus their energy on purchasing new storage containers. If you need to do that, there's a large chance you should continue throwing things out. Although, here and there, a repurposed shoe box works just fine to keep your stuff corralled, boxes and bins are



Invest in experiences

We know that stuff doesn't buy us happiness, at least in the long term. Does that mean you can't buy that new phone, bag or sequined blouse? Of course not.

Treating yourself and investing in purchases that will make your heart sing *does* have value. But before you save up for that new TV, you might want to think about purchasing an experience instead – and that does not necessarily entail putting your earnings toward just one extravagant vacation. A trip to the nail salon or dinner out at a restaurant you've been meaning to try can have just as many positive benefits as a big beach trip. Research shows that consumers derive a lot of value from the anticipation of a planned experience, whether that be a once-in-a-lifetime holiday or waiting in line for the latest food craze.





Fast fashion

In my experience, the main location for clutter is the wardrobe. This makes sense when you realize that, in the UK, more than 30 per cent of clothing hasn't been worn for over a year. "In less than 20 years, the volume of clothing Americans toss each year has doubled from 7 million to 14 million tons, or an astounding 80 pounds per person," Alden Wicker noted in *Newsweek* in 2016.⁹

To keep consumers shopping, the fashion industry has created a staggering 52 "micro-seasons" per year. These garments aren't made to last. It isn't long before they show signs of wear and tear so you can't donate them, and hardly any are suitable for recycling. Worldwide, millions of tons of clothing go to landfill each year. You might ask yourself, how can we do better?