



Organizing your home isn't exactly a 'new trend' - spring cleaning is an age-old institution. Still, with the newfound popularity of Marie Kondo and her KonMari method, which is popping up everywhere from news articles to Netflix, you may be feeling more ready than ever to re-examine your possessions and get rid of what doesn't "spark joy."

Before you get those garbage bags out, though, be prepared: organizing and discarding your clutter can be a physically and emotionally difficult process. This month, we spoke with Jamie Shaner, owner of Home Solutions of WNY, Inc, to get some tips on organizing and decluttering that will allow you to care for yourself and tackle some of your big cleaning projects at the same time.

1. Start small.

One of Shaner's biggest issue with the KonMari method is that it emphasizes the importance of doing everything at once. "Marie Kondo wants you to clean every room in a weekend, but that isn't physically and/or emotionally possible for many of us," Shaner emphasizes. We often have emotional attachments to our 'stuff,' and getting rid of it might feel difficult or painful. The process of cleaning may be stressful in and of itself, and you may feel overwhelmed or drained just imagining all the work you'll have to do.

Instead, Shaner advises her clients to start small and create order in one spatial area before moving on to another. She emphasizes that "baby steps are key. Start by gathering things of the same type together (coffee mugs, for example), then decide which you can appropriately store and which

aren't necessary or don't have a place."

It also isn't necessary to start with the hardest task first. "If you are attempting to organize something that you find intimidating, whether emotionally or just due to quantity, you may overwhelm yourself even before you begin." Instead of starting with the boxes full of old children's toys and artwork, Shaner recommends that you start with something simpler. "Start with something you know you can do easily and well, and then build up to the more difficult tasks."

2. Don't throw away what you can donate or recycle.

It can be especially difficult to throw things you care about into a trash bag, and it's certainly not environmentally friendly. "Make sure to give away or recycle anything that still has value—it's no longer cluttering your home, and someone else can potentially use it, which may make the discarding process feel a bit easier." Don't hold on to things just because you received them for no cost or you think you may use them in the future. "If you received something for free, that doesn't mean you should keep it for the 'good value.' Separate the things you genuinely want or need from the inessentials.

3. Don't worry about loving everything you keep.

Not everything you will keep will 'spark joy,' and that's ok. "While you certainly want to be surrounded by things that make you happy and remind you of good times, you also need a system to store things that you don't need often but may have to refer to, like documents or important mementos," Shaner says. She recommends an active, everyday file system, where documents are at your fingertips when you need them but aren't cluttering up your living space. Once you accept that you may have to keep things you don't love, and that some things you may love can be stored out of sight and still be meaningful, there will be less pressure on the organizational decisions you make.

For more organizing tips, check out *Organizing News You Can Use*, a monthly newsletter through Home Solutions of WNY, at www.homesolutionswny.com.