



Purging Guilt

Everyone has excess stuff. (I know I do!) And the first step in effectively organizing any space is to eliminate as much of the excess as possible. Unfortunately, just like doing the laundry, cleaning, eating right and exercising, this need to purge your excess is ongoing. You have to keep doing it if you want to stay in good, orderly shape.

One of the biggest deterrents to ridding ourselves of the fat is all the guilt that wraps itself around each unwanted, broken, useless, ill-fitting piece of surplus in our closets. Some people have storage units stuffed to the brim with that guilt. It comes in the form of gifts received but never used, deceased loved ones' belongings that we don't know what to do with, clothes long out of fashion that used to fit, broken furniture or toys we always meant to repair but never did...all good intentions and fond old memories that are now saturated in guilt. If this sounds like you, it's time to bring that guilt into the light, recognize it for what it is and purge it.

Here are a few things to keep in mind as you confront your guilt:

Memories cannot be donated. We often keep items because they trigger a fond memory for us. But unless you encounter that object, the memory isn't getting triggered. My readers know that I'm big on re-purposing, not only because it saves money and reduces waste, but because it often enables you to place a memory trigger in the midst of everyday life. There it can do its job much better than if stuffed into a bin in the garage. But if you can't find a use for it, consider documenting the memory in some other way. Take a photo of the item or write about it in your journal before donating it to a good home. You're donating the item, NOT the memory!

True gifts are emotions, not tangible items. No one ever intended to give you a burden as a gift. The physical object they gave you only represents the *true* gift of their love, appreciation, friendship...and those are things you cannot give away. Often, the giver will not even remember the specific object that represented their real gift, much less realize that you parted with it.

A purchase is not a lifelong commitment. Yes, you spent "good money" on it. True, you may have loved it. If you are not using it and don't need it, then getting rid of it now does not change those facts from the past. Hopefully it served its purpose at the time, but even if it didn't, depriving yourself of the space it occupies now will not make it more useful.

If you're gonna fix it, fix it NOW! Stop procrastinating. If it is important or valuable enough to warrant keeping, make it useful again. Otherwise it is just broken stuff getting in your way. If you haven't fixed it by now and aren't willing or able to do it today, you probably never will. Give yourself a firm deadline for getting it done and pitch it if you don't meet it.

Sharing is honorable. Perhaps there's an item that reminds you of someone special. If you don't need it or can't use it or display it, why not honor that person by sharing it with someone who can? Preserve the memory with a picture or journal entry and pass it along...perhaps to someone else with a connection to that same special person.

New memories await creation. Don't allow your desire to hold onto old memories squeeze out the opportunity to create new ones. You need space to live and grow

and collect tomorrow's keepsakes. Give away that guilt to make room for something better.

I'm not suggesting that you can't keep anything just for its pure sentimental value. But you owe it to yourself and to the simplicity you *need* in your life to keep it manageable and meaningful. Decide in advance how much space you are willing to devote to that category and once it is full, it's time to purge something or stop collecting.

Guilt, like mold, can grow and destroy. Free yourself from its stranglehold and give yourself enough room to grow into the future you that you want to be!