

May/June 2005

"Time flies. It's up to you to be the navigator."

-- Robert Orben, Comedian and Author

Parting is such sweet sorrow. For the emotional packrat, Shakespeare never wrote truer words. Making the decision to part with things can become a very emotional, difficult issue. One of the sessions at the National Association of Professional Organizers conference in San Diego centered on the emotional packrat, the ones who have a difficulty parting with clutter. I came home from the conference with cool, new products and great information to make your life a little easier.

Top Reasons People Hang Onto Stuff

It's a gift. But do you like it? If you don't, it may be time to part with it. It's also time to speak up. One of my friends likes cats, and as a result, people liked to give her cat things for presents. She finally told everyone that she wasn't really "collecting" cat items anymore. Instead of buying stuff, one organizer said she gives her nieces and nephews a coupon to spend the day with her, their favorite aunt.

It's an inheritance. For those items that are important to you, honor it and display or frame it.

It came from the kids. You're not a bad parent if you part with some of your child's artwork. After all, glued on macaroni eventually becomes pretty disgusting. Be sure to ask the kids which pieces they would like to save, and frame their favorites. Donna Smallin, author of *Organizing Plain and Simple*, suggests taking a clean pizza box and storing your child's artwork inside, and the boxes easily slide under the bed.

You're saving it for the kids. Ask if each item has a particular memory for them or for you. You want to give them items that have meaning, and you can designate a trunk or large plastic tote for each child. When the children are older, they can make decisions about what they would like to keep.

You might need it someday. Maybe. Really. Ask yourself how much it would cost to replace the item. Would you be able to find another one? Keeping stuff becomes a very strong habit that we don't know any other way. My parents grew up with parents who went through the Depression, and they grew up with the habit of keeping everything "just in case" or because it "was still good." Mom said she realized how ingrained this was when she recently threw out some old tennis shoes and automatically started to take out the shoelaces to keep them. When she realized what she was doing, she stopped and threw out the shoes and the laces.

You're just not sure whether to keep it or not. If the item broke or disappeared, would you be sad? Upset? Need to replace it? Have you ever used it? Do you like it? Do you have good or bad memories attached to it? You'll answer your own question. You can also take a photo or only keep parts of a collection that you really want. One organizer said her client had a family quilt that had fallen apart and was beyond repair, and the woman framed a part of it before getting rid of the rest.

Cool Products

As a professional organizer, I have come to realize one thing about myself: I am a total geek over office supplies. I love 'em. It's like the first day of school again every time the Office Depot box appears. And I know I'm not alone. Here are a few new things that you might find helpful.

Pendaflex PileSmart by Esselte. This new product line is aimed at keeping those piles organized.

The [Label Clips](#) are so new that they won't be out until this summer. These colorful clips can be seen no matter how high your stacks grow, and you label them to find things very quickly. For example, you can label them "To Do," "Priority," or "Do This First."

The PileSmart line also features the QuickView Jackets for your piles. The jackets are clear poly and have large tabs on the end to help you find your document without having to rummage through the entire stack.

Putting files back in their places can be a drag, but the Pendaflex File Flag can be attached to the hanging file folder. When you pull a file out, raise the red flag. You can see where to return the file.

Smead Color Viewables. These colorful folder [labels](#) can be printed out in several different formats. In addition to the popular hanging tabs, the Viewables can be printed out to use on workspace and jacket folders with the same color-coding and lettering. You can choose what kind labels you need and want to print.

Simple Division [Garment Organizers](#) from LivingOrder. Organize your closet with these white, plastic hangers. Each hanger can be labeled to divide your wardrobe categories, such as dress pants, short skirts, or capri pants, or you can use the organizers to manage your children's hand-me-downs or your laundry room. The pre-made labels come both in English and Spanish, and if you want to create your own, you can download the template. Each package of 12 garment organizers comes with tips and a "closet maintenance" calendar.

Freezer Organizers. For those who ever wanted to carve out more space in your freezer, try freezer shelves from [Organize-Everything.com](#). The shelves are big enough to hold a 12-inch pizza. The set includes two stackable trays. The company offers a bevy of organizing items to make your life more comfortable.

[Busy Woman Inc.](#) This is not a new company, but I thought it was worth mentioning since they carry a bevy of organizing products for your home and car. In addition to the hefty line of daily planners they offer, the company also has a variety of car organizing products, aimed at making those car trips with the kids go a little easier. One item in particular is the Kids [Backseat Car Organizer](#). It's big enough to place between two car seats and holds videos, CDs, games, drinks, and videogames. The flip flop top keeps markers from rolling off and is sturdy enough to draw on.

Read More Faster. Through her company [Read More Faster](#) and her website (www.readmorefaster.com), Abby Marks-Beale offers tips, books, and tele-classes on improving your reading speed, and she also teaches a speed reading class at Barnes and Noble Online University. One of her books even gives tips on how to read faster on a computer screen. A few of her tips include:

When deciding what you want to read, ask yourself two questions: Why am I reading this? What do I want to learn or do from reading this? From the answers, you can decide whether or not the article, journal, or book should be on your reading stack.

With a non-fiction book, read the first sentence of each paragraph. Marks-Beale says this is a great way to preview a non-fiction book, but this will not work on fiction.

Read only key words and phrases. This will not affect your comprehension of the material.

Use a blank white card on top of the words you are reading instead of underneath the line. Using the card on top of the words prevents you from regressing and re-reading. If you don't want to use a white card, use your finger on the left margin to follow along.

Summer Travel Tips

Airlines are cracking down on overweight luggage due to higher fuel costs, and you may be required to pay a fee for a hefty bag. Buying another suitcase may be cost prohibitive since you would pay about the same amount (or less) in overweight fees. To avoid those extra fees, you might need to lighten up to make room for those souvenirs.

Don't overpack -- something that is difficult for me to do. I always seem to toss in a couple of "just in case" items, and I try to weed out a few of the unnecessary items in my suitcase.

Before packing to come home, toss your travel-size toiletries and any paperback books you've read and don't want to keep.

Consolidate your souvenir purchases into as few bags as possible. Remove any bulky packaging if you can.

Most larger hotels have a business center, and you could mail some souvenirs home or directly to family members. If the hotel doesn't offer mail services, find the local post office. Any post office in the U.S. has flat rate priority mail boxes, and no matter how heavy or light the box, the price is always \$7.70.

On my recent vacation, I brought my old workout shoes for the gym and for any serious tourist walking. Then I tossed them before I left. This way, I got one more use out of an old, comfortable pair of shoes that I was going to throw away anyway, and my new shoes stayed home. And the best thing? No blisters from uncomfortable shoes!

Got Clutter? I have developed 15 minute, 30 minute and 45 minute presentations on organizing and time management. Moving to a new building? I also have a 15-minute presentation on preparing for a move for your department. I also do one-on-one sessions in your office and help you come up with a solution. To schedule a presentation or a one-on-one appointment, call 713-792-8061.

Links:

Pendaflex PileSmart Binder Clips: <http://www.instaoffice.com/pilesmart-primary-colors-binder-label-clips-1-2in-51052binder-clips-clips-label-clips-organize.ess51052.0.7.htm>

Smead Color Viewables: <http://www.smead.com/Director.asp?NodeID=513>

Garment Organizers: <http://www.livingorder.com/products.asp>

Busy Woman Inc: <http://www.thebusywoman.com/>

Backseat Car Organizer:

http://www.thebusywoman.com/index.php?main_page=product_info&cPath=1&products_id=185

Read More Faster <http://www.revitupreading.com/>