



How To Let Go Of Sentimental Items

Kristyn Ivey, Chicago's first certified KonMari consultant, gives the scoop on how to tackle the last—and most challenging—step of the tidying method.

Emily Clouse
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If you've ever heard someone say that a certain item does or does not "spark joy," then you're already aware of the KonMari Method. Popularized by the New York Times bestselling "The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up," Marie Kondo's decluttering method has gained even more international attention since the release of its corresponding Netflix [series](#). In a nutshell, from Kondo's official [website](#): "The KonMari Method™ encourages tidying by category—not by location—beginning with clothes, then moving on to books, papers, komono (miscellaneous items), and, finally, sentimental items. Keep only those things that speak to the heart, and discard items that no longer spark joy. Thank them for their service—then let them go." Sentimental items are saved until the last step of the KonMari Method for good reason. Letting go of belongings heavy with memories can be difficult, even with hours of practice discarding other categorical items under your belt. We caught up with [Kristyn Ivey](#), Chicago's first certified KonMari tidying consultant to find out how to tackle this challenge with purpose—and [come out on the other side](#) with only items that truly spark joy. What are

sentimental items? “I define sentimental items as your ‘legacy of clutter,’” said Ivey, noting that photographs, artwork, journals and yearbooks are common sentimental items that represent past seasons of one’s life. “What is your legacy going to be? What are you leaving behind? Will anyone be happier if you save this item? This is when the conversation extends to others who may be impacted by what you’re keeping.” Ivey said that many people delay having important conversations with loved ones about preserving their personal legacies through belongings. “The KonMari process evokes conversation as much as it declutters. That’s what makes it really special,” she said. “We make a lot of assumptions around what actually may be special for someone else when we view it through our lens of joy.” While certain items may have deep meaning for one individual, they may not inspire the same feelings for those inheriting them. Thus, it’s important to share the stories that surround sentimental items—and equally as important to give people space to either accept or decline the heirloom. Ivey says she often is asked what to do when someone says they don’t want to inherit a certain belonging. “I say to believe them,” she said. “Manage these things now, while you can.”

How to assess sentimental items Because sentimental items can come in a variety of forms, Ivey said that it’s important to not accidentally address them in earlier categories. “If you find a photo or piece of art, that is not in the paper category. That is sentimental,” she said. “It’s important to get sentimental items together and not try to make snap judgments about their ‘joy factor’ before you’ve had an appropriate amount of practice on easier decisions.” Break the sentimental category into subcategories, like photos, artwork and jewelry, to make the task less overwhelming. Create a category of items that may be sentimental to others, but not to you, and delegate those decisions. Consider outsourcing the digitization and organization of photos to a professional. Also, sell items that have value now instead of assuming you can sell them for more later. For items that pose a particularly challenging decision, lean into the true emotional reason behind why you are considering keeping it. “What does that object represent for you? How can that memory, or the person the object represents, be memorialized in a way that may not take up such a large footprint? Perhaps take a photo of that particular object to remember it, but maybe let it go in a way where you’re leading with gratitude, like donating it to a charity that you are particularly fond of, or recycling so it will be appropriately reused or reduced,” suggested Ivey.

Revisit your intention Throughout the process, revisit the first step of the KonMari method: Defining your ideal lifestyle and living environment. “Lean on that vision whenever you are going through a category, but especially with sentimental items,” said Ivey. “You should really view it as a way to celebrate the end of your process. It’s a way to highlight and honor things, dotting your home with items that are special and no longer hiding in the dark corners of the basement.” In the end, KonMari gives you permission to keep whatever you want. “Just remember that you may have to scale back in other clutter categories in order to make space for the confident decision about keeping something in excess,” said Ivey. “Ultimately, it’s an exercise in keeping, rather than discarding.”