

# Taking stock of your stuff, time and money



By Eve Menezes Cunningham

**A**nother year has whizzed by and you may be wondering what you want to improve in the coming year. Maybe you seem to be setting the same goals each year and somehow not making the changes you help your clients to sustain. If this is the case for any of your resolutions for 2016, you might want to ask yourself why.

Is this previously failed attempt actually something you care about or perhaps something you've said you'll work on to please a loved one? Is it something you think you should care about based on what you've read in magazines?

One of the loveliest books I read in 2015 was Marie Kondo's *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*. Her clutter clearing process is simple and revolves around handling every item you own (literally taking stock of your life) and asking the simple question, 'Does this spark joy?'

It's positively easy to then release the things that don't spark joy whether you donate them to charity, sell them or simply bin or recycle (I bought the book because it sounded adorable and thought it might be helpful for some clients

but I ended up following her process and, within 2 weeks, had donated 50+ carrier bags to charity shops and countless more for recycling).

We can use the same approach with our lives. As you think about the year ahead, maybe scanning

“As you think about the year ahead, which events and days spark the most joy?”

your planner for things you've already got booked in, which events and days spark the most joy? What about the other days? Are there any things that do the opposite and drain you at the very thought of them?

Of course, there'll always be things that we choose to do in spite of them not bringing our most effervescent self to the surface. Our values mean we'll keep our word, donate our time and/or money to causes we care about, do our duty caring for dependants and loved ones, and things that don't perhaps spark joy but which we know we want to do (even if the practicalities are frustrating sometimes or, if you

have limited support, often). This can spark a quieter type of joy but we know that it's something we wouldn't want to delete from our schedules. What about the things that don't feel good or align with our values?

In *Money: A Love Story*, Kate Northrup encourages readers to look at their bank balances and credit card statements and assess, through mood, each expense. It's a simple tool, similar to Kondo's, which can help us cut through so much excess spending.

You might want to try it with your expenses (charges to do with a gorgeous day out may make you beam at the memory whereas basic bills might make you feel less enthusiastic but happy that you can afford to pay them).

Which stand out as the kind of expense that brings you bigger rewards in terms of memory? What about the kind of thing you almost immediately regret?

Taking stock of your possessions, finances and the way you spend your time, notice how you now feel about the year ahead. What would you like to do more and less of? ■