



## In the CLUTCHES OF CLUTTER... and the KEEP TEST!

How to break through the agony of deciding what to keep and cherish,  
and what to give away.

What is your most frustrating mess? Is it the overflowing piles on the dining room table or the attic packed with who knows what? Is it the shelves stuffed with knick-knacks or the boxes and boxes of kids' schoolwork that you don't want to toss but can't store forever?"

Say it's the junk room. You'd rather ignore it but you can feel its tentacles wrapping themselves around you anyway. A thousand impossible decisions await. What to do with those boxes of great grandmother's china sitting way in the back of the closet? The wedding dress? All that cloth for that the sewing project!

In there somewhere are several good coats and who knows WHAT is in the boxes on top of the old bed! Of course no one sleeps in that room. No one can get in there. It was once a pretty space but now feels like a hopeless burden.

Sound familiar? Maybe you have a whole barn to deal with, or maybe it's a bedroom or kitchen. Regardless - you are probably overwhelmed and need a solution.

Yet you think, "How can I get rid of any of it?" There are so many reasons why you have all that stuff:

- It was a present from someone special
- It cost a bunch of money
- It could come in handy
- It's practically new
- You don't believe in wasting things!

All of these can be excellent reasons for keeping an item IF you have tons of

time and space to devote to everything you own. If however, you are feeling oppressed by too much stuff and unable to make decisions about it, try this:

## **THE KEEP TEST!**

YOU ASK ONLY THREE QUESTIONS. They are all centered on YOU and the realities of your life rather than who the stuff belonged to, where it came from, how much money it cost etc. etc. Here they are:

### **Question 1. DO I LOVE THIS ?**

Breathe ... and stay focused on this one question.

How do you know you love it? Well - does it make you smile when you see it or hold it. Does it make you happy? Does it make YOUR heart sing?

If you get a resounding YES- the item goes into your keep pile. If not there's another question to ask.

### **Question 2. DO I USE THIS - NOW ?**

"NOW" because it is now that we are talking about. This question is not about what you hope to do in the future - what you might do. It's about what you have time for NOW; about who you are now.

It can be hard to stay firmly rooted to this question. What about the knitting project you started four years ago which you have always thought you would get back to?

Well - it depends upon how you feel having it around. Are you full of renewed energy about the project? You might decide to give it another chance. If so - put it in an obvious place where you can begin to work on it.

If instead you feel a sense of burden and failure; if you think, "I SHOULD finish that project - but I really want to do my sculpture ... let the yarn project go. Give the yarn to someone who does craft projects with children or teaches knitting. Clear out the space for your current life.

### **Question 3. IS THIS A TREASURE?**

Maybe it's your grandmother's dress and you don't like the style that much but it reminds you of what a comfort she was. Do keep it ! But Aunt Bessies

hat is a different story. You didn't know her very well and you don't like the style. Then by all means pass it on with your blessing.

This is about how YOU feel. Is the item a treasure to you? You will want to consider carefully. If it is, you don't need any further justification whether it's in perfect shape and worth tons or worn, cracked and worth nothing. It is yours to keep.

However if you are thinking you SHOULD keep it because of someone else's reasons it's time to give it another home. Let someone else enjoy and treasure it.

WITH a clear and resounding YES to any one of these three questions the item passes the KEEP test. Just imagine if everything you have around you has passed this test!

These questions help you fully focus on what is truly useful and gives you joy ... If you want to have a space that you can manage with ease use the KEEP TEST as your decision making devise.

-----  
If there's a question that this article doesn't answer, you are invited to look through other articles on my website or email me at [Joanna@breathing-space.com](mailto:Joanna@breathing-space.com).

With all best wishes, Joanna Rueter