

# Sorry, Marie Kondo. Most People Have Too Little Stuff.

Marie Kondo's Netflix show "Tidying Up" is a hit. Apparently, Americans love watching other people throw stuff into trash bags – saying "thank you" to each item first, per the KonMari method. In each episode, Kondo cheerfully sweeps into a new family's home like a Japanese Mary Poppins and teaches them how to declutter their stuff. She tells them to keep only the items that "spark joy."

I watched the first two episodes of "Tidying Up," but that's enough for me. The show is not un-entertaining. But I object to the way the KonMari method is presented as a kind of secular salvation. Somehow, if you just get rid of all your excess junk, you will finally live your best life.

Of course, it's great to have a tidy house. No one denies that. But the alleged benefits of the KonMari method are absurdly overblown. At the end of each episode, the families weep and thank Kondo for fixing their marriages, making them better parents, and removing evil from their hearts.

And then there's the issue of decluttering. How necessary is it really for most people? In the second episode, Kondo helps the Akiyama family, who have a garage piled so high with junk they can barely wade through it. Yes, they're a case for professional intervention. But that's the exception rather than the rule. In my experience, most people's problem is that their house is way too empty.

I can't tell you how often I've visited a home that makes me wonder if the family just moved in and haven't unpacked yet. There's one sofa against a wall. Perhaps a coffee table if you're lucky. Some people store their bicycles in their living room. The windows have blinds, but no curtains. There is nothing hanging on the bare, white walls – except a gigantic

flat-screen TV. Would it be so difficult to print out a few photos and buy some frames at Wal-Mart? Hanging those on the walls would go a long way towards creating a cozier home.

These families must have spent all their money on buying the home and then had no budget left to decorate. That's what I assume must have happened, anyway. What other explanation is there for a human being choosing to live in a house that looks like a mental hospital?

In fairness to Kondo, her two books do treat the question of home decorating. Once we establish that an item "sparks joy," she encourages us to display it proudly. But that side of the KonMari method has been lost in the show. We only see people throwing out their excess.

Style is intensely personal. It would be hard for Netflix to make a show about home decorating that would be popular with a large audience. Focusing on decluttering is easier and has much broader appeal. (Not to mention that it offers the delicious shock value of showing huge messes like the Akiyama's garage).

To a limited extent, the KonMari method is useful for everyone. We all have a junk drawer or a messy closet somewhere. And every American – myself included – owns too many clothes.

However, the number of people who need to seriously declutter – like the Akiyama family – is tiny. Everyone else needs to stop throwing stuff out. Instead, they should focus their time and energy on buying some nice items to make their home cozier. And they need to get that bicycle out of their living room.

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