

Marie Kondo and the Clutter That Sparks Joy

When I was eight years old, a little girl moved in across the street. Since Katie* was an only child and the daughter of two working parents, she spent a fair amount of time at my house, imagining and playing up a storm.

One day, several years into our friendship, I happened to be over at Katie's house when she realized that her mom had been doing some spring cleaning. In Katie's bedroom. Amongst Katie's stuff.

Katie was not happy.

Admittedly, I was not much help. The sight of Katie freaking out as she rescued her stuffed animals out of the trash can in the alley was too much, and I had a hearty case of the giggles as I trotted behind Katie—arms piled high with stuffed animals—back and forth between the trash can and her bedroom.

As an adult, I have a little more sympathy for Katie's mom than I did at the time. An interior decorator, she likely learned the Marie Kondo concept of decluttering while Marie Kondo was still in diapers. Katie's clutter wasn't sparking joy in her mother, apparently, so out it went.

But Katie's mother probably learned that day that even if a child's clutter doesn't bring a mother joy, it likely brings joy to the child. And that's something that it seems even Marie Kondo herself may be starting to realize.

The popular organizing consultant recently admitted that the birth of her third child has tossed her "tidying up" ideals out the window. Instead, she is adjusting her priorities, [The Guardian explained](#):

“Up until now, I was a professional tidier, so I did my best to keep my home tidy at all times,” she said, through an interpreter during an online webinar.

“I have kind of given up on that, in a good way for me,” she said. “Now I realise what is important to me is enjoying spending time with my children at home.”

Parents the world over [rejoiced](#), feeling their guilt diminish over their inability to juggle small children and keep a continually tidy home.

We should as well—not necessarily because Kondo got a comeuppance, but because she realized that there is greater joy in loving on and enjoying her children, despite their untidy ways. Their little lives are too short to be upset over the clutter and disorder they bring to a household.

There is nothing wrong with striving for a neat and tidy house. Cleanliness and orderliness are first rate qualities we should all seek to have. But in striving for such tidiness, we need to ensure that we’re not putting it above those we love. One day, we’ll likely live in houses without shoes and soccer gear and stuffed animals strewn about ... and we’ll give anything to have that clutter back again, if it would only bring the little pattering feet and dirty fingertips that made such disorder in the first place.

—

**Names have been changed.*

This [article](#) originally appeared on Annie’s Substack. You can subscribe to it [here](#).

Image credit: Pixnio-Drazen Nesic, [CC0 1.0](#)

[ITO](#)