How to apply Marie Kondo’s ‘Tidying Up’ to your finances
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I admit that I haven’t watched Marie Kondo’s hit show “Tidying Up,” but our daughters have described it to me. And while I love thinking about what may spark joy in me, from a financial planning perspective, I am also interested in what we can get rid of. So let’s tidy up our financial perspectives.

You feel frustrated because your partner just bought something you don’t think they need or they discourage you from getting something you really want — throw those sentiments away. Something gets triggered in these interactions, but it isn’t about money. The key thing is to get agreements around what you reasonably can spend and then don’t sweat how it is spent. Being too frugal or over spending are generally about fears of something like not having enough or not fitting in. Throw away the judgment and decide how to allocate your money by aligning it with your values.

You made a bad investment decision and now you are paralyzed — throw it away. So maybe you jumped on something because greed took over, you were sold something that was not the right thing for you, or you got out of the market in 2009 and watched it soar past you in the ensuing years. Spend more time understanding your process and less on the results. Throw away old stories that aren’t useful.

Your child made what you think is a stupid money decision — throw it away. Work with your children on resilience around money decisions, get curious around how they are making choices, and become interested in what they want for themselves. What you perceive is a dumb choice may actually just be a different choice than yours. And if it really was a poor decision, they are likely to learn from it if you let them. Throw away giving them financial advice before they ask for it.

You think that no matter what you have, it isn’t enough — throw it away. Here is a secret — if your partner is a problem, your boss is a problem, your job is a problem, your friends are a problem, there may be a chance that you are the problem. The simplest way to throw away wanting something else is spending more time wanting what you have. Reflect daily on what is going right and sit with what is not going well as you work through it. You may be best off throwing away what you are saying to yourself about how miserable life is rather than throwing away those things that you are blaming for the misery.

As Kondo tidily sums up, “People cannot change their habits without first changing their thinking.”

Spend your life wisely.

- Ross Levin

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