
Living Homegrown Podcast – Episode 163 Organizing Your Home With The KonMari Method

Show Notes are at: www.LivingHomegrown.com/163

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Theresa: This is the Living Homegrown podcast, episode 163.

Announcer: Welcome to the living homegrown podcast where it's all about how to live farm fresh without the farm, to help guide the way to a more flavorful and sustainable lifestyle is your host, National PBS TV producer and canning expert, Theresa Loe.

Theresa: Hey there everybody. Today is a little bit different. Today is an encore episode, and I explained in episode 162, last week's episode, why I'm taking just a couple of episodes off so that my team and I can work on a project together. And so we brought back some of our favorite episodes. It was really hard for us to go through all of the 161 different episodes and decide which ones to bring back that we thought you guys might like to revisit. We have so many incredible interviews, and some of my solo episodes, and just some that seemed to really resonate with you. And I know that you probably have not listened to every single one, and there are some really wonderful nuggets of information that I just hate for you to miss. So since I needed to take just a couple of weeks off with the podcast, we brought back some of our favorites. And today's episode is one of those favorites.

This particular episode is all about the KonMari method for organizing, and I'm talking specifically how you can use it if you are a gardener, or a homesteader, or just how to make your whole entire home a little bit more organized. Now, this particular episode came out a couple of years ago and I am happy to report that I am still using this particular method, especially for folding my clothes, and even my kids still fold their clothes this way. My oldest went off to college last year and the reason he didn't have any problem fitting all of his clothes into his dorm room was because he just automatically folds all of his t-shirts and everything using the KonMari method. And it's just this really simple, easy way to make things fit. So, he like amazed all his friends because he was so super

organized and it actually, it wasn't that like I drilled it into his head, he really liked using this method so he just did it automatically.

Anyway, even though this is an encore episode, we still have fresh show notes for you with the latest links and all of the important information. So to get to the show notes, just go to livinghomegrown.com/163. We'll have everything talked about will be in this new set of show notes, including the transcript for today's episode. So with that, let's dive into this encore episode all about the KonMari method.

Hey there everybody, and welcome to the Living Homegrown podcast. I'm your host, Theresa Loe. This podcast is where we talk about living farm fresh without a farm. And that's through artisan food crafts, like canning, preserving, and even fermenting, small space food growing, backyard critter keeping everything from chickens to goats, and just living a more sustainable lifestyle. If you'd like to learn more about any of these topics or my online canning courses, just visit my website, livinghomegrown.com.

Today's episode is about organizing your homestead and I'm specifically talking about using the KonMari method of organization for your homesteading organization. And you may have heard about this method, it's been a really big buzz the last couple months. Actually since the beginning of the year it's just taken off, and I'm seeing pictures on Pinterest, and I was hearing about it in all the newspapers, and magazines, and on television, and there were YouTube videos, and I was like, "Oh my gosh, what is this?"

And it was right at the beginning of the year that this craze started. And I guess everyone was starting their new year's resolutions and cleaning out their closets, and to be honest, when I first heard about this particular way of organizing your home, I right off the bat decided it was not for me. It just seemed a little extreme. It seemed too minimalistic. And as I was hearing different parts of the way you're supposed to organize, it just seemed a little hokey. So my first reaction was, "Nope, that's not for me." But I have to tell you that as I started to hear more and more people, including some of my friends who were starting to use this type of organization in their homes, and they were calling it life changing, it kind of sparked my interest. And I decided I needed to see what all the fuss was about.

Now, what I'm talking about is this book called *The Life Changing Magic of Tidying Up*. The subtitle is *The Japanese Art of Decluttering and Organizing*, and the book is written by a woman. If you read the name in English, it looks like Marie Kondo. But I believe the way that she pronounces her name is Marie Kondo, and her nickname is KonMari, and that's where the KonMari method comes about. That's where that name comes from. So, if you hear KonMari method or the art of tidying, that is what people are talking about. They're

talking about this book, and millions of copies of this book have been sold. You can read the entire book in a day. It's a very simple, very easy reading. I got mine as an audio book, so I was listening as I was flying and I'm traveling, and then apply to everything as I got home. And I have to tell you once you start applying some of these things, it really is life changing.

It was for me. And no, I'm not an affiliate of anything, I'm not trying to sell you the book or anything like that. I just wanted to make the topic of today's podcast be about how I have taken those methods of how I have organized my closets, and my clothes, and I am now applying them to all different aspects of my life. So that means I am organizing my kitchen, and my homesteading supplies, and my gardening supplies using this same method and it really has been life changing for me. It makes my life simpler. It's about bringing more joy and happiness into your life by not having the clutter in your brain, or the clutter in your closets. And you know it's funny, I talked about being very organized when you're canning in another podcast episode. It was podcast episode number 10, and I'll have a link to that in the show notes. And I have written about organizing all of your canning equipment, and it kind of related to what I had learned from using this KonMari method in my house.

Those two posts, the podcast and the post about organizing, were extremely popular, so it does seem that everybody wants to be a little bit more organized and wants to streamline their time. And by being organized you do streamline your time. And so in today's podcast I'm going to explain what the heck this organizing craze is, exactly what the KonMari method is and how it works, and the basic principles. And explain how I use it now, both in my home and in my home steadying organization. And I have to say I'm still a work in progress. I'm still working on different areas of my home, in no way is my home perfectly organized yet, and it takes months and months to really get into every nook and cranny of your home. You will find things everywhere stuffed in corners, but as you kind of embrace this whole philosophy, it gets easier and easier, and faster and faster. At least that's the way it has been for me.

My first test run of doing this type of organization was when I was organizing my clothes. That's really how she tells you to start, is you start with your clothes, because that's one of the easiest things to organize. You don't have as much emotional attachment to your clothes as you might when you start trying to organize and go through your momentous. So, I started with my clothes and I was so head over heels happy with the results when I finished. I have not backtracked. I have not gone back to my old ways at all. And you know how you might go and organize a closet, and then three weeks later you open up that closet and you've kind of reverted back? It's starting to look disorganized again. Well, when you use this method, everything is so streamlined that you really do not find yourself going back. At least I haven't.

So with all that said, let me dive into what exactly is this KonMari method of organization. I think that if I were to try and sum up in just a few sentences, what is different about this method? It's that whereas most times you open up a closet to organize it and you just are looking at what to pull out or what to discard, the way she makes you organize is you take everything out and you work on one category at a time. Like for instance, clothes. You take all of your clothes from everywhere in the house, not just that one closet, and then you decide what to put back. And doing it that way makes a huge difference. The other part of the philosophy that was the life changing part is that you're only supposed to put back or keep what brings you joy or happiness, and that was where it was a little touchy feely. You know, a little over the top for me when I was first reading about this.

However, as you start to read the book and you understand the whole bigger picture, you do end up with a lot more happiness at the end. Because you don't have the clutter, you don't have the guilt of things that you maybe spent too much money on that you never use. Or something that was given to you that you don't really want, but you feel like you have to hold onto it. There's all these negative associations with a lot of that stuff, and the clutter alone can be very, very stressful. So, when you only keep things that you love, or the way she says it, "Things that spark joy and happiness in you. When you open up your closet, you see all your favorite things, and that was the part, when I first heard that, I was like, "Well, that's impossible because there's things you have to have."

Well, yes, there are things that you have to have and that's where I kind of pull in the philosophy of I either keep something because it sparks joy or as beautiful, or I keep it because it is extremely useful and I have to have it. So, it actually does create joy because I need to use it. I'll get more into that when I talk about the canning equipment and how you can apply this there. But that's the gist of this philosophy, and that's where it's different from any other organizational tool or any other way that you might have tried to organize a closet. So, what I'm going to do is talk about four major points of how you apply this organization to your home, and how you can apply it to your canning, and you're gardening equipment, all of that stuff.

First of all, you will be organizing things by category, not by location. In other words, you don't open up a closet and say, "Oh, I'm going to organize the closet today." Instead you pick a category like clothes, or books, or movie tapes, or something like that, and you organize that one category all at once. Every single item in your entire household that falls into that category has to be pulled out and you organize it all at once.

Now, the reason this is so brilliant is that when you organize clothes, for example, you might only organize a little section of your closet, but you might have some other clothes in another area of the house. And you actually have duplicates or things that you really just don't need anymore, so you're really

only doing it in little bits and spurts and that just doesn't ever work. At least it never worked for me. So, the way it works with this method is you take all of your clothes, every single piece of clothing you have in the entire house and you dump it on the floor. And I know that sounds crazy, but you dump it on the floor so you have everything all in one room in one place.

Now, after you get over the initial shock at the sheer volume of clothing that you have, because I know it was a shocker to me. I am not at all into fashion. I just, I wear more for comfort than anything else, and I was shocked at how many pieces of clothing I had when I put it all on the floor. So, step one is to organize by category and step two is to dump it on the floor. And step three is to pick up every single item of clothing and see how it makes you feel. Now, when I first heard that, I thought, "Okay, that's a little nutty. That's very, very nutty," but trust me, if you go with this, it really, really makes all of the decision making so much easier. The idea is that you only want to pick what you were going to keep, not what you're going to throw away, and you only want to keep items that bring you joy.

Now, you're probably already thinking in your head, "Well, what about the items that may be don't bring me joy, but that I have to have?" Well, the way I worked around that was that I keep things that either bring me joy or are extremely useful and I have to have them. There are some instances where a piece of kitchen equipment perhaps doesn't necessarily bring me joy, but I have to have it, and I'll talk about that in a minute. But back to picking each item up, that's step three. So as you pick up every shirt or every pair of pants, you have to decide, "Does this bring me joy?" And at first you're kind of unsure until you pick up like your favorite pair of blue jeans, and then you know what that feeling is. Like, "Oh yes, these jeans bring me joy. Or this shirt has a very special memory and brings you joy." Then it starts to become a little bit easier.

So as you first get started, you may have several items that you're unsure of, and I started making a pile of 'I'm not sure a pile' and I would go back over that later. But as you start going, there are certain items that you pick up that perhaps were given to you and you've never worn them. You immediately feel guilt because you know they were expensive and someone gave them to you, and you don't want to just discard them. But if you keep them, they don't bring you joy. So what do you do about an item like that? Well, KonMari has a very set way of how to handle things like that. She feels that you should not keep something out of obligation if it does not bring you joy. That you need to acknowledge and be grateful for the fact that someone bought that gift for you, that they took the time, energy, and money to buy that gift for you, to give it to you and be grateful for the gift. But you do not need to keep it out of obligation, because the person who gave it to you would not want you to have resentment, or worry, or guilt every time you see that item.

They want you to have happiness in the fact that they gave it to you. And if you don't get happiness from it, then you should pass it on, or give it away, or hand it off so that someone else out in the universe can use that item and get enjoyment from it. Other times you might pick up something like a jacket that was just way too expensive and you never wore it. So every time you pick it up, you have guilt and you're keeping it thinking, "Well, maybe, maybe I'll wear it some day, because you know I spent a lot of money on that." Well, no, you have to let it go because it has too much negative association. If you haven't worn it by now, you're not going to wear it, so it's time to let it go.

So after you have picked your category, you've taken everything and put it into the room. You have picked up every single item and decided if it gives you joy, then the fourth step is to take all the things that you are keeping, all the things that you have chosen that give you joy or are extremely useful and you have to find a home for them. But you will discover that you end up purging or getting rid of so many things that did not give you joy, that you end up having a lot more space. And the idea of putting the things away so that everything has a home is so much easier. That was the life changing part for me. That and the fact that all of this clutter was out of my house, and it seemed to free my thinking, and when I would open up my closets, it really bring me joy and it was so much more peaceful and less stressful. That was the life changing part for me.

Now, the way that I have been applying this same philosophy of sorting by category and only picking things that bring joy, and giving everything a home. The way I have been applying that to my homesteading and gardening supplies is I follow the exact same philosophy. So for instance, in my kitchen and in my garage I gathered together all of, let's say, my canning supplies, all my canning jars. And when you put all of your jars in one room and you start realizing, "You know, I had some jars that were chipped. I had some canning rings that were rusty. I had a whole bunch of vintage jars that were just packed away that I wasn't using it all that I just adored." Those definitely brought me joy and I wasn't using them.

When I put all of these canning jars and all my cannon supplies in one room, I actually covered my whole living room with all my canning supplies. It forces you to see where perhaps you have spent way too much money on certain sized jars, for example, or where you need to buy more. And in the case of what brings you joy? Well, I definitely realized that I had a lot of rusty rings, a lot of canning jar rings that were rusty, and those rusty rings do not bring me joy. So, I was cleaning out all of the rusty rings, and having all the new rings, and when it came to my canning equipment, you know my canners, my pressure canner and my water bath canner, they absolutely do bring me joy. So that was a no brainer.

But I also had some pots and pans that I use with canning that were beat up, that were ugly, that really didn't serve their purpose anymore. I didn't really use them. I was actually using other things, and so I had duplicates. But the real eyeopener for me was the vintage jars that I had all over my house. Now, I love to collect old blue vintage canning jars, and some of the old wire bail jars, and I have them in various places of the house. But most of them were wrapped up and in boxes. I was not using them. I had collected them. I had bought them at garage sales, and I was not enjoying them. I remember when I was in my early 20s and my grandmother knew that I was collecting green jadeite dishes, and she had a couple pieces of jadeite dishes that she gave me to add to my collection.

And she gave me these dishes and I had most of it in boxes, because I was so afraid that the dishes ... You know, they're those green depression glass dishes, I was so afraid that they would get broken in an earthquake. We live in earthquake country in Los Angeles and we had had an earthquake a few years before I started collecting, and I was so paranoid that I kept my collection wrapped up in a box, in boxes, in the garage. So I remember it was months later and my grandmother said to me, "So, how are you liking your green dishes? Don't you just love having breakfast in the morning on your favorite dishes?" And I kind of sat there for a second and I thought, I better does tell her I'm actually not using them. They're all wrapped up. And she just about blew a gasket, because she said, "Well, if you're not going to enjoy the dishes, why bother having them?"

And it was such a shocker when she said that to me, but she was so right. So I immediately pulled all of those dishes out and I started using them for my everyday dishes. And I have used them my entire married life. It was only just recently that we boxed them up and move them up to our farmstead, up in northern California. Otherwise, they have been my everyday dishes for most of my adult life. And did any of them ever get broken? Absolutely. Did I ever drop one or did one get ruined somehow? Absolutely. It happened and I grieved a little bit for each one of those dishes, because they're not easy to replace, but I so got more enjoyment out of using them every day than I did having them boxed up and put away.

So, when I was doing the canning equipment and trying to organize everything using the KonMari method, I realized that my blue vintage jars had spent most of their lives sitting in boxes in my garage, or just sitting tucked away on some shelf. And it made me realize that I needed to start pulling them out and using them more. I was using one blue vintage jar for making my room temperature yogurt. I talk about making yogurt in episode two of this podcast, and it's a yogurt that's made sitting on your countertop. And so I do use one jar for that, but I really wasn't enjoying some of my old larger jars, and this made me realize that I needed to start doing that. Because they bring me tremendous joy and I wanted them out on my countertops and on my shelves. So, now I use my jars

for storing my coffee, and my rice, and beans, and things like that, that are just sitting in my pantry. So when I open up my pantry, it's so much more beautiful and I actually enjoy doing that. I get more joy out of those jars.

Now, in the case of gardening equipment or outdoor equipment, when you're using this method for that, I took all of my gardening tools, and my gardening gloves, and all of that stuff and laid them out on my patio. And it made me realize that I had way too many cultivators, and I had several broken shovels. I don't know why I was keeping the shovels as they were broken. I had a broken rake. I had several items that really I didn't need to be storing. They were taking up space in my tool shed. They were not being useful. They certainly weren't bringing me joy, and it forced me to hone down just the few items that I used all the time, that did bring me joy, that were helpful in the garden. And it made me realize that I needed a few things as well.

So, I use the same philosophy for my gardening equipment, for my gardening gloves. I got rid of any gloves that had holes in them that were worn out. I discovered gloves that had been tucked away into things, and I'm like, "Man, these are fantastic gloves." I get so much more enjoyment actually using them than to have them tucked away in some drawer somewhere.

One of the other things that I discovered I was doing with both canning equipment and gardening equipment, and I also tend to do this just in my kitchen. Is there were items that I perhaps had purchased or had been given to me that I really didn't need yet, but I kept thinking, "Well, maybe I'll keep them in case I ever need them some day." That is not really a good way to use your space of your home. Now, I'm not talking about like you have an extra bag of rice that maybe you'll use some day and you probably will. I'm talking about maybe it's an extra coffee maker that was given to you. You're already have a coffee maker that you're using that works great, and you have this extra one taking up space and you're holding onto it just in case you ever need it.

Well, the amount of space that that extra coffee maker is taking up is wasted space. And I know you feel guilty giving up that coffee maker because, first of all, it was expensive ,or perhaps it was a gift, but it's not bringing you joy and it's just sitting there. But if you put it out into the universe, either by giving it away or selling it at a garage sale, or passing it onto a friend who needs it, somebody else will get joy from that coffee maker. And that was the whole philosophy thing that at first when I first was hearing about this method, I didn't quite get it until I was actually doing that process myself. And then it really allowed you to let go of some things. So there's no reason to store extra duplicates of things unless you are absolutely sure that the first item is going to wear out, and you will actually need the next item in the next few weeks or months.

Otherwise, it's just taking up space and you're using that as an excuse not to let go and purge. Having that extra item does not bring you joy. And just to be clear, I'm not talking about your emergency stash where you might have extra flashlights, and batteries, and extra food, and things like that. That will bring you joy if you need it. But I'm talking about when you have extra measuring cups, or an extra tea kettle that you're just not using, or even a book that someone passed on to you that you think, "Well, maybe I might need this someday." If you are not going to ever get around to reading that book, that book is not bringing joy to anybody but especially not you.

So that's what I'm talking about here. Getting rid of or passing on items that are either duplicates, or you will never use them and you need to pass them on so that they can bring joy to someone else. When you do this, it frees you up so that when you open up your cupboards, and you open up your closets, everything in there is things that you are currently using and needing, or things that bring you joy. And yes, I have a few items that maybe don't bring me particular joy, but they are things that I need. Like my iron for example. I have an iron, I don't really like ironing, but I have an iron that's a nice one, and I do use it. So, I guess it brings me joy in that I only needed occasionally, so it's just there if I need it. It's something that I have to have. But I certainly don't need to have five sets of measuring spoons.

So by narrowing down to just what I actually need opens up my space and takes away some of the clutter, which will make you feel so much more relaxed, at ease, and rested. So that was the philosophy that I wanted to explain to you guys today. It has really been life changing for me. It has made me so much more organized and so much less cluttered in my head. I know where everything is, almost. I'm still working on a few areas, and I think you guys will really get a lot out of it as well.

Well, I hope you enjoyed that encore episode of the KonMari method for homesteading. To get to the show notes and get all the links, and the books, and everything mentioned, all you have to do is go to livinghomegrown.com/163. We'll have everything right there for you. Thank you so much for joining me for today's encore episode, and until next time just try to live a little more local, seasonal, and homegrown. See you next time.

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