

Getting Rid of Clutter (3 Must-Have Skills), Episode 71



Power of Moms
A Gathering Place for Deliberate Mothers

In this delightful and information- filled podcast, April talks to Alice Fulton Osborne, author of “It’s Here...Somewhere.” They discuss the steps necessary to de-clutter our lives and create a user-friendly home that’s easy to manage.

First, Alice defines **clutter**. Clutter is any and all the stuff that you don’t like, don’t use, don’t need, don’t want, and don’t have room for. We all have clutter.

We ultimately want to adhere to the “Grandma Philosophy” where everything has a place and everything is in its place. Before you organize, you have to **streamline** (which is a nasty experience) your possessions. Streamlining is the process of finding what matters most. Find the items that fit into the big picture and get rid of the rest. By getting rid of this stuff, it does not mean trash. Most, if not all, the clutter you no longer like, have use for, don’t want, need or have use for can become a useful and well-loved item to someone else through charity shops, yard sales, and donations. The big picture should focus on creating a user-friendly home that is easy to manage for mom and kids alike.

In considering items, choose **quality** over quantity. What do you need to run your home? Alice explains that in the consumer industry today many marketers and product developers actually make their products to become obsolete after a given length of time. This planned obsolescence is good for the market (and those making money from this venture) but it’s not too good for you, the consumer. Knowing that a lot of the tools on the market are meant to be replaced does not mean that we need to shop with that mentality. Choose the best quality you can afford and always remember that “less is best.”

Following this “less is best” mentality, find the best use of the space that you have. Alice explains that in their house her kitchen was small. She would often complain about the lack of space in the kitchen when she was struck by the idea to streamline her possessions in that area of her house. Once the clutter was cleared, she realized that she had plenty of space for the necessary tools to create meals for her family regardless of the kitchen’s physical size. April relays a philosophy that she inherited from her Power of Moms co-founder, Saren. Treat each physical item like a movie ticket: it’s good for the moment that you need it but once the purpose has expired it loses its original value.

Three must have skills and questions to ask in order to help de-clutter and streamline our possessions:

1. Why are you clinging to the things you don't like?
 - Sentiment – most of the things we hang on to the longest are the ones that have sentimental value. April remembers when she got rid of her prom dress, which was a really difficult decision. It was something that was taking up space in her closet and no longer served a purpose. She still has photos of her wearing the dress, but it no longer takes up needed and valuable closet space.
 - Paid good money – We fall back on the idea that we “paid good money” for an item (like there's such a thing as paying bad money) that we hang on to something that has long since lost its usability for our family. Alice points out that there are actually three prices that we pay for an item --the first is the initial payment at the store, the next is the price for it to stay in our home, and the way that it may hold us back if we hold onto it too long.
 - Might need it someday – This follows the same line of thinking as the paid good money. By hanging on to things that we think we'll need someday we create an overcrowded atmosphere for when we bring in the things that we need at that moment. Another way to reconcile sending these things off to the donation bin is to remember that the thing you give away could be something that another mom needs right then. Also, if, in the future you do need that thing, chances are there are four moms on your block who would be happy to lend or give you whatever it is you need.
2. Use the keeper questions
 - Do I like it?
 - Do I use it?
 - Do I need it?
 - Do I want it?
 - Do I have room for it?
 - You don't have to answer “yes” to all of the questions in order to keep something but they are useful in determining why you would want to keep that item. If you answer no to all of them but still feel compelled to keep it look at the above section to see why you're clinging to that thing. If it's for sentiment, perhaps a photo of the object will suffice to keep the memory alive.
3. Make the best use of things and circumstances
 - Space is fixed. Stuff is the variable.
 - Without some serious remodel, you can't change the size of your house, but you can change the amount of stuff in the house.
 - Big isn't better, it's just BIG.

By following the law of household physics (space is fixed, stuff is not), we can create a user-friendly environment that the kids can help control through housework and chores. We can feel organized. When everything has its place and everything gets put there, we have more time to just be mom.

Transcribed by Rosie Liljenquist