

CLEANSING & THE VALUE OF THINGS

By Donna Deos

Finally, the nicer weather is here! The pollen and other allergens have been horrendous this year and we, at last, have had some rain to wash those away and nourish the plants, gardens and forests. A good cleansing is always a good thing.

I was having this discussion just the other day about cleansing – or really, cleaning out. It's funny when you talk to a couple separately versus together. You can really get two different sides

of things. This was an older couple. She has been wanting him to get rid of things for years. She's really been on him about it and made her opinion clear. Naturally, when it is not your idea initially, one can tend to be reluctant.

He has been cleaning out and giving things away. He did it differently than most though. People usually start by getting rid of things that don't matter: the piles of stuff we don't use and aren't really sure why we have them anymore and work our way up from there. He started with the things he cares about most. He really thought about who he wanted to have what and why. He made important, heartfelt gifts to each and every family member and explained to them why he was giving this item to them and the importance behind it. He also gave them the opportunity to go through certain things and take whatever they wanted. To him, meaning is important.

He's now ready to do the other items and wants to go through his closet and give away things there too. He said he has so many pairs of nice shoes he never wears anymore and is ready to let them go. Funny thing: she isn't up for him doing that.

You see, one person's treasure is another person's trash. What is important to one person is not to another. The things she was ready to let go, he wasn't ready to let go of yet. The things he is ready to let go of, she isn't. (It could be because she remembers him in each of those pairs of shoes and the events they went to in them... versus the tools and other work related items he accumulated outside of his time with her).

That's okay. Letting go is a hard thing to do and no matter what it is, it can take time to get to the place where you are ready to let it go. Each person's path is different. We all see things and feel things differently.

I can look at a piece of furniture in my home and know it was Great Aunt Edith and Great Uncle Bill's. Someone else can look at it and say "why do you still have that? It's so old...and dated..." I have it because I have memories and emotional attachments to it. I've seen it in family photographs of their old house – right next to the wingback chair my brother has. To me it isn't just old, it's beautiful and meaningful – and actually very cool! It's an antique marble topped table with carved legs. I think it's just about the best thing ever! To others it's dated and old and not like all the new things out there. I think that's why I like it so much!



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Anyway, you will like the things you do and others will like the things they do. You will more easily give up some things than others and so will your parents, kids, spouse or whoever. If you're working on trying to clean out the old stuff just keep that in mind. It is great to clean out what you no longer want or need. Just please don't force someone else to give away something important to them simply because you don't understand and you don't appreciate it. Show some patience, let them keep it for a while longer. They may eventually come to the point where they can and are willing to let it go. Or, you may come to understand why it touches their heart and is important to them. Ask them about the item and why it is important. Get the stories and memories from them. If this is your parent or grandparent, you may want to take a picture and write down the story or even record a small video of them telling you about it. I wish I had done more of that!

Anyway, if you face resistance, move on to something else. Hey! How about you ask them where they would like to start and what they feel comfortable going through and getting rid of?! People tend to do things more easily when it is their idea rather than someone else's. As long as you are making progress, who cares where you start?

Much of our pasts are tied to the objects around us. Some of us appreciate that and can feel the memories of times gone by in the items we have. Some of us cannot. Some people do not seem to value or appreciate items at all. We do live in a very disposable society and have to also try and relate with those types of people as well. Either way, we still need to honor our loved one's feelings – even if we don't yet understand.

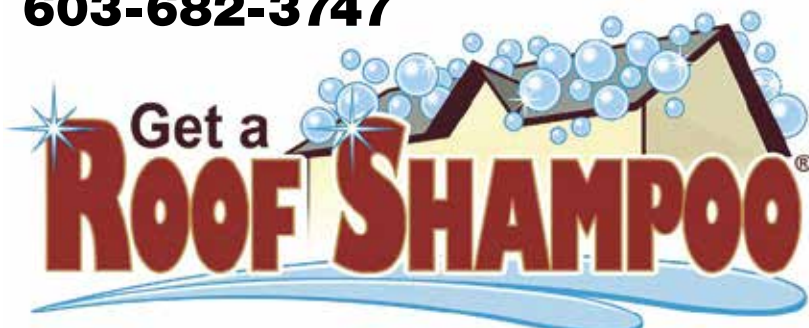
Trying to understand can help them work through their attachment to it. It can give you both great memories of the time you are spending together talking about it too. Don't rush the cleaning out. Don't try to hurry up and get it done just because that's what you want. Instead, enjoy the lessons and gifts it gives you! Trust me, cleaning out by yourself down the road without the ability to get the stories is a sad and lonely place to be. Understanding the thoughts, feelings and significance is a much nicer way of accomplishing the same task!

I guess the bigger lesson here is individualism. We are all unique individuals. We aren't just like everyone else and we don't need to be. We need is to work on being inclusive, of understanding each other's uniqueness and embracing that unique individualism!

Here's to that! Best, Donna

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