



Miriam Gold is a professional organizer in Jerusalem who believes tidying up is not about 'stuff'; it's about making the most of your space. (Photo: Courtesy of Miriam Gold)

Move over, Marie Kondo: This organizer loves cleaning up your busy, messy life

You don't have to thank your clothes for their service, professional organizer Miriam Gold says. But you do have to be committed to making the most of your space.

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by Jaime Frazee

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Thanks to the popularity of the [Netflix series](#) "Tidying Up," Marie Kondo is now a household name, and "sparking joy" is now a million-dollar phrase. Thrift stores and donation bins are filling up with discarded items inspired by the 34-year-old guru's credo. Millions of her viewers are now adopting the KonMari method and collectively thanking their clothes before sending them off for a second chance at life.

Life-changing magic? Perhaps. But that doesn't mean Kondo, with all her rituals and her cheery, warm disposition, is your only hope for combating the clutter in your home.

Enter [Miriam Gold](#). She's been helping people organize their homes, offices and overall lives for most of her life. A social worker by trade, Gold became a professional organizer about six years ago, shortly after [moving to Israel from the U.S.](#) She's impressed and uplifted by the recent worldwide obsession with Kondo, who believes decluttering is all about honoring and respecting items before discarding them, and who divides tasks by category rather than by room. But, Gold says, there's much that she finds "hokey" about the bestselling author's methods.

"I will never tell my client to 'thank' an item for its service or if it 'sparks joy' ... that's just to hokey for me," Gold told From The Grapevine from her home in Jerusalem. "But, I will ask my clients if the item they want to keep is useful to them and how they see themselves using it. Once they are able to verbalize if the item has a purpose or not, we will make sure that it is put in its proper place, or we will donate that item to someone who will find a use for it."



Author and series host Marie Kondo (left) has started a worldwide obsession with her KonMarie method of tidying up. (Photos: Michael Loccisano/Getty Images and CAITLIN WILSON/AFP/Getty Images)

Gold acknowledged that many of her clients differ widely from Kondo's, so she can't use a one-size-fits-all approach to help them. "Some people need a more fun approach, some more serious, some more intense coaching," she said. "Also, I work with all ages and each age and stage of life requires a different approach. For example, a busy mom needs a different approach than an elderly person who needs to downsize."

But in her experience, Gold said, one thing remains consistent: organizing by room, rather than by category, is always more effective. This way, it's "easier to see more immediate and smaller successes" and the process is "less overwhelming for the client."

And while Gold's approach focuses more on the individual, she does espouse a few gems to most of her clients as a primer. "Bedrooms are for sleep and sex, so they should feel like a hotel or zen place to escape into," Gold advised. Also, "One thing in, two things out."

Growing up in a large family of five siblings, it was difficult to find anything "zen" to escape to, Gold recalled. But, "I was the only one with my own room. Granted it was a very small room, but it was all mine. I always kept it neat and organized and was always rearranging and getting rid of items that no longer suited me."



Even the youngest residents of any home can learn to appreciate organizing. (Photo: Kostikova Natalia/Shutterstock)

However, she understands the difficulty people have with letting go of items, even if they're causing disorder in their homes.

"People hold on to items for three reasons: because they paid money for it, it serves a real purpose, or sentimental," Gold explained. "If an item is kept just because money was spent on it, I encourage my clients to donate the item to people who really need it and help them move past the monetary side of the issue. Sometimes that even helps them curb spending in the future. If people hold on to an item for sentimental reasons, we need to talk about that item and its value and real sentiment and make decisions based not only on emotion but also reality. Is there space for the item? What is the value, monetary and emotional? And realistically, how many of these types of items are we talking about?"



Sometimes you just need to organize your 'extras.' (Photo: Courtesy of Miriam Gold)

As daunting as some of her projects are, Gold keeps one thing top of mind when working with clients: "People are busy and don't have time for minutiae. I am good with space and how to best use it, and so many times I will rearrange an entire space so that my client appreciates their space and items even more."

Overall, though, it's not about folding methods and drawer dividers. For Gold, professional organizing is about organizing minds, not homes. "Visualize the type of life you want and environment you want to live in," she told us. "It's not about having enough items or money, it's about valuing what you do have and keeping it in order."



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