

The Subconscious Feelings of Messies

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I've been reading a book by Sandra Felton (aka The Organiser Lady) recently. I've read several of Sandra's books, and I highly recommend them all. She has a rare gift for both useful commonsense help and deep insight into the minds of organizationally-challenged people (aka Messies).

The most recent book I've been reading is "When You Live With a Messie." This particular book is intended for those who live with Messie people, though they themselves may or may not struggle with personal messie-ness. As I've thought about my own situation recently, I've become more and more aware that the messes in my house are not solely MY doing, or responsibility - somehow I seem to have multiple family members with strong tendencies to create mess everywhere they go and never clean it up, except under threat of dire consequences (like no friends, no phone, or no food until it's done!) I remember the days when I used to try to clean up after everyone else - I could spend all day running around in circles picking things up, and get nothing else done! Now, I KNOW that I am far from perfect - I have habits and tendencies that need working on or constant monitoring - but it's empowering to recognise that it's not just me, and that there are steps I can take to change situations at home I'm not happy about, despite the saboteurs - oops, I mean loved-ones who are messy. :-) And it can be done without nagging, yelling, arguing or otherwise tearing down relationships.

Today, however, I want to share with you a brief quote from "When You Live With a Messie" that really got me thinking about myself, as well as about others:

".....Messies have a feeling - not a thought mind you, a feeling - that the cherished belongings are somehow alive like pets and that the Messie is morally responsible for their well-being. That is why Messies want to give them away to a good home where they will be properly valued and cared for. As with an old and faithful dog, the Messie does not casually evict his junk."

Sandra goes on to talk about other subconscious feelings of Messies - that some part of the former owner somehow lives on in belongings, so disposing of a deceased relative's things somehow is disposing of THEM, or letting go of one's own things somehow diminishes SELF - or how Messies live in fear of need; getting rid of things kicks up the fear of being in need - and sometimes the Messie is saving things (such as books) he or she imagines to be of great value; a trip to the used book store may enlighten them to the reality that their "treasures" are worth very little.

These concepts really touched a cord in my mind! I realised that I do tend to see myself as somehow "morally responsible" for things I own. I find it very hard to toss things out "recklessly" - I try to make sure they go to a "good home" - either by giving them to someone I know needs them, selling them for money so I can benefit my family, donating to charity that will "use them for good" etc. It's really hard to just "let go". The rubbish dump is the LAST place I consider taking stuff - except for obviously broken or useless junk. Do you find that too??

How much does this kind of thinking hold us back from getting rid of things?? How much does it slow us down? A lot, I suspect!

Of course, if I stopped to think about it, I'm sure I could feel very justified in this thinking - after all the Bible talks about being content with what you have (surely that means appreciating it and loving it and not just tossing it out.....doesn't it???) and how all good things come from God (so if we have it, it must be good, "a blessing", and so should be treated as such, right??). Hmm.....maybe that kind of thinking is putting a slant on God's Word that he never intended???

What about the verses that say "Freely you have received; freely give." Or "To give is better than to receive." Or how about "Let us throw off everything that hinders, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us." I believe that often God does bless us with lots of things, not so we can hang on to them and be hindered in our own lives, but so that we can serve as a channel or conduit of God's blessing to others. By opening our hands, and giving it away.

So, today, I ask you: How many things do you have in your home that you don't truly love or need? How many of those have you been reluctant to part with because you were concerned about "properly" disposing of them, or were afraid you would need them later?

Now, I'm not saying you have to just toss everything in the trash! If you feel the best way to get rid of something would be to sell it, then fine - but put a time limit on doing this, and if you don't get around to advertising it, or it doesn't sell by then, you get rid of it anyway. And consider just letting go - giving it all away. Your stuff is not blessing you or your family if it's just sitting around cluttering up your home and lives!

Our church is holding their annual fair in 3 weeks time, to raise money for charity. As I ponder these thoughts, I'm opening my cupboards and clearing out pretty much anything I can do without - including those things I've been holding on to "just in case," because I "kinda like 'em" and other lame reasons. And it is so freeing to just let go, and so spirit-lifting to simply give.

Oh, and one way to *really* set yourself free from the desire to hold onto unneeded stuff - and that's to get involved in the lives of those less fortunate; those who truly have nothing! "She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy." (Prov 31:20) Giving of yourself to others, and seeing the needs, really helps you to feel good about living with less! (Of course that's just a side benefit).

Now go eliminate some stuff!
Love

Cynthia