



My favorite purging or decluttering technique is the:
Onion Edit®.

Think of your home as a **giant onion** waiting to be peeled. Remove one layer at a time until you've restored order.

Because possessions hold our memories, this process is *very* personal. Dumping everything at one time can be a shock to your system. I like this *slow and gradual* approach. I developed this program to allow a person to purge and then have an adjustment period before they purge again.

If you have a room that has been nagging you for awhile, take 15-30 minutes to work on it. Start by eliminating junk. The next time remove the unnecessary, continue working down the list until you have completed all of the categories. Repeat as needed.

1) The first layer to be removed is **obvious junk**. This is the stuff you *know* you should throw away, you just haven't gotten around to it yet. Move through the room looking for things that are broken, holey, dirty and un-cleanable, missing pieces, rusted, outdated or expired. No need to sort this into piles. It's all junk, take it straight to the trash.

2) The second layer is **the unnecessary**. Here are four of the main offenders:

- Duplicates. If you are working in the kitchen you will probably discover quite a few duplicates. Decide how many paring knives, spatulas and can openers you really need. Donate the rest, or offer extras to a friend.
- Things you don't use. If you haven't touched those boxes in the basement in the last year, you probably won't. Reevaluate.

There is one exception: decorating accessories. Framed artwork or unused frames, baskets, vases and the like are helpful to have on hand. It is better to store some of these items in a "prop" area than to keep everything on display at one time. In other words, if storing these items keeps your home from looking cluttered, then storing them is the best route.

- Things that don't fit. Don't collect several sizes in the hope that you will one day fit into them again. Give yourself a year, then move on. When you release the clothing you'll be able to release the guilty feelings that you get every time you look at the clothes.
- Things you don't like. After we've had things for awhile we stop noticing

them. The term for this is *visual noise*. Look around the room. Are there items that you don't love, that don't match, that really don't work with your style? Eliminate them.

3) The third layer is ***paper clutter***. Children's artwork, old college papers, household receipts and paid bills can accumulate very quickly. Paper clutter can be time-consuming to sort through. Every paper must be examined, page by page. It's tedious work and it's very easy to get bogged down. The results aren't as dramatic as the first two steps. However, *it is a necessary step*. Everything will be much more streamlined once you have eliminated this layer.

4) The fourth layer: **Book Review**. I am a book lover. So, I empathize if you have stacks and stacks of books. Try this: look at each book and honestly asked yourself these questions.

- "Will I ever read this again?"
- Does it have a deep meaning for me?
- Will I refer to it again?"

If you can't say yes, to at least one of those questions, box them up. Donate them to the library, sell a few to the used bookstore or handpick them to go to friends who will enjoy them.

5) The fifth layer is by far the most difficult. Reassess ***gifts*** and items with ***sentimental value***. Do you *really* love it? If you do, keep it without regret or explanation. But, *don't* keep things out of a sense of obligation or guilt.

Remember that organization is a life-long process. Once you have done the initial work, it just requires maintenance. Continue to "sweep" through the house from time to time to keep things organized.