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It's Time to Spring Clean Your Closets – and Personal Relationships

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It's Time to Spring Clean Your Closets — and Personal Relationships

By Carolyn Massiah
UCF Forum columnist
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I looked at my calendar recently and realized that spring is rapidly approaching. Each year at this time, I'm like millions of others who undertake the task of spring cleaning our homes.

We wash our windows. We dust in places guests will never see. We turn mattresses and change out bed sets. If we are truly committed to spring cleaning, we decide to tackle the dreaded closet. Unfortunately, intentions are not always converted to behaviors when it comes to cleaning of the closets in our homes...or in our lives.

I have an overwhelmingly large walk-in closet in my master bedroom. It was one of the major selling points of my home when I bought it. I was excited by the possibilities of what I could do with that large closet.

Now, however, I am merely overwhelmed with the amount of clothes, shoes and other various accessories I have managed to pile, shelve and shove into that closet. So, I chose to have the cleaning of the walk-in closet be my one major goal of spring cleaning this year.

Being an academic by trade, I somehow manage to make even the simplest of tasks into a research project of sorts. I want to do the best job possible in cleaning and organizing my closet. However, I want to be the most efficient with my time as well. So, I searched the internet on tips for cleaning closets. Pages and pages of results are produced on the subject.

Coincidentally, some of the advice given on cleaning our closets is readily applicable on cleaning up our lives as well.

On numerous websites, the advice is to not try to pick and choose items to keep or discard while they are still in the closet. Instead, the suggestion is to remove everything from the closet and then examine and/or try on every piece individually before making a decision about keeping, discarding, or donating. When reading that suggestion, I think about our own personal lives. We all have some issues, memories or people stuffed in our closets that we need to truly take out, examine and make an honest decision about.

When we try on clothes from our closet, we should be asking ourselves several questions. Those same questions can be asked about our personal lives:

1. **Does this fit:** As I began to clean, I realized that I have up to three different sizes of clothing stored in my closet. I have continued to hold onto the various sizes because I am always telling myself that I will fit into that size again.

I think we all have relationships or memories that we hold onto in the same vain. We hold out hope that we are going to fit those people or those times again someday. However, all of the spring-cleaning articles that I have read strongly suggest that we need to acknowledge that we have changed and that we must not hold onto items that no longer fit us merely out of emotional ties.

What people or issues are you holding onto that you have outgrown? It is OK to say they no longer fit you and you no longer fit them. Do not keep them around hoping that one day you will fit them again. Discard and move on.

2. **Is this still in style:** Beyond the several sizes of clothing I have in my closet, I also discovered that I have items that have long since gone out of style or they just do not match my current style or image. I must admit that when I go into my closet to choose an outfit, I will nostalgically look at those items and remember times gone by. However, I know that I will not choose to wear them. They just do not match the time and person that I am now.

This past year, I accepted that there were several people in my life that were like these clothing items. I kept them around because of the good old memories that we shared but we were not making any new memories together because we were different people with different paths.

Do you have an acquaintance that fits that category? You know that you are no longer friends but guilt and good memories prevent you from moving on. Holding onto those types of relationships will only clutter your mind and your heart much like out of style clothes clutter the closet.

Much like you, those people should probably find a new friend that matches their style. Donate them to that new friend.

3. **Will I make the time to repair this:** In cleaning out my closet, I discovered several items that were damaged. Perhaps they had stains, zippers were broken, seams were torn, or hems needed repairing. In either case, I had saved each of the items with the intention of repairing them. At least one of those items had been damaged for at

least two years. I just kept telling myself that I will make the time and effort to get the items repaired and until that time, I would hold onto the items.

Ironically, I have a couple of people in my life that fit this same category. We have a tear or some other damage in the seams of our relationships and I have just continually kept telling myself that I will make the time and effort to fix that damage.

In January, one of my acquaintances died. I had procrastinated so long that I will never have the opportunity to fix that relationship. Are you right now storing deep in the back of your own closet such a relationship? I urge you to take those damaged relationships out and give them an honest examination.

As harsh and hard as it might be, you may learn that it is not a relationship that you want to or need to repair. That is OK. Do not allow it to clutter your mind and heart any longer. Discard and move on. However, you might decide that the relationship is worth saving and spending the time to repair? If so, do not delay: repair and keep.

As you begin your spring cleaning and you decide to tackle those pesky closets in your home, also take time to deal with your own emotional closets. If you ask and honestly answer those three short questions, I think you will be relieved with the results and you will have room in your closet for the people and memories that belong because they fit who you are now.

Now, go clean your closets!

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