



WHY I DON'T ASK WHY

I don't ask my clients why they clutter, or why they have an item. Nor do I ask them why they want to keep something. In fact I rarely ask them why at all.

Why not?

Because it's not very helpful and hardly ever relevant.

It's unhelpful because it can put a client on the defensive and make them feel like they have to justify their belongings. They don't need to justify any items to me. They can buy and keep whatever they want.

It's unhelpful because clients with clutter are inevitably maxed out on their emotional, mental and physical bandwidth when it comes to their homes. Explaining their rationale for their belongings depletes their bandwidth even further.

It's unhelpful because it doesn't address a main constraint: belongings that don't have a home.

Decluttering can be tough enough without adding Why into the mix. Clearing space in a judgement free zone is easier, simpler and kinder for everyone.

Will clients sometimes tell me why they have something? Sure they will. If they do my job is to listen.

Sometimes in the act of talking to a non judgemental ear they come to a conclusion about the meaning and role of the item in their life, and if they want to find a space for it.

Sometimes my job is to remind them they can keep anything, not everything. Their home can contain any belongings they value within the limited space they have available.

Sometimes my job is to remind them an objects utility or beauty or significance or price doesn't have to be the determining factor in whether to keep it or not. They can keep things because they want to. End of story.

If a client is questioning whether to keep an item or not, my job is to ask questions that help them discern that. These questions might start with a How, or a What, or a When, or a Which, but even those are rare.

They are rare because like the Why questions they are rarely helpful or relevant. They are second order questions that are used only when they might provide greater clarity.

What's relevant is the Space first and foremost. Knowing the maximum amount of items that fit into the available space. What's helpful is making sure the Space only contains the number of items that a client can easily manage in that space. Working through that equation is a foundational skill.

The first part is addressed in Step 4 with this first order question: If you needed this item where would you look for it first?

This question is designed to give a home to an item that doesn't currently have a home.

When a client answers that Step 4 question they take the item to the place they would look for it first to put it away. This action gives them more clarity and information about their space. The item will fit in the space or it won't. If it fits great, they can keep it if they want to keep it.

If it doesn't fit they get to decide if they value the item in their hand more than they value the item currently taking up space, or vice versa they value the item in the space more than the one in their hand. Only one can fit in the space. It can be useful, beautiful, sentimental, expensive and still not be space worthy. Only the client knows which item they prefer more.

Same goes for you. Keep your favourites, keep it because you want to, keep anything you value, knowing you can't keep everything, simply because the space you have is the space you have.

Why? Your space is finite.

