

# The Joy of Clutter: What Marie Kondo Got Wrong

August 27, 2019

**I AM AN UNABASHED** magpie; tchotchkes dot the hill I will die on. They're mostly vacation mementos, like the silver, Victorian, mussel-shaped "match safe" that I splurged on in a Rome antique shop with my newly minted fiancé. I keep other dust-collectors at hand for a reason. My husband and I are trying to eliminate most of our screen time at home, and having books and playing cards within reach makes it much easier to resist our phones. Besides, the cards are beautiful and graphic.

Yes, some of my knickknacks spark joy, the quality that Japanese organizing dynamo [Marie Kondo](#) demands one's possessions trigger to be deemed worth keeping. But, though I'm sure her 2014 book, "The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up," has helped many of the millions of people in 42 regions and countries who've bought it stave off hoarding tendencies (now a bona fide mental-illness diagnosis), I've always found the bar she sets a little lofty and specific.

...

Clutter gets a bad rap. Researchers have found that a muddle of objects can actually jolt creativity. Kathleen Vohs, a professor of marketing at the University of Minnesota's Carlson School of Management, conducted studies in which people were led into a spotless or cluttered room, then tasked with imagining inventive uses for a surplus of ping-pong balls. "The people in messier rooms came up with more creative solutions," Ms. Vohs said. Their ideas included turning the white plastic orbs into earrings or popping them on chair feet to protect floors. "People in tidy rooms wrote things like, 'You could use them for Ping-Pong.'"