

behind THE clutter

TRUTH. LOVE. MEANING. PURPOSE.

june SARUWATARI

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preface.

Thank you so much for choosing to go on this journey with me. I am truly and deeply honored that you are here reading this book.

First of all, I would love to manage your expectations from the beginning so you don't misunderstand what kind of book this is. This book is not your traditional "how-to" book on organizing, simplifying, and decluttering—rather it is quite non-linear and non-traditional in that the book itself is not actually organized, simplified, or decluttered at all—in the traditional sense. It is not about the ins and outs of simplifying and decluttering your physical spaces, nor is it a collection of instructions and guidelines about actual systems to implement on your journey toward decluttering your homes and offices. Instead, this book delves into what I believe is *behind* the clutter—the layers of mental, spiritual, and emotional stuff that tend to manifest in the form of physical clutter in our lives.

Ideally, the book will take you on a unique journey as you look at your own stuff, both internal and external, through a new lens. To best prepare for this journey, I would love for you to let go of any preconceived notions of how you are going to declutter, organize, and simplify your stuff, and not to search for the "how to." I invite you to simply absorb what I am presenting to you and go on the ride with me. And enjoy it!

the process. *for your miraculous transformation.*

Based on my experience with myself and my clients, I have found that transformation doesn't tend to happen in some methodical A-B-C way, but in a zigzag way that may not even make sense to your logical brain. If you trust me as your tour guide and do the

exercises as they are presented, you will release the spontaneous free flow of intel hidden in the private recesses of your subconscious—your *TruthLoveMeaningPurpose*TM—which will finally allow that “transformation” you so crave. You cannot force the change to come, but you can encourage it by gently accepting who you truly are, the stuff you are truly made of, and honoring your unique soul. From this fresh perspective about your life and your stuff, the “how-to” will organically arise. Suddenly, you may be compelled to let go of chunks rather than bits. Suddenly, your stuff will look different. Suddenly, you will allow yourself to be at one with your stuff so that it will tell you the real story and power of your stuff. Then, suddenly, one day you will start throwing away boxes of your stuff, having realized why you were holding on in the first place. When you understand the “why” behind your stuff, you will finally gain control of your life!

So think of this journey as a treasure hunt. You’ll peel away the layers beneath your stuff, shine a light on the *internal* stuff lurking in the darkness, examine it with a fine-toothed comb, and decide whether you’re supposed to keep it or let it go. I truly believe this path is the way to a long-lasting change in your relationship to your external stuff. Once you make the internal shifts, the external will shift to match what is going on internally. And you will see the amazing tapestry of your own life as a unique work of art. You will see the masterpiece you already are. You really won’t need the “how to” from me—you’ll know what to do next, and you’ll be able to do it with love!

the map. to your special treasures.

Here’s a brief map of our journey. First, the Stuff Test will give you a glimpse into both the inside stuff you are made of—and the outside stuff you may accumulate. To me, it’s a continuum—both funny and profound. Again, once we finally deal with the stuff going on inside, the stuff on the outside will radically shift. The Introduction will give you a glimpse into why I believe what internally lies beneath the clutter is actually the most important stuff.

Part One, The Foundation, describes what I believe to be the core infrastructure beneath your stuff, space, being, and doing. In Me & My Stuff, you’ll come to understand why I am the way I am, and why I have empathy for you on this journey of decluttering, as I am not at all neat or organized by nature. Then we will talk about You & Your Stuff, because the journey is really all about you, and nobody like you will ever be born here on this earth! Then, I will introduce to you four special words in a unique combination that form the criteria for all my decisions in life—TruthLoveMeaningPurpose. To me, this filter is all you will ever need to make the best choices for you and your stuff, whether it’s simplifying, decluttering, or organizing your stuff, time, spaces, kids’ stuff and schedules, homes, offices, relationships, jobs, or businesses! I believe you can use TruthLoveMeaningPurpose as the foundation for everything—especially to curate and create a life you love, love, love!

Really, with those concepts and exercises, you can get started on transforming your life.

However, from there we move on to Part Two, The Journey itself, where I get more specific (and vulnerable). Here I share my own personal life stories, thoughts, views, and insights related to my own quest to becoming simplified, as well as the experiences and insights I've gained in my work with others during my decades as a coach and professional organizer. I'll also share the thought processes and mindsets that have been valuable tools in helping me become clutter free, curating stuff I love, and creating a life I love. Think of this section as a treasure hunt, where you are seeking clues to your journey to help you get organized, simplified, and decluttered on all levels, whether it's money, love, people, or time. My hope is that you will recognize yourself and your own experience in my stories, and that the Exercises at the end of each chapter will help you shift your perspective about your stuff, your different forms of clutter, your thought processes, and your life.

how to use this book. *for your unique journey.*

You can begin by reading the book from beginning to end, and then freely use it thereafter as a reference throughout your own quest to become simplified and create a life you love. You can flip to any page for a message for the day, a powerful reminder that will activate something deep within, to create those long-lasting changes you desire.

Or you can read it, highlight it, write in it, and use it as a workbook or journal of sorts, taking your time to work through each section at your own pace and in your own order. If you do the exercises as I encourage you to, you'll finish this book with a list of your own insights, thoughts, and ideas about how to declutter, simplify, organize, and curate your own unique life.

Or you can read one chapter a day and ruminate upon it. Let the words seep into your consciousness and stir up something inside of you. By the end of the book, enough should be stirred up inside of you—mentally, spiritually, and emotionally—for you to finally take action in many different areas of your life.

Remember: the journey behind your stuff is not a straight and narrow path. Getting to the truth requires fearless meandering, sightseeing, self-examining, and self-reflecting. In my own personal experience and in my work with many clients over the years, I have found that this heart-centered approach and the spontaneous path, where we let go of what we think “should” happen, brings maximum and long-lasting deep results from the inside out.

Also, with tremendous respect for each and every one of you, I am letting you know that I have chosen to refer to the Higher Power as God, but this name could be Buddha, Allah, Vishnu, or many others. I honor the God within each one of us. I honor Jesus Christ and the religion of Christianity. I honor Jehovah and the religion of Judaism. I honor Buddha and the religion of Buddhism. I honor Allah and the religion of Islam.

This book is about *you* and the God I believe that resides within each of you, even if you believe in all Gods, one God, or no God at all. For me, because I did grow up Christian, the word *God* has a special meaning for me and resonates with me. And while I have evolved and grown into a deeper understanding of God through different teachings, I have come to accept that God lives within each one of us. God lives within us as an intuition or an inner knowing. God lives within us as love, compassion, and passion. I do not look at this God as someone who punishes me or watches my acts with a stern hand, but as an all-loving God who loves me for just being me, and as I have come to learn, a God who loves me for just living my TruthLoveMeaningPurpose. So I choose to use God to refer to this Source Energy, all-encompassing Wisdom, Infinite Intelligence, and Higher Self within me.

Thank you for opening yourself to a new way of seeing God in your own life and how the stuff of your life can be full of God-energy—and thank you for choosing not to allow that word to stop you from seeing the message beyond the stuff and its deeper meaning.

Living your life full of your own TruthLoveMeaningPurpose is God in action for you. Living and honoring TruthLoveMeaningPurpose in all you do and are is utilizing all of God's gifts to you, and it is your gift to God and the world. Living your life with TruthLoveMeaningPurpose is honoring God with your stuff and your life. It is the ultimate dedication of your life to your God.

May you move forward in these teachings with an open heart and mind.

INTRODUCTION.

the journey behind the clutter. *the most important stuff.*

It's exciting for me to hear about people's journeys—what they learn along the way and how they learn it. What triggers the lessons? What catapults a person into doing something radically different? What was that defining moment? What was that one thing that put them over the top where they said, "I gotta change. I gotta do something different."

One definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. Do you truly want different results? Then do something differently. Just one thing—and suddenly, you're on a different path. Don't underestimate the significance of doing just one small thing differently. It could have long-lasting and significant consequences, possibly changing the course of your entire life. Make one choice, take action on that choice, and it will begin to have a domino effect on everything else.

My mission is to help you see the beautiful masterpiece you already are. Your life is a work of art. So what kind of art are you creating? Do you need all this stuff? The stuff should not make you feel whole or complete, or define you. The stuff should merely be an extension of the magnificence of who you are and your amazing, unique life.

My intention is to demystify the decluttering process for you, to simplify it so that anyone can understand what it takes to lead a life of simplicity, clarity, *truth, love, meaning, and purpose*. I want you to ask yourself the right questions to get you to the answers you already have within. I want you to transform how you do things and how you see your life and your stuff. I want you to realize that stuff has energy and a life of its own, and like you, the stuff wants to be useful, serve a purpose, have meaning, and be loved. We can't take anything with us when we die. We come into this world in this lifetime with nothing more

than deep-seated desires planted in our hearts. We don't come out of our mother's womb attached to stuff—only the umbilical cord that gives us breath and life. Breath is the only thing we come into this world with. And our last breath transports us to the next realm.

Do you feel suffocated by your stuff? Is it clogging up your life with confusion? Do you feel like you're slogging through mud every day? Do you want more energy?

Life energy has to do with what we bring into our environment, and what we surround ourselves with. We live in a physical universe, so of course, our physical environment will have a profound effect on our lives. But underneath this physical stuff are our mental, emotional, and spiritual layers of stuff. When you are surrounded by so much stuff, you feel bogged down mentally, spiritually, and emotionally. You can't budge. The stuff is holding you back from being all that you can be. It's holding you hostage. The stuff then is no longer serving you. You've become a servant to it. The stuff dictates to you how you should live your life. The stuff is no longer a tool to help you lead a better life—it's a burden controlling you and your actions.

When you crave a bigger space, why? Do you feel that bigger is better? And when you get more space, do you just fill it back up with more stuff, and then you run out space yet again? Do you really need all that space? Truthfully, do you really need all the stuff that's going to fill up that new big space?

The journey you're about to embark upon will make you conscious of the fact that everything you have in your life is there for a purpose. To teach you something. To help. To serve. To love.

When you're conscious of the purpose of every object, you won't cast aside that matchbook carelessly, stashing it away in some junk drawer where it'll sit for years, never being used to light a fire. You won't cast aside that bookmark you received from someone that you intend to use "one day." You will begin honoring that bookmark and the purpose it serves. You will put that bookmark with your other bookmarks so they can help you remember your place in your book and enjoy the journey of reading. If you don't want to spend the energy creating a comfortable home for the bookmark, give it to someone else who will use it for what it was intended. Give away what you don't want to someone who will honor it, respect it, cherish it, love it, and most importantly, give it life.

You give life to something by using it fully and deeply.

So why *do* you cast things aside? Because you're *unconscious*. Because you don't realize that the choices and decisions you make lead to the actions you take or don't take, and that, in reality, "creating" your life is a moment to moment endeavor with huge consequences. You don't realize that all your stuff, inside and out, is connected, and that it all matters.

Or perhaps you do realize it, but it's much easier to not deal with the feelings that come with the stuff, and you keep shoving it somewhere, hoping it really won't matter or no one will notice or care. You bury it deep somewhere so you never have to confront the truth.

But if you know that all your stuff is connected and it matters, how can you just buy more stuff and bring it into your life, when you have all that other stuff like it at home? C'mon, wake up and start dealing with it! Don't pretend to be in a coma with your stuff and act as if it's not there. Don't ignore your buried feelings and your stuff. Deal with it, and let it go once and for all if you are not truly using it fully and deeply. Give it to somebody who will consciously use that item and shower it with love.

There is no such thing as an unimportant item. Every item in your life is important and is there for a reason, to teach you something. There is no such thing as meaningless stuff. Otherwise, why have it? Why keep it? Why move it about? Let it go.

Why do you find it difficult to let go?

Fear. Do you fear that you might need it someday? That you won't have the money to replace it? Do you fear seeing empty spaces? Do they make you feel alone and empty? If you think of your stuff as friends and companions on the journey, why not have company that you love along for the ride?

Why keep things in your life that make you feel yucky? You know when you truly love something. If I ask you if you love this thing or that person, and you hesitate—that means you don't love it. When you love something, every fiber of your being oozes with passion. Your eyes light up, your heart beats a little bit faster, and you can't help but smile just because . . . oooh, it just feels so good inside. It feels right. You don't question it. You just know deep inside. Perhaps you can't quite define why, but you just know.

That's how I want you to feel about your stuff. I want you to become discerning with your stuff so the stuff that doesn't belong in your life will scream to you, "Let go of me! I don't belong."

Perhaps it did belong at one time. Perhaps one year ago, you were interested in the life of Sylvia Plath, and now you're fascinated with the works of e.e. cummings. Then, let go of those books that you purchased on Sylvia, and let e.e. reside in your home. Give those books away to someone else who will honor Sylvia's journey and who will go on the ride with her. Your ride with Sylvia is done. It was thrilling while it lasted, and now it's on to something else. Let go of the stuff that reflected your passions of yesterday, and create space for the fresh and new passions of today.

Live in the now. That means only keeping stuff in your life that reflects your present. That means honoring your truth, love, meaning, and purpose *now*—moment to moment.

So the simplifying, decluttering, and organizing process is a lifelong journey, not just something you do just once and that's it. You may have been organized a few years ago, but if you didn't remain vigilant on your journey, you may have gradually accumulated certain things and became disorganized again. You fell asleep at the wheel and allowed things into your vehicles, home, and being. You kept packing stuff in rather than taking the time and energy to process, to reflect, and to let go.

Does this item really belong now? Is this truthfully me now? Does this have meaning for me now? Do I love it still now?

Most of all, love the journey that you're on. Don't judge yourself. Don't be hard on yourself because you no longer love something that you spent your hard-earned cash on. It served you well for a season. You loved it for some time. You didn't waste it or dishonor it. The truth is that you fully loved it and squeezed the life out of it in each moment you used it. Even if it was a gift that wasn't really "you," and you haven't used it at all, you still fully squeezed the life out of it in the moment you received it—with gratitude—as an expression of love from the giver. There's no need to lament or overanalyze. Just let the truth be. The truth is: You don't love it anymore, it doesn't serve a purpose anymore, it doesn't have as much meaning anymore, and it's not really *you* anymore.

We sometimes hold on to things way past their usefulness for sentimental reasons. I remember this dress I used to wear when I was in college—that was the time when my boyfriend lied to me, and I broke up with him. The dress is a reminder for me to never again ignore my gut when it tells me that someone may not be telling me the truth. I remember this Madonna tape with my favorite song on it, "Borderline," which reminded me to stay strong despite the pain I was in.

I remember when my new boyfriend gave me this ring, and suddenly, I wasn't single anymore, I was engaged, and then—I lost the diamond in some hospital room while visiting my friend who was having a hysterectomy. Everyone around me was more upset than I was about the loss of the ring, and then I started to feel guilty, that I should have been lamenting more, but it taught me to stay grounded in my own perspective about stuff and not be too attached to anything.

Looking at this expired driver's license, I remember when I changed my name when I got married, and it felt strange taking on my husband's name, and then, I changed it back to my maiden name, and then, I felt guilty that I didn't take on his name, and then, I eventually got over it, but it's fun to see my name in print as an example of what could have been. Do I need all these things to remind me of all the lessons I've learned, the mistakes I've made, the pain I've endured? Do I fear that I'll forget the lessons and make some dumb mistakes again?

Looking at a tiara on the shelf, I remember when I was crowned homecoming queen, and I was queen for a day. Do I fear that I'll never be a queen again, and am I living in the glory of my past accomplishments? Looking at a pyramid-shaped crystal trophy, I am reminded of when I was voted "Team Player." Do I secretly fear that I'm really a selfish person, and looking at that reminds me that at one point in my life, I was noble and really was a team player? Or am I just overanalyzing, and do I keep these things because they bring me joy?

Looking at this velour robe that my mom stayed up all night to make for me makes me feel loved, special. The bathrobe is now tattered and torn. Do I need that bathrobe to remind me of how much my mother loves me? Would I dishonor all the effort and energy she poured into that item by letting it go? If I let it go, would that mean I'm being disrespectful and, in essence, not appreciating her love?

Going through boxes of photos, I remember having so much fun skiing with my college friends every winter break. I remember the people I used to ski with, but I can't remember all their names. The photos remind me that I did ski at one point in my life, that I was quite good actually, that I was adventurous and daring enough to ski down the diamond slopes, and that I may someday ski again. Do I really need all those photos to remind me of those times when I was a happy-go-lucky risk taker? If it's something I need to remember, won't my memory jog me into remembering it when I need to remember it? Do I need all those photos to remember those people, or will their memories and the special times we shared together live on in my heart forever?

So you begin to realize that the stuff has a life all its own, with its own stories, memories, feelings, and triggers that connect the past to the present. Sometimes they are tentacles to our past that keep us living in the past. We realize we don't want to let go of those times when we felt loved, safe, and secure. We don't want to let go of what the stuff represents. They are symbols for the way it used to be, of my youth and my sense of adventure. Are my youth and sense of adventure gone? Will holding on to those photos help me retain that feeling of being so young and alive? Will holding on to that dress remind me never to make that stupid mistake again? So does that mean that I don't have trust in myself, the present, and my future? Does that mean I'm living my life with fear, and not faith? Perhaps.

These are some of the issues you might begin to deal with if you let your stuff tell you the story, if you go beyond the superficial meaning of why you have it, and if you're willing to delve deeper beyond appearances to see what truly lies beneath the clutter.

The digging is what thrills me—it's like an archaeological dig into your own consciousness for the reasons why you exist, and your perceptions and feelings about life itself. All contained in your stuff.

I've seen it all. Buried underneath the stuff are dreams waiting to be manifested, talents waiting to be unveiled, passions waiting to be explored. Buried underneath the stuff are

issues of anger, resentment, shame, and addiction, waiting to be healed. Buried underneath the stuff is the amazingly unique, one-of-a-kind, and once-in-a-lifetime work of art called *your life*, and the beautifully raw, authentic, brilliant masterpiece called *you*.

Buried underneath the stuff is TruthLoveMeaningPurpose.

about june.



June Saruwatari is a lifestyle, business, & relationship coach, productivity & organizing consultant, inspirational speaker, and founder of The Organizing Maniac™. For nearly twenty years, her transformational approach of TruthLoveMeaningPurpose™ has helped hundreds of people declutter their minds, hearts, spaces, and stuff to create lives and businesses they love! The co-host of TLC's first season of *Home Made Simple*, June has appeared on *The Nate Berkus Show* and has contributed to publications such as *Woman's Day*, *31 Words to Create an Organized Life*, and *Practically Posh*.

Continue your journey with June at www.junesaruwatari.com.