

LET IT GO

How to Let Go: Tips From a Downsizing Specialist

It's hard to walk away from memories and keepsakes, so a little psychology is part of the process.

By [Kim Doleatto](#) • 3/6/2021 at 8:59am • Published in the [March-April 2021](#) issue of *Sarasota Magazine*



IMAGE: [KOSTIKOVA NATALIA/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM](#)

Amy Esper is the kind of person who can't stand to see a fork out of place before leaving her house. That attention to detail translated well as a labor and employment lawyer in New York City, and now as an organizing and relocation specialist in Sarasota.

Esper, who needed a career change and more flexibility after becoming a mother, knew her "obsessive-compulsive" organizational skills could be put to good use in a concierge service to help people downsize and declutter. She connected with Denise Caron-Quinn, founder and director of [In Order To Succeed](#), with bases in New York and Connecticut, and pitched the need for the company's concierge organization and relocation services in Sarasota.

Now a concierge/consultant with the Sarasota office for the past five years, Esper has been coaching clients on what to keep and what to purge. She's more practical than anti-clutter queen Marie Kondo of Netflix's *Tidying Up with Marie Kondo*. Instead of Kondo's mantra to rid yourself of anything that doesn't "spark joy," Esper thinks of what we need. A wine opener may not spark joy, but without it, you can't get to the joy it brings when it pops a bottle of your favorite Chardonnay.

Items her clients clutch most tightly include their children's first forays into the visual arts, old toys and clothes. They're tied to memories, even when their children are now adults who no longer care about the stick people they drew all those years ago. For other people, books, linens, china and silver are crammed into every corner.

"Everyone has their crutch," Esper says.

After helping clients set goals, Esper takes measurements and pictures of the cluttered spaces and gets to work. She uses shipping bins, drawer organizers and other tools to convert every room in the home into an orderly haven. Esper makes sure everything is labeled. Her favorite go-to sources for organizers include The Home Edit and The Container Store. For pantries, it's OXO Pops containers, and for garages, Esper opts for the Gladiator series of wall units and shelving "since they're so sturdy," she says.

It's hard to walk away from memories and keepsakes, so a little psychology is part of the process. "I'm part counselor because you have to counsel people through letting go of things," she says.

Decluttering Tips

AN IMPARTIAL REFEREE IS KEY. Family members can add confusion and delay decision-making as they negotiate what has value and what doesn't.

MAKE DECLUTTERING A JUDGMENT-FREE PROCESS. "Don't be embarrassed or ashamed to ask for help. Everyone is good at different things; maybe organizing isn't one of them," Esper says.

IT DOESN'T SPARK JOY, BUT IS IT FUNCTIONAL? The toaster may not "spark joy," but toast is great, especially with butter.

THE 365-DAY RULE: If you haven't used it in more than a year, ditch it or donate it.

KEEP IT REAL. No one can color-code their candy. The goal isn't to make your pantry look like a store. It's to give every item its place.