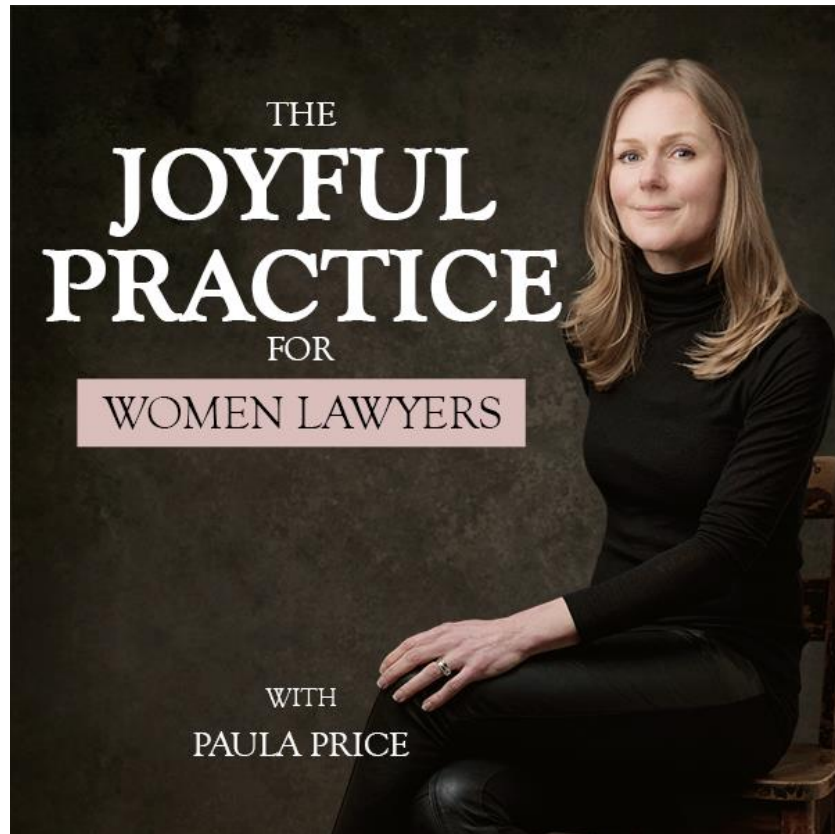


Ep #10: 7 Steps to Free Yourself From Clutter



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Paula Price

[The Joyful Practice for Women Lawyers](#) with Paula Price

Ep #10: 7 Steps to Free Yourself From Clutter

You're listening to *The Joyful Practice for Women Lawyers* Podcast episode number 10.

Welcome to *The Joyful Practice for Women Lawyers* Podcast. I'm your host Paula Price, lawyer turned certified executive coach. This podcast was created to empower women lawyers just like you to create a life and practice you love. Join me every week for a break from the hustle so we can focus on you, what you truly want, and how you can create it.

If you're over the overwhelm, done with putting out fires, and ready to create a life and practice that brings you more joy, you're in the right place. Ready for today's episode? Let's dive in.

Hello, my friends, and welcome back to the podcast. I'm so excited to have all of you here today to join me for this very fun topic. For those of you who don't know me, my name is Paula Price. I'm a lawyer turned certified executive coach, and the host of this podcast. Welcome. I am delighted to have you here. For those of you who are returning for today's podcast, delighted to have you back. I hope that this episode resonates with all of you.

The inspiration for today's podcast came from a Facebook post that I saw on my feed earlier today. I was scrolling through, and a friend of mine had posted an image of her shelf. She wrote in the introduction, "I've had this item on my wish list since about 2018." So that makes it about three years. The wish list item being to declutter her home. What she showed was the image of a before and after of her shelf.

She said, "After this time, I realized I wasn't going to get this done on my own. So I brought in a professional organizer." Who came in and basically affected magic in her home and decluttered the shelf. When you look at the visual, you look at the before picture and you look at the after picture, it's really clear what has happened.

Ep #10: 7 Steps to Free Yourself From Clutter

I mean it wasn't terrible. I've seen far worse. I will admit I've seen far worse in my own home when it comes to cluttered spaces. There were books kind of out of alignment. There were a number of different objects, a bag here and there. It just didn't look very aesthetically appealing nor could you really tell what was in that first image of the shelf.

Then when you looked at the second image, the after image, you could see that there were books and they were all piled neatly together, like with like. The person who'd organized had obviously removed a few things. A few of those items were no longer on the shelf. What was there was organized with order and in such a way that you could actually see what was on the shelf. If you were looking for something, I imagine it would be a lot easier to find it.

So I was thinking about this image, of the decluttered shelf. While I was daydreaming about what that might be like to have such an individual to come into my house and declutter everything I would like to declutter, I started to think about the parallels between decluttering our physical spaces and decluttering our mental spaces.

In today's episode, I am going to talk about both. I am going to take you through a little bit of a discussion about clutter, how it might show up, what it looks like. I'm going to offer some practical strategies for identifying clutter and then tackling it and pointing out along the way some of the reasons why you might want to do that.

Now in my coaching practice, I think I probably play more of a role in the mental decluttering process than the physical decluttering process. Although I would argue that there is some overlap between the two. I know for myself when my physical space is more organized, it tends to also mean that what's going on inside my mind is also more organized. I think we can all relate, even probably relate to this. When you're in a space that

Ep #10: 7 Steps to Free Yourself From Clutter

is free of clutter, it's a lot easier to feel at peace and to figure out what to focus on.

Relative to being in a space where there's so much everywhere that you don't even know where to begin. Your eyes get almost jumbled. This happens to me sometimes when my children have had a particularly exciting time in my house, and everything is topsy turvy. It takes me a while to kind of adapt and get my head on straight. I imagine that many of you who are listening may feel the same way about the clutter that you may have in your home, clutter in your office space for example, and other clutter that you may have in your physical spaces.

So today we're going to talk about clutter and why it's a problem. You probably have your own reasons for deciding why clutter could be a problem. I'm just going to highlight a few of them and invite you to think about how this might show up in your life.

So the first thing that I would identify about clutter as being a bit of a problem is that it gets in the way. So if you think about that shelf example. Where you have a lot of clutter, where things are all shoved in there, it actually makes it physically impossible for you to see what is actually in that shelf because everything is kind of packed in on top of each other.

I would argue the same holds true of what's going on inside our minds. When we are not really being deliberate and intentional about what we are thinking about, how we are organizing our own thoughts. Then there may be some thoughts in there that we're not even aware of that have just been languishing in that back shelf, and we haven't really paid attention to them. They may be blocking out more productive thoughts, thoughts that are more aligned with who we are today. We're going to talk about that a little more.

Ep #10: 7 Steps to Free Yourself From Clutter

The first thing then to think about in both the physical clutter and mental clutter spaces is what are you blocking out by not dealing with some of this clutter that has piled up?

Another way that clutter can be a problem is that it's distracting. The way that I would describe that is let's say that you're going downstairs, for example. I'm working upstairs right now. I imagine myself going downstairs. If I am met with a wall of clutter, then my eyes go to that space, and I start focusing on it. I start thinking about it. Should I do something about it? What that does is it takes me off course.

You can imagine the same thing happening in your mind. You may be starting on a project for work, for example. Maybe you're getting to write a brief, an email to a client. Maybe you got a new file that has just come in through the door. Before you get to that work, you may find yourself getting distracted with some thoughts.

Maybe the thoughts are simple distractions like, "Oh I feel a bit hungry, or I feel a bit tired." Or maybe there are other types of thoughts like those more self-effacing types of thoughts like, "This is not going to go well. Am I really prepared for this?" There are all sorts of thoughts that you might be having. When those thoughts pop up, they can be distracting and keep you from focusing on the task at hand.

A third reason why clutter is a problem is a consequence of that point that I just made. When you are distracted as a result of the clutter then it takes you time. So you end up spending your valuable time distracted thinking about something that is clutter. So maybe you're thinking about, "Well, how am I going to fix this clutter?"

Maybe in my case I go downstairs, and I see that my shelf is quite out of order, and I think of that beautiful image on Facebook. I start to think, "Well,

Ep #10: 7 Steps to Free Yourself From Clutter

how could I create a shelf that has less clutter? What would I need to remove here? Where would I find the time to do that?”

Every time that I go through that thought process and don't do anything about it, I'm essentially wasting some of my precious time looking at something and renegotiating with myself in terms of whether or not I'm going to do something about it. That costs time. So, unfortunately, the clutter is not only distracting, but it's taking you away from accomplishing something that may have a lot more value for you.

Finally, I would argue that one of the main drawbacks of having cluttered spaces, of having mental clutter is that it can keep you stuck. Here you might imagine that you have, for example, a very outdated suit in your wardrobe. Or a dress that you once upon a time thought was a lovely dress, and you've still got it there. It's something that you can connect to, you can relate to, in a previous iteration of yourself. Maybe this is something from a few years back. You somehow feel connected to it.

What that can do is keep you stuck in a place where you are thinking of the past. You're not really thinking of the future. You're thinking of this time in the past, and in a sense, envisioning yourself going back to that place. What I would argue there is that so long as you have this clutter that is keeping you trapped in times past, it is weighing you down and preventing you from moving forward.

Now, there are a lot of reasons why we have clutter, all forms of clutter. There is absolutely no reason to beat yourself up over any of it. I understand. We are all busy. You are busy. You've got your practice to run. You've got your professional work. You've got your personal life. You may have a family you're looking after. You may be planning your wedding. You may have all sorts of obligations on the go.

Ep #10: 7 Steps to Free Yourself From Clutter

When it comes to the immediate pressing demands and commitments that you have in the moment relative to the task of going to that hall closet and starting to pull out all the old scarves from the very back of the top shelf, I do this myself. I can see how you would prioritize and how I would prioritize the tasks that have a more immediate need. I can also see how we end up getting into a situation where we allow the clutter to pile up because we don't even notice that it's even there.

I'm not sure if this has happened to you, but there have been times where I've just been so preoccupied with the immediate needs that I stop seeing the clutter. You might find this for example. Let's say you go out on a long trip, for example. Maybe you've left your home in perfect condition, but maybe you come back, and you see it for the first time almost. You start to realize, "Wow, there's a lot here that I really do not need and that is no longer serving me." So it may just be an unconscious thing that the clutter has started to pile up, and you haven't really been consciously turning your mind to dealing with it.

Another way that it can start to pile up is that you legitimately do not have time. I know that I put myself into this category whether or not it's true. Maybe I'm just not making the time. I live in a house with three other people. There is really times where I cannot physically keep up with the creation of clutter in every room of the house. So I choose to let that clutter pile up with a promise that at some point I will opt to deal with it.

This can happen too from a mental perspective in terms of allowing the clutter to pile up. This happens to me as well. What I find here is that I need to have a balance of time spent working and time spent thinking. When I do work with my clients, my clients who are in their law practices, the time that they spend with me is the time that they spend thinking.

So they may have all sorts of things that are on the go. You may have all sorts of things that are on the go. Your mind is occupied on the immediate

Ep #10: 7 Steps to Free Yourself From Clutter

file needs, your client requests, getting through each and every day, making sure that you're taking off the items on your to-do list. What it may not leave you is that time where you get to step back and reflect on the big picture.

So when we don't have that time to step back and reflect on the big picture, what I have found is that then all the micro pieces start to pile up in my mind. I need to set aside time so that I can talk with somebody. Maybe I talk with my coach, maybe I sit down and have an extended planning session.

It's a way to basically sit through and organize all the different pieces that are going on internally and creating some sort of order out of them so that I feel more at peace. Much the same way that you might feel more at peace when you attack that hall closet, when you deal with the top drawer in your desk, when you go to your desktop and clear up all the different images on your computer. That is the peace of mind that we can achieve by simply going through that act of decluttering.

Now, there are a number of ways that we might try to deal with clutter. Some of them just trying to avoid it. Like I said, I'm not judging here. I have done this myself, and I totally understand why people do this. Sometimes we just simply do not have the bandwidth to deal with the clutter in the moment. Sometimes we tell ourselves that it doesn't matter. We actually don't mind having the clutter. It's not doing us any harm. So we continue to live our lives allowing the clutter to build up.

Unfortunately the difficulty there is that when we do not attend to the clutter, when we do choose to ignore it, eventually it piles up and it gets worse. It's almost like this snowballing thing. Because once we have the clutter there then we have to attend to it.

Ep #10: 7 Steps to Free Yourself From Clutter

You may have had this experience. I used to have a number of those little sort of ornaments. When you have ornaments that are sitting on a tabletop, for example, they start to collect dust. So now you need to spend your time dusting off those ornaments. Maybe those ornaments are really important to you, and they bring you joy, and you want to have them there. You're committed to tidying them up because they serve a purpose.

If those ornaments aren't really bringing anything into your life, and now you are spending time dusting them off and tending to them then you may spend your time nurturing some past ornaments or past practices that at one point really served you but no longer serve you. Again, this brings us back into that problem where we're now spending our time focused on things from the past as opposed to looking more towards the future.

So for today's episode, what I'm going to do is give you some ideas and suggestions on how you can declutter both your physical spaces and any mental clutter that you may be experiencing right now. There are seven steps all together. I'm just going to run through them with you. Again, as I do it with you, I would invite you to think about where you're experiencing clutter right now. How it's showing up for you, and how you might be able to use some of these tips to declutter your physical space and any mental clutter that you might be struggling with at the moment.

So the first step in all of this is to simply identify the clutter. Sometimes that can be really obvious. I would invite you in this moment to think about where you are, and to look around wherever that is. Maybe you're standing in the kitchen washing dishes listening to this podcast. I know that's the time that I really like listening to podcasts. So you might be looking around your kitchen area.

Maybe you are sitting at your desk or standing near your desk. You can look over at your desk and see that there's a number of piles of papers that

Ep #10: 7 Steps to Free Yourself From Clutter

have piled up. Maybe things are a little bit out of order. Maybe they're perfectly in order. Maybe you have no clutter, and you can celebrate that.

Maybe you're in a different space. Maybe you're out walking, and you don't have an immediate physical surrounding, but you might think about what some of the mental clutter might be on your mind right now. Maybe you turned to this particular podcast because you feel like your thoughts are a little bit jumbled. That you've got a whole bunch of different priorities that you're trying to balance, and you're trying to figure out where to focus your energy.

So at this point, I would invite you to think about what kind of clutter might be showing up for you. Here are some examples of what you might look for. So one is physical clutter. So, as I mentioned, maybe it's your physical workspace. Maybe it's your desktop. Maybe you have old files that need to be closed. Maybe they're taking up space in your office.

Maybe you have a to-do list that has been languishing on your computer or on your desk, and there are items on that to-do list that you know you no longer ever plan to do. But you still find yourself going to that list every once in a while, looking at it, and then not doing anything on that list. If that is the case, you may be better off just saying goodbye to the list than to continue to effectively torment yourself by going back to that list and asking yourself if you're going to do those things.

It may be that you are in a position where you have mental clutter. So what does mental clutter actually look like? Well, it will look different for all of us. Number one, mental clutter can present as old thoughts. These are really the old stories and beliefs that we have about ourselves. I am in a very privileged position working as a coach because I get to work with clients and help them identify what some of those old thoughts are. If you start to pay attention to the way that you speak to yourself, you may also be able to recognize what some of those thoughts may be.

Ep #10: 7 Steps to Free Yourself From Clutter

Everybody that I've worked with at least has certain thoughts that hold them back. Maybe these are thoughts like, "I'm not prepared enough. Or I don't really know what I'm doing. I don't know where to start on this. There's another lawyer down the hall who's more qualified than me to do this. Last time I worked with this lawyer, it ended badly." There's all sorts of thoughts that may be going on in your mind that you may be aware of or not aware of. This is a really excellent place to start if what you're feeling is overwhelm in terms of whatever clutter is going on between your ears.

Other things that I find may be unnecessary clutter can be the language that you use. I know for myself this is an area where I'm always trying to improve and be more conscious. I think there's so much power in the words that we choose to use with ourselves, the language that we choose to use with other people. It's an expression of who we are.

I am always trying to refine the word choices that I use because, to me, it is a way of decluttering or walking away from some of the language that I find does not serve me. Language that is no longer in alignment with my identity personally or professionally. That frees up some space then to invite new language.

So that's another area where you might find there's a bit of clutter. This can be just in terms of the choices as in you do not like how those words sound, you don't like how they reflect on you. It may also be in terms of the messaging that you're trying to send to yourself.

So some words, for example, that I would try to move away from would be overwhelm for example. "I feel stressed. I feel overwhelm. I am busy." Those are words that I really try to use as little as possible in my own vocabulary because I don't want to see myself as a person who is overwhelmed, stressed, or who is in that state. Which, to me, is really almost a reflection of being in a victim mentality. It's saying that these are

Ep #10: 7 Steps to Free Yourself From Clutter

the things that are happening to me. What I would then do would be to replace that language with something else, right?

I talked a little bit about growth mindset and Carol Dweck's work in that respect. So I am so overwhelmed, for example, might become something like I am learning how to manage my priorities so that I feel calmer. So you can see how there's a language difference there. In this decluttering episode, what we're talking about is identifying the language that you want to move away from.

Another thing that you might want to let go of is old dreams. This one can be really hard to identify and potentially walk away from depending on where you're at. So it may be a dream that is a professional goal that you once had or a personal goal that you once had that is no longer viable.

You might liken this to something in your closet that at one point was the epitome of style. I'm trying to think of something that would be reflective of that. Like acid wash jean combo, although I think acid wash may even have made a comeback at some point. Acid wash was very popular 20/30 years ago. You look at it now and maybe it's not so popular.

Well, what else is going on in your professional life where you set a goal that made sense maybe 10 years ago, but it no longer makes sense to you? Maybe you're in an organization where 10 years ago or three years ago you saw yourself as having a certain role. Maybe you had lined up a certain opportunity to branch out with somebody. Maybe you had plans to form your own organization. The chips for that are no longer in order.

There may be some things that you once aspired to that you realize now are just not really in alignment with where you want to go. So being able to let go of those old dreams might be a real challenge for you, but it may be something that once you do it can become very freeing.

Ep #10: 7 Steps to Free Yourself From Clutter

I'm going to mention that in last week's episode, I talked about integrity and bringing yourself into integrity by aligning your actions with your goals and your values. I talked a lot about having a vision and moving towards that vision. Where the decluttering comes in, especially when it comes to that piece of integrity, is letting go of those pieces that no longer are in integrity with the person who you are becoming, the person who you want to be.

So this is a very important part of the decluttering process is to move away from where you no longer want to be. It may also be saying goodbye to things that you now accept are not part of your future for whatever reason. Maybe it's something that you've chosen. Maybe it's something that somebody else has chosen for you. If it's not on the table anymore and you still hold onto that, I would encourage you to find a way to let it go. We'll talk about some strategies for how to do that in a moment.

Another area where you may find there's some clutter is almost in this space where your physical and your mental worlds intertwine, which is in habits. So things that you repeatedly do that are no longer serving you. As you think about this, you might ask yourself what kind of habits you currently have that you may want to say goodbye to?

One that comes to mind for me in terms of a lot of the clients that I work with is the habit of people pleasing. Of saying yes without considering whether or not it's something you can truly take on without seriously compromising something that you can truly take on without seriously compromising something that is really important to you. Maybe it's a habit of scrolling through your social media feed at times of the day when you would be much better served buckling down and executing on your work tasks.

Maybe the habits are habits that you're not allowing time for. So maybe it's not taking care of your physical health the way that you would like to. Maybe the habits are the relationships that you're allowing yourself to have

Ep #10: 7 Steps to Free Yourself From Clutter

with people. Maybe you have friends of... I don't want to say friendships of convenience, but friendships where the dynamic has shifted, and it no longer sits right with you. So there may be elements of a friendship that you might want to let go of.

So what I would encourage you to do in this part of the exercise, which is to identify some of the clutter that you have in your life, is to explore it from not just a physical perspective of is there physical clutter in my office space that I'd like to tidy up. What kind of mental clutter? What kind of thoughts that I'm thinking? What are some of the stories that I've told myself? What are some dreams I need to let go of? Also what are some of the habits that are taking up space and time in my day that are really no longer serving me.

Now once you have identified what those habits or other forms of clutter might be, then I would ask you to do something that is actually a strategy that I learned from a dear friend of mine who is a professional organizer. Her name is Mylène Houle Morency, and she is a professional organizer working out of Montreal, Canada at FLO Organisation. What Mylène taught me about organizing a physical space, she taught me two things that are really key that I think are really relevant here.

The first thing is to simply start in one place. So I think we can sometimes get really excited, and when we start decluttering, we want to do everything all at once. We want to go from that really messy closet to that very sleek organized closet. It doesn't always work that way. Sometimes we really just have to start with one thing. That is something that she encouraged me to do. Just start with one thing, start with one room, start with one drawer. Start with one thing.

If that's your mental clutter, you might start with one thought. You might start with one habit. You might start with one physical space, your office. Maybe it's your desktop. Maybe it's that drawer in your office desk.

Ep #10: 7 Steps to Free Yourself From Clutter

The second thing that she taught me, which I think is really impactful, is when it comes to selecting that one thing, pick something that is going to have the greatest impact for you.

So in the example of a home, for example, if you walk into your house through the front door, and every time you walk in you see a giant mess right in front of you. Maybe there's a set of stairs in front of you, and there's always a pile of old clothing right on that staircase. Maybe that's where you start. Because then when you walk into the house, the first thing you're going to see is clarity. It's something that is organized.

If it's your office space, maybe it's the top of your desk. When you have a clean desk, maybe you feel so much more productive. You feel like you're able to take out one file at a time and work on it without getting distracted. So maybe that's where you choose to focus first. The idea here is to pick something that is a high value item that once you deal with it will make you feel better and give you some momentum and encouragement in terms of where you move forward.

The same holds true of your mental clutter. Maybe there's a thought that is recurring in your mind. Something like, "I'm not ready yet. I'm underprepared. I don't know where to start." You will start to notice that there are certain thoughts that may be your go to thoughts, and I would encourage you to make those thoughts one that you want to start with and one that you think will have the most impact. Start there. See what will happen next.

Now the next tip that I would recommend when it comes to decluttering is to have strategies on board. You want to have a few strategies up your sleeve so that once you're in that zone of decluttering whether it's mental clutter or physical clutter, you know how you're going to attack that clutter. Now when it comes to physical clutter, one expression that I heard which I think is quite neat is this idea of the four Ds. So let's say you have a pile of

Ep #10: 7 Steps to Free Yourself From Clutter

paper or a to-do list that is languishing on your desk. Let's take the example of the to-do list.

So you've got the to-do list. You've got all these items on that list. What you might do is go through it using a four D framework. One D is do. So maybe you do the thing on the list. Another is to defer. Maybe you decide you will do it, but you don't want to do it until some date in the future. So maybe you put it in your calendar and then you know you're going to do it at some point a few weeks from now.

The next is delegate. Maybe you decide okay. Like with the Facebook example. This is a friend who decided she really wanted to declutter her home. She realized after several years that she was not going to be the person to do it. So she asked somebody else to come in. She paid them to come in and do the decluttering. So that might be something that you do. Maybe you look at your list, and you decide I'm just not going to do these tasks myself. I've had this on my to do list long enough to know. It's not going to be me. I'm going to delegate this task to somebody else.

Then finally your fourth option is to discard that item. You may realize that there are items on your to-do list that you simply do not want to do. It's perfectly okay to scratch that item off the list and simply not do it. So those are some options for you. The four D strategy may be one that you employ.

There's another strategy that you might employ when it comes to decluttering. This is one that I learned from a colleague of mine in my coaching program. One day she said, "If it's not a hell yes, then it's a no." This is a test that I have taught clients. I had one client who absolutely loved it. We talked about it in relation to time management. She had been very committed. Perhaps overcommitted and overextended in a number of different committees and organizations. She was doing so much that she literally didn't have time to focus on what she really wanted to.

Ep #10: 7 Steps to Free Yourself From Clutter

When I introduced this concept to her of if it's not a hell yes, then it's a no. All of a sudden, she had a new filter, and she said, "This is so powerful." When we met a few weeks later, she said, "I've been using that strategy. I have been using that strategy to filter out new requests, and it has made such a difference."

A similar expression to that might be that notion that Marie Kondo coined. The test when you are decluttering your home of does this particular item spark joy? I recognized that in our lives, there may be a number of items or tasks or people even who may not necessarily spark joy in our lives, but it doesn't mean that we don't want them there. So yes, you might have that as a test, but you clearly get to exercise your discretion in deciding what to keep and what not to keep.

Another strategy that you might engage when it comes to decluttering, and this applies to both physical and mental clutter or habits, is would you choose to do this again? I think that's such a neat example of how you can go about something.

So if you've got a shirt, for example, in your closet and you look at it. Maybe you have a strong sentimental attachment to it. If you were really to look at it, would you choose that shirt again? If the answer is no, you might seriously consider whether or not it holds a place in your closet. Does it warrant you looking after it, making decisions about it, caring for it, deciding whether or not to keep it. All of that is costing you time. Is it worth it?

It may also be in terms of thoughts that you have about yourself. Maybe thoughts that were negative about yourself served you at one point. I have a good friend who talked about stress one day. She explained to me that she has these really stressful thoughts when she's getting ready for a big presentation. The trouble with these stressful thoughts is that when she has them, she forces herself to prepare. As a result, her presentations have always gone really smoothly. Now she doesn't want to walk away from that

Ep #10: 7 Steps to Free Yourself From Clutter

process because she's concerned. She's linked those stressful thoughts with her success. So she doesn't want to change the format.

What that does is that, unfortunately, it deprives you of the opportunity to see whether or not you could do just as good a job without the stressful thoughts or perhaps even a better job without those stressful thoughts. So that is another question to be asking yourself is if you could start over, would you choose those same thoughts or would you try to do it differently? So those are some of the strategies that you might have onboard when it comes to decluttering.

The next question is to allow yourself the discomfort. I think a lot of us get really uncomfortable when it comes to letting go of objects, of thoughts, of habits just like I explained a moment ago because we've associated that thought or that thing with a particular outcome. We're not sure if we let that thing go if maybe we're going to miss it or maybe we aren't going to be performing as well. Maybe something will be missing. Maybe we can never get it back. There's a lot of scarcity thinking around that. There may be a lot of nervousness around letting something go and trying something differently.

So in this example, I would encourage you to think about some strategies that you may use not just to do the actual act of decluttering, which is much what that four D's framework is about, but to deal with the discomfort that comes along with making a decision about how you go about decluttering. One tool that you might find helpful for this then may be to focus more on where you're going rather than focusing on where you're coming from.

By this what I'm referring to is having more of a future focus and moving towards that vision for yourself in the future rather than looking at it from a position of the past. What that might look like is let's say it's a thought that you're thinking that is not serving you anymore.

Ep #10: 7 Steps to Free Yourself From Clutter

You may ask yourself, “Where is it you want to be five years from now? Who do you need to become to be that person? What kind of thoughts is she thinking?” Does that thought, first of all the one that you're considering decluttering, does it align with that future version of yourself? If not, what might be a better thought that you could be having?

Now, again, last week we talked about integrity and aligning your actions with what is really important to you, what matters to you. This is very much an exercise that will help you get into integrity with yourself where you are looking not so much to the past for direction but looking to where you're headed. Looking to what your goals are. Asking yourself how this clutter fits in relation to that. Is it a distraction that's keeping you from moving forward? Is it completely out of alignment? Maybe there are reasons beyond distraction that this is really holding you back.

When you look at that, when you ask yourself questions about how this thing that you're thinking of letting go of is in relation to that goal, it may help you to decide one way or the other if it's time to let that go for now or for good.

Now the next item that I have on my list, so that was allowing for the discomfort. That was actually number four. I double checked my numbering. The fifth tool that I would like to offer you, which is to celebrate the completion rather than mourning the loss.

So what exactly do I mean here? Well, I think sometimes when we are letting go of something, we tend to view it as almost like a breakup. Like we're rejecting something. It's no longer something that we love. It's not something that we care for anymore. That can make us feel maybe badly or guilty or ashamed or sad because we're rejecting something. This is how we may see it in our minds.

Ep #10: 7 Steps to Free Yourself From Clutter

So if what you're saying goodbye to is maybe your favorite t-shirt or maybe you are letting go of a dream that you once had or letting go of plan A because you're now pursuing plan B. There are all these examples where you may choose to let something go, and you may think to yourself that in order to let it go, you need to dislike it. Maybe you see it as a failure. I would invite you to think about it in a completely different way, which is to take on that idea that whatever it is that you're saying goodbye to has served its purpose and it has run its course. Now you are saying goodbye in the most loving way.

Now I think that Marie Kondo, I'm not a Marie Kondo expert, but I think that she has this practice of letting things go. So if an item no longer sparks joy, I believe her practice is then to thank it for how it has served you. That's a practice that I've adopted when I'm decluttering certain things out of my life. It's one that I would encourage you to practice when you are decluttering out of your life. It isn't so much that the thing that you're moving away from is not good in and of itself or that it wasn't something that you really enjoyed when you were in it. But it's kind of reached its course, and it is time for both of you to move on.

This may show up, for example, in an employment situation. Maybe you decide that you're ready to move on from your current position. You're moving into a new position. It doesn't mean that you need to look at your old position and say it wasn't good for you. It wasn't a good experience. You don't like the people. You don't like the job, the organization.

What you can say is that it was incredible for what it was. It was an opportunity for you to learn, to grow, to form connections. That you really enjoyed aspects of it. You are now in a position. You're different from the person you were when you started in that position. Now you're ready for your next challenge to grow in a new way. Whatever the reason might be for you, and to look back as fondly as possible on the thing that you're stepping away from.

Ep #10: 7 Steps to Free Yourself From Clutter

So that is one of the tools that I think will be very helpful in terms of letting go is that you're not necessarily judging those thoughts. You're not necessarily judging the physical clutter, if you will. You're simply accepting it and appreciating it for what it was and appreciating the fact that it's what helped you get to the place where you are now. So you can say goodbye on good terms.

Now the sixth step is when you do let go of old things, let go of old habits, I would invite you to really enjoy the new space that you're in. That will give you that lovely feeling of having accomplished something. It will build that momentum. I always find that once you start decluttering in one area of your life, there's this spillover effect. When you start cleaning up your thinking, for example, when you start cleaning up your physical environment, it feels so good that you want to do more of that.

What is so fascinating too is once you start clearing away certain of the commitments that you may have, when you start clearing away some of the habits that are no longer serving you, there will be a bit of a void. That can be uncomfortable.

Going back to that point about discomfort, I would encourage you to expect some discomfort in the process. To plan for that discomfort ahead of time so that you are allowing it so that you're not fighting it and feeling like something has gone awry. That is not the case. It is simply a part of the growth that you're going through in decluttering and removing things that no longer serve you from your life. I would invite you to really enjoy the freedom of being in that new space, and to see what else comes in for you.

I've seen this happen numerous times with clients where they've let go of something, and it's been difficult for them to let go of. Then the most magical thing happens. They get a whole bunch of new clients, for example. Or they get a new promotion, or they have something happen in their life that they were not expecting. It fills that space that they have just

Ep #10: 7 Steps to Free Yourself From Clutter

created for themselves. So that is step number six is to really enjoy whatever that new space brings your way.

Finally my last tip is that this is a practice. I talk about the practice, for example, in episode three. What that means to have an ongoing commitment to developing your skill, to working towards your potential knowing that your potential is always your potential. That you'll never fully reach it. The same is true when it comes to decluttering.

This is something that will happen on an ongoing basis. As you move through the different seasons of your life, you will continue to outgrow habits. You'll continue to outgrow spaces and thoughts that no longer serve you. You will need to let them go to make space for what's next. So once you've done this, once you've decluttered in one area, I would encourage you to continually do that. You will find that overtime you are now moving in a direction where you're not being held back quite as much by old habits, old thoughts, whatever it might be.

So, my friends, thank you so much. To review those seven steps that I outlined is number one, to identify the clutter. Is it mental clutter, physical clutter? Is it old habits? Number two is to start with one thing at a time, and to start with what you think will have the greatest impact. The third is to have strategies onboard. So we talked about the four Ds. We talked about if it's not a hell yes, it's a no. Does it spark joy? What kind of filters are you using to decide whether something stays or if it goes?

Number four is to allow for the discomfort. So know ahead of time that you are going to feel uncomfortable about letting go of certain things. But when you are experiencing that discomfort, I would encourage you to look to the future of where you want to be and ask yourself whether or not that is something that will help you get to that place or if it's something that will hold you back.

Ep #10: 7 Steps to Free Yourself From Clutter

The next, number five, is to celebrate the completion. The fact that whatever it is that you're letting go has run its course rather than mourning the loss of what once was. Number six is to enjoy the space that you've now freed up for yourself and to see what else comes into your life. Then finally number seven is to accept that this is an ongoing practice. This is something that you will be committed to indefinitely.

So my friends, that is what I have to offer to you today. Thank you, again, for joining me for this episode. As I'm chatting with you, I'm looking at a bit of clutter on my desk and thinking about how I'm going to apply these strategies to resolve that situation. I would encourage you and invite you to think about how you might use some of these tools going forward in a way that will serve you. Thank you, again, for joining me. I'm excited to see you again next week.

If you have any questions or if you think that you might like to work with me, I do work with lawyers one to one. I do one to one coaching. So feel free to send me an email, reach out in a contact form, let me know what I can help you with. We can set up a call. If you like this podcast, I would really appreciate it if you would do a review wherever it is that you subscribe to your podcast. It helps others know about the podcast. What I would love is to be able to share this work with as many lawyers as would find it to be beneficial to them. So with that, I am going to say goodbye. Thank you again for joining me today. Bye for now.

If you enjoyed today's show and don't want to miss an episode, subscribe, and follow the show wherever you listen to your podcasts. If you haven't already, please leave a rating and review. Your feedback will help me create a podcast that's tailored to your needs and goes straight to the heart of what matters to you. For instructions on how to subscribe, rate, and review the podcast, visit www.thejoyfulpractice.com/podcastlaunch. See you next time.

Ep #10: 7 Steps to Free Yourself From Clutter

Thank you for listening to this episode of *The Joyful Practice for Women Lawyers* podcast. If you want more information, visit www.thejoyfulpractice.com. See you next week.