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## Vision to Be Organized

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Perhaps you've seen this before: David Barlavi standing with his fist raised while the national



With the popularity of "The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up," you've probably done some self-examination to decide if a little change is in order. But if applying the KonMari method sounds overwhelming, it's possible you just need a little help.

There are a lot of circumstances that might lead you to reach out to Canyon Country resident Christie Johnson:

- If your "junk drawer" is a closet
- If you're the only child of a hoarder
- If you've got mass quantities of something you defend with "What if..."
- If inviting Marie Kondo to your house would make her cry


There are plenty more reasons to call a professional organizer like Johnson, and the bonus you get is she trains you to use new practices to make it easier for you to go forward without a repeat of untidy habits.

Vision to be Organized is the name of Johnson's business, which involves her working side-by-side with you to create systems of organization that work for you. She is an objective party, able to put ownership of your belongings in perspective, while remaining sensitive to your needs and desires.


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anthem plays. Or his fist is raised and his other hand is over h...

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### Doug's Rant – Video Edition

"That is a part of me as an organizer – I'm sentimental for my clients," Johnson explained. "Other organizers might say, 'You don't need it anymore, it's not doing anything for you.' I will say, 'Let's document the story.'"

The clutter part of it gets addressed later in the process. Johnson approaches the client to suggest that the documentation is enough without holding onto the physical items, which may be furniture, like rocking chairs, or home goods, such as teapots or handkerchiefs. She'll ask, "Do we really need it to document the story, or is there someone else in the family who could use it?"

One of the hurdles for an individual who has trouble parting with things is their attachment. "Why they have it in the first place, why they bought it, why they received it into their house," she explained. "They 'can use it someday' or 'why should they get rid of it if they don't need to?'"

The majority of Johnson's clients have read the book by the new Netflix star Marie Kondo about increasing your joy by decreasing clutter.

"Most of them have multiple organizing books in their house," she said. "But applying the methods to it is another thing – it just doesn't click."

Perhaps none of us need another reason to de-clutter, but it's helpful to be reminded of the advantages.

"Obviously, a kind of clear space, in the sense you have room to move around, so you don't trip on anything or stumble," Johnson said. "And health-wise, it contributes to cleanliness, because a lot of (knickknacks) bring dust into the house as well."

She brought up another downside to ignoring the new trend toward tidiness: "The agony of throwing things in the spare bedroom and just closing the door, and then you don't ever really have a spare bedroom available for a guest – which is impractical."

Johnson's home is nowhere near the image some people have of a stark, austere, sparsely-furnished house belonging to a professional organizer. She decorates with quilts, Swedish horses and plenty of memorabilia, mostly honoring family heritage, complete with a "genealogy wall" along the stairwell.



The most

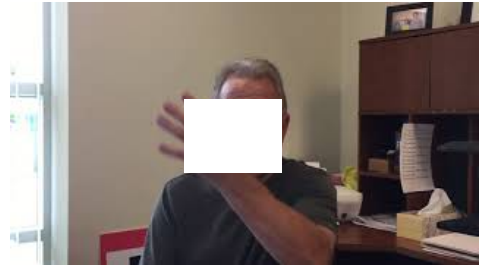
common articles that she's seen residents purging are clothing and electronics. And for the latter, by the way, Johnson recommends smashing your hard drive.

One of the bigger challenges with clutter that people have is excessive paper. "Bills and receipts, trying to get away from the piles and files and the file cabinets," she said. "If they feel uncomfortable getting rid of old papers, like tax returns, they can scan them."

Originally from Nebraska, Johnson moved to California to work in the fashion industry, hoping for a Hollywood wardrobe connection. When it didn't pan out that way, she ended up in retail



Doug's Rant June 22



Doug's Rant June 15

management, later leaving the chore of working nights, weekends and holidays to launch her own business.

A scrapbooking fan during the '90s craze, she worked in a crafting store and found herself organizing a lot of photos as a part of assisting locals with their scrapbooks.

"They'd say, 'There could be more photos, but they're in that guest room' or in 'that closet' or in 'that drawer that's messy and disorganized,'" she said. "And I'd say, 'I can help you tidy that up.'"

That led to organizing various spaces in her clients' homes in search of photos, and she realized she could expand her scrapbooking business, also noting the rise in organizing shows on TV. Next she found an industry affiliation to join – National Association of Professional Organizers.

She's active in NAPO, including the Los Angeles chapter and a virtual chapter of the association. She also attends and speaks at conferences in and out of California.

Johnson will teach a class at the SCV Family History & Genealogy Fair at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, at 24443 McBean Pkwy in Valencia, on March 23. The conference is free and open to the public and will run from 8 a.m.-2:30 p.m. For more information, visit <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/scv-family-history-and-genealogy-fair-2019-tickets-55138466638>.

Her trajectory got its start early. Johnson's first job was at a pizza restaurant, where she earned an award for "most organized." Later, her interests and experience contributed to her current expertise and, like her colleagues, she developed a specialty. There are organizers with narrow specialties, including: photo books; video transfers; memory boards; kosher kitchens; and eco-friendly organizing.



The job of a photo and

genealogy organizer requires a certain amount of flexibility, as there are ongoing shifts in the technology market. And sometimes it's the client, especially those who struggle with ADD or OCD, she said. Tasks can get bogged down when they spend too much time making decisions about one small item or if they have way too much to wade through.

"I don't specialize in hoarding, though I have worked on the TV show twice," Johnson said.

As an assistant to another organizer, her first gig on the A&E series "Hoarders" involved a young woman whose mother had passed away.

"She was trying to keep the memory of her mom alive, and she had young children and wanted them to remember," Johnson said. "There were photos involved, so I came on to help her work through some of the photos and some of the memorabilia even."

The second hoarding project was a mother and two daughters whose household had deteriorated due to personal setbacks.

"The mom went through a divorce and she had some health issues, so her life just stopped," Johnson explained. "As we peeled back the layers you could actually see the stuff in the house get younger and younger. The top layer was the girls' recent boy craze and the bottom was their toys and baby clothes."

But the job wasn't as difficult to endure as it sounds, she said.

"It wasn't dirty or dusty – it wasn't bad, it was just layers of their life," she said. "A team came in and everybody specialized in something different. Someone specialized in kids, someone in paperwork, someone in organizing the kitchen, someone for closets. We all came in and as soon as we knew what we needed to do, we gravitated to that."

You could sense the family's relief at the end of the job, Johnson said, but those scenarios can spark problems in the future, with a likelihood of recidivism. "We're in there for two 8-hour shifts, and then we leave," she said. "They didn't learn the skills ... they need training."

She's worked with various clients for 10-15 years now, witnessing growth along the way. "When I have the same client over time, their lives change," she said. "The system they had set up may no longer be needed, so that needs to be changed. Like when they used to pay with paper, now it needs to go online."

Johnson's business has also experienced change since she launched it.

"Back then there wasn't that much information about (organizing). They'd call me because they'd say, 'I can't walk in my house' or 'I can't find this,'" she said. "Now there's a lot of knowledge and information put out there – the books, the shows, your best friend getting organized and you not being organized ... people are more aware of it than they were 10 years ago."

The upside to it is that now it's not as hard to get the client sold on the job.

As far as the reason some people need help with organization is due to many factors, she said. "There's a genetic component and also lifestyle, and exposure you've had, education or no education," she explained.

Johnson has guided people through the latest DNA testing, as well, but warns that family secrets sometimes pop up.

"I have a client who's adopted and wanted to do the genealogy to find out who her birth parents are," she said. "As I hand her the test, I tell her, 'As long as you know it could find you siblings and other relatives.'"

Johnson's client responded affirmatively. "She and I are hoping for something very exciting," she said.

For Canyon Country residents, living in a fire zone means they have an added incentive to put genealogy documents and photos in a safe place.

"It's not just fires – it's earthquakes, tornadoes, floods, hurricanes – it affects everyone," Johnson said, adding that people everywhere should scan their genealogy materials and put scans into a cloud service, such as Dropbox.

It's the dual benefit to the whole process – absence of clutter and protection of valuables.

When asked her greatest satisfaction, Johnson said, "When we have the photos in beautiful books or they've all been scanned and all the scanned information is given to family members."

Visit [visiontobeorganized.com](http://visiontobeorganized.com).

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## ABOUT MARTHA MICHAEL



A professional writer for decades and the editor of multiple products from Valley Publications, Martha is in a constant search for new challenges. While maintaining her editing post for more than eight years, she also opened an antiques business and authored her first book, "Canyon Country," by Arcadia Publishing. Martha manages two blogs—one for business and one that is more personal—and works to market and perfect her craft in every arena. Lack of energy is never a problem, and Martha is daily generating ideas, taking photos and talking to members of the community. She believes strongly that "everybody has a story."



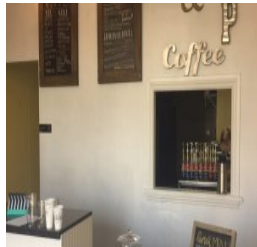
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