Narrative Appraisal

Narrative Appraisal is a tool for times when you're trying to make difficult decisions regarding which of your possessions to keep and which ones to let go. Because only you know what your possessions are worth (and why,) you will be in charge of this exercise. You will create your own priorities and determine your own limits.

Let's say you have a set amount of space that can be dedicated to your stuff. Let's say, for example, you're considering your book collection. You decide that you will fill one bookcase. When you have filled the bookcase, you can use the Narrative Appraisal questions to decide which books will remain on the shelves, and which ones will be let go. You'd keep only the best ones, right? Only you know why one of your books is better compared to another book. You determine the value of something based on what it represents to you.

STEP 1:

Write down a list of up to twenty collections/categories of items that you tend to accumulate. (Examples: shoes, stamps, art supplies, magazines, tools, etc.)

1	11
2	12
3	13
4	14
5	15
6	16
7	17
8	18
9	19
10	20

Contact www.mutual-support.com for more information.

STEP 2:

Choose an item: _____

STEP 3:

Which collection/category does it come from?

```
[                                                                    ]
```

How did you come to own it?

```
[                                                                    ]
```

How long have you owned it?

```
[                                                                    ]
```

What do you like about it?

```
[                                                                    ]
```

How does it make you feel to have it?

```
[                                                                    ]
```

How important is this item compared to the other examples of this category?

     It's the best item   It's really good   Average   Not that important

What is your favorite item in the collection it belongs to?

```
[                                                                    ]
```

Would the collection/category be greatly diminished without this particular item?   Yes   No

If you let this item go, how do you think you'll feel?

```
[                                                                    ]
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What does this item say about you?

Does it represent the person you want to be?

Do you think you'll be able to let this item go?

Immediately   Maybe someday   Probably not   No way!

STEP 4:

Is there another item from this collection/category to consider next? How about an item that's more important from this collection/category, and one that's less important.

BACK TO STEP 1:

At this point, you can repeat the exercise with the next item, and so on, until you don't even need to look at this form. The decisions may never get easier; you'll just feel more confident making them.

Decluttering is not an all-or-nothing affair. The process of decluttering a home is as much about what to save, as it is about what to let go of. If your focus remains on saving the most fun, personally valuable and meaningful collections/categories, and the best items that make-up those collections/categories, you can make the best use of your space.

Narrative Appraisal is a positive, strengths-based volume-reducer. Imagine reducing the number of collections/categories that you have, and that the items you do save are reduced by an appropriate percentage relative to how much space you have. Imagine that at the end of the process, you are able to step back from the items and say, "Wow, that's awesome. I thought this would be terrible, and I'm not totally fine with it yet, but I'm proud to enjoy this part of my life again."

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