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Small Space Savvy in a Big Stuff World: 13 Tips

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We all, including me, like our creature comforts at home. But do you like storing too much stuff, organizing it, paying for it, tripping over it, and maintaining it? I don't, so I'm very selective about what I allow to reside in my 987 square foot upscale apartment. Sure I think big homes are beautiful to *look at* and *visit*, but I personally choose, and have always chosen, to live in a small space, surrounded only with possessions I truly find beautiful or useful. Why? Four words: *The freedom of simplicity*. That includes freedom from big house maintenance and never-ending landscaping and the freedom to travel with my husband at a moment's notice so I can experience the wonders of the world around me and write about all of it. What freedom from your stuff do *you* long for?

So, how can *you* achieve "small space savvy" in a "big stuff" world?

Here's how:

- 1. Savvy Stuff.** Are you savvy about your "stuff?" Do you absolutely love everything in your home? Do you need it? If not, why not donate some of it to charity or give it to a family member? Don't pay for a bigger space when it's easier to unload it once and for all.
- 2. Memento Madness.** Okay, I admit that I too still have the card that came with courting flowers from my hubby over 30 years ago. The good news it's in a scrapbook, which doesn't take up much space. Weed through your mementos and if parting with your football trophies ignites your adolescent angst, take a photo of them for your scrapbook and say "so long" to the actual dusty space-hogging trophies.
- 3. Bountiful Beauty.** If you're like me, your weakness is "pretty stuff." But do you really need five sets of the same crystal glasses and four sets of china? Or the juice glasses that were a present from Aunt Gertrude in 1958? Choose your two favorite dish sets and donate the rest to a local homeless shelter.
- 4. Fab Furnishings.** If you inherited Aunt Matilda's Victorian furniture and you're a minimalist, there's no rule book written that says you have to keep it. Might a sibling or a cousin like it? How about consigning it to an antique store?
- 5. Clothes Horse.** If you still have your prom dress from 1952, believe me, you won't be attending another prom soon. Make a pillow from that beautiful fabric you love so much and donate the dress to the local animal shelter to spruce up Fido's cage.

6. Clever Containers. Keep possessions well-sorted in labeled containers so you can find things when you need them. Think baskets, plastic bins, clear tubs with lids, and zippered plastic bags. It's wise to containerize.

7. Kiss the Cook. Your mate will more likely kiss you as the cook if he or she can actually find a dish in the kitchen. Go through your spices and toss any that are old, keep kitchen cabinets free from appliances, and make sure the dishes you have in the cabinets are well organized. Keep your favorite recipes in a binder or file box and ditch the rest.

8. Shoe Sugar. Are you a "shoe sugar" who loves every pretty pair of shoes you see? (Yes, I'm guilty!) If so, choose the ones that are still comfortable and that match all your current outfits. Get rid of the rest, as in *hello Goodwill!*

9. Book Blitz. Unless you're a professional writer like me (and even then...) do you really need every book you've read since third grade? Nope. Sort through them all and display your favorites on attractive bookshelves and donate the rest where they belong: the public library.

10. Bathroom Brigade. If you have 99 perfume bottles, that's frankly 97 too many. Chanel Number 5 went out with the 60's so say goodbye to that era *now*. And while you're at it, donate your old frayed towels to the local animal shelter so Fluffy is more comfortable.

11. Tacky Ties. Oh, I know. You're saving all those colorful wacky ties your husband's had since the 80's to make a quilt some day. News alert: Your local quilting bee can use them *today*. Donate.

12. CD Serenade. Do the greatest hits from the 40's still make you swoon? If so, choose your favorites and get rid of the rest. If they make you feel like you're older than the hills, ditch them so they're not making you feel more drab than mouse-brown hair.

13. Toy Town. Do your children really need enough toys to create a toy town? Give some of them to a local abused children's shelter and ask relatives to give your kids a savings bond for their college fund for their next birthday.

Is it really possible to create small space savvy in a big stuff world and live simply, but well? Absolutely! Artfully pare down to only what you really love and need and release the rest to the universe to be used, loved, and ummmm...stored... by someone else.

For more small space organizing and decorating tips, please visit www.KathrynBechen.com, where you can buy Kathryn's internationally bestselling book, *Small Space Organizing: A Room-by-Room Guide to Maximizing Your Space*.