

The Gentle Art of Swedish Death Cleaning

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Chalice Lighting/Opening Words:

In Sweden death cleaning means removing unnecessary or unwanted household things to make your home nice and orderly when you think the time is coming closer for you leaving the planet.

Check-in: Share a bit about yourself, a thought, an event in your life, or something intended to be meaningful to these friends with whom we gather today.

Topic:

Some adult children do not want to talk about death with their parents. If it's too hard to address, then death cleaning can be a way to start the conversation. Our children lead busy lives and they might not be able to take care of what you leave behind. Taking care of that burden for them is a loving gesture.

The difference between death cleaning and just a big cleanup is the amount of time they consume. Death cleaning is not about dusting or mopping; it is about a permanent form of organization that makes your everyday life run more smoothly.

Death cleaning can be very hard if for some reason you must downsize your home. Going through all your old belongs and hopefully saying good-bye to several of them is very difficult for some of us. People tend to hoard rather than throw away.

Once you are gone, there can be chaos enough without leaving behind things you may cherish but others will not. One easy way to avoid future conflict is to sell your items. After all, they are yours to do what you want with them.

Some advice and questions to ask yourself:

- Do not start with photographs or letters and personal papers. These items may start you down memory lane and you may never get around removing anything else.
- Size really matters. Start with the large items and finish with the small.
- Start with choosing an easy category without too much sentimental connection. Clothes are an easy category. There are probably many things you own that you never use.
- What do you want to do with all your stuff?
- Do you enjoy having all this stuff?
- Could life be easier and less tiring if we got rid of some of this stuff?
- Will anyone I know be happier if I save this? If the answer is no, then put it in the shredder, sell it, or give it away.
- Throw away your secret or not so secret vices. There's no sense in saving things that will shock or upset your family after you are gone. This includes letters, documents, or diaries that contain information that might embarrass or upset your descendants. If you think the secret will cause your loved one's unhappiness, then destroy them. Make a bonfire or shove them into the hungry shredder.
- For things that you want to save for your enjoyment, old love letters, other memories, etc. gather them into a small box and label it "**Throw Away.**" These things have no value to anyone but yourself. Once you are gone, the box can be destroyed.

- Death cleaning is something you can do for yourself, for your own pleasure. If you start early, say at 65 (too late for me!) it won't seem like such a huge task. It is a delight to go through things and remember their worth.

Questions:

1. What do you think about death cleaning?
2. Is this something you have already started or might do?
3. Did any of your relatives do a form of death cleaning?
4. Were you appreciative of their thoughtfulness?
5. Or, were you angry that items you wanted were gone?