



HOME AND INTERIORS

## The modern way to Marie Kondo: how to be organised without your home feeling grey and sterile

BY AMY BEECHAM 2 DAYS AGO



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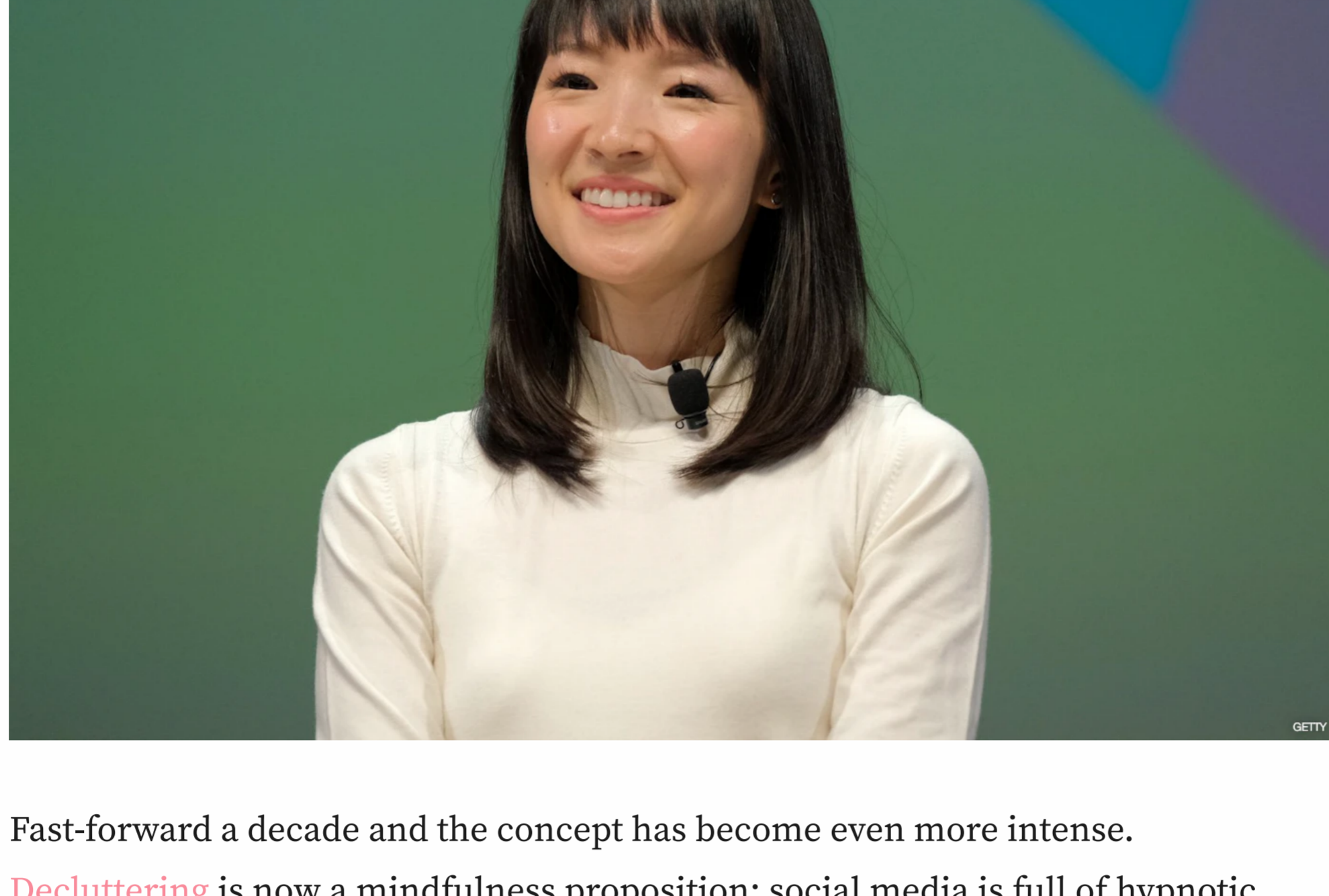
DON'T HAVE ENOUGH TIME? SAVE FOR LATER.

A decade has passed since Marie Kondo first taught the world how to clear out, tidy up and ask whether their belongings 'spark joy'. But as we creep away from bland minimalist styles and back into an era of bold maximalism, Stylist asked a team of expert home organisers how to ditch grey and sterile interiors and KonMari your life – the modern way. This is what they said...

The year is 2014: Gwyneth Paltrow and Chris Martin have "consciously uncoupled", celebrities are undertaking the ice bucket challenge, Psy's *Gangnam Style* is dominating the music charts and **Marie Kondo**, the Japanese organising consultant, has the world in a triple-fold grip. Following the release of her book, *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying*, millions were inspired to declutter their homes, chucking out everything that didn't "spark joy", a phrase she brought into public consciousness. The book would go on to sell more than 14 million copies worldwide, be translated into 44 languages and inspire the hit *Netflix series Tidying Up with Marie Kondo*, which ranked as the streamer's #1 release of 2019.

So to call Kondo a cultural phenomenon feels something of an understatement. She rebranded organising as something to be enjoyed, not just endured. For her (and her loyal followers), tidying was a "festival" in which we should let go of anything that didn't speak to the heart – but not before thanking the item out loud for the role it played in your life. With her compartmentalised underwear drawers and bright-white aesthetic, she single-handedly sold us not just beautifully folded clothes, but the fantasy of a tidy life. "The **Marie Kondo effect** is one of those phenomena of macro- and micro-trend convergence, where one neatly packaged idea of having less and appreciating our stuff more successfully taps into our cultural, social and behavioural psyche," explains Annie Corser, senior trends editor for pop culture and media at *Stylius*. "Her decluttering formula promised satisfaction, emotional control and moral superiority. It was a seductive proposition and we all internalised the concept that fewer material possessions leads to more happiness."

Indeed, Kondo became something of a catch-all salve to the commercialism that seemed to ramp up in the 2010s. As we began to spend a growing amount of social time online, our exposure to advertising grew exponentially. Providing us with a much-needed antidote to out-of-control consumerism, Kondo repackaged a sense of minimalism for Western audiences in particular, who were experiencing a newfound anxiety about stuff, as well as growing cognisance of mental wellness.



Fast-forward a decade and the concept has become even more intense.

**Decluttering** is now a mindfulness proposition: social media is full of hypnotic home organisation videos, cleaning tutorials and timelapses of people tidying their rooms and organising their fridges with military precision. At the same time, we're seeing a growing backlash against the so-called 'sad beige aesthetic' and the dull, muted tones of the 'quiet luxury' trend. According to the *Pinterest Predicts 2024 Report*, after years of minimalist design and neutral colour schemes, bolds 2024 and individuality are reigning supreme once more. Searches for 'eclectic interior design vintage' have soared by 850% year on year, while searches for how to style 'maximalist decor vintage' are also up by 350%. For Corser, the return to 'maximalism' among young people especially is about two things: regaining control and redefining joy. "In terms of control, maximalist fashion and interior design is a statement of how you want to live your life in a way that's defiantly about not fitting in, not being quiet or 'tasteful' or demure," she says. "Bold colours, clashing prints, statement furniture and ornaments and bold wallpaper – all of these things are designed to declare personality, agency, idiosyncrasy, a bit of a DGAF attitude that repositions personal taste as a favoured attribute."

"We're definitely seeing a shift towards valuing authenticity and personality over 'perfection' in our homes," agrees **Katrina Hassan**, a master-level certified KonMari® consultant and professional organiser. "As I tell my clients: it's not about achieving a museum-quality or showroom-like home, it's about getting back in control of what you own and how it makes you feel. It's something Marie addresses in her book, but it's a message that gets lost when all we see on social media are minimalist images and perfectly curated environments."

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Clearly then, the true KonMari ethos is not about how your space looks, but *feels*.

As Kondo said herself in a 2023 interview: "[The method] is a huge fundamental shift in your mind and in your heart... It's not simply about tidying up and organising your home." So if you're tired of bland, blank walls and dull uniformity but still want a space that feels calm and clutter-free, know that it is entirely possible. We asked a team of tidying experts – and maximalists – to show us how.

## How to Marie Kondo your life – the modern way

A practical and streamlined space doesn't have to look grey and sterile. Put down the matching glass containers and start by embracing a joyful, bold and – most importantly – personalised home, say these expert organisers.



### Focus on what you value, not how much you have

Worried that embracing the KonMari method means whittling down your wardrobe to just four t-shirts and three pairs of shoes? Think again. "Unlike challenges that encourage you to 'get rid of one item a day', the KonMari method has rules about how to approach and undertake decluttering but doesn't ever dictate what you should and shouldn't keep," explains **Judith Clarkson**, a professional organiser and KonMari consultant. "What sparks joy for one person is completely different to what sparks joy for another person, so the key is making sure that whatever you have at home sparks joy for you. If your passion is cooking, then don't throw away items from your kitchen just to reach an arbitrary amount of utensils or pots and pans. If you're a nighttime reader, move your bookshelf into your bedroom. The goal is always convenience and creating systems that work for each individual."

### Embrace the eclectic – but have some kind of a plan

If you're a fan of bold and bright interiors, you don't need to give them up in order to have an organised home. Just make sure that your choices are well thought out. "There's a real misconception about **maximalism** being about just chucking everything at the wall and seeing what sticks, but my approach is a much more curated and considered version," says Siobhan Murphy, a self-confessed maximalist and the designer behind *Interior Curve*. "It's not about displaying a mishmash of items just for the sake of it. Every piece – whether it's a vintage lamp or a bright pink rug – tells a story or has a memory attached to it. It's that element of beauty that is most important and sparks joy for me."

"My job as a consultant is to help people create an ideal living environment that still supports their daily lifestyle," agrees Hassan. "Start with looking at how you go about your day, your behaviours, which parts of your home you come into contact with most often – and then assess the parts that are hindering you the most. Does your bathroom feel like a burden? Is it cluttered or chaotic? If so, how can we turn this into a place of calm? That might be by minimising, but it could also be leaning into colours, patterns and items that spark that visual joy, too."

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