



Marie Kondo-ing Your Home Office

The guru of declutter takes on the new remote workspace (and pays a visit to mine).

by FRANCES DODDS

Every office has its politics. But bringing your office into your home, as many of us have in quarantine, escalates the usual state of affairs. I share a 500-square-foot apartment with my fiancé, Chad, and I've found coworking and coexisting to be a bit of a minefield. We're allies, but inanimate enemies lie in wait: an ill-placed coffee mug, a computer cord stretched across the floor like a booby trap. The explosions have an existential ring to them: "But why, *why*??"

So when I discover that Marie Kondo will be paying us a Zoom visit to discuss her new book, *Joy at Work*—published in early April, just as the pandemic took off—I am eager to experience her much-celebrated, life-changing magic.

At the appointed time, Kondo "arrives," accompanied by her English-speaking interpreter, Marie Iida. Kondo looks fresh and minimal in a white crewneck sweater. A copy of *Joy at Work* sits on a shelf over her right shoulder. The whole scene is very Zen, but Kondo assures me that outside the frame, her remote work setup is less than serene. "This is certainly new for me," she says. "My children are playing in the other room. I'm home the entire day, so I make three meals for them, and in between..." I think she says something about work and a dog and health, but feedback fuzzes up the connection.

Joy at Work is Kondo's fifth book, cowritten with Scott Sonenshein, an organizational psychologist. In it, she takes the method that mesmerized the world in *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up* and applies it to our professional lives, advising us to remove clutter from all areas of our career—office, email, desktop files, apps, daily calendar. The idea is to clear time for those aspects of your work that spark joy, and ultimately to ask if your occupation makes you feel happy and fulfilled. "For me, the goal was to create a book that allows you to think about how you want to work in the first place, and what your ideal is when it comes to your career," she says. "I think this book really gives people an opportunity to listen to their hearts."

Sadly, a 30-minute Zoom session is not enough time for Kondo

to listen to my heart (it tends to go on). But it's enough for a tour. I show her my desk with its curated baubles, stack of papers, and nest of electronic cords. Then we visit my bedroom, where Chad is perched on the bedside with his laptop on a barstool. "That's where I keep my coffee mug!" he says, pointing at the windowsill.

"I'm so happy that you shared your specific work area with me!" she says, sounding genuinely happy. "It will just take a few tricks of storing to make it a lot better." Her voice rises and falls in the warm, lively timbre that endeared her to millions of fans on her show, *Tidying Up with Marie Kondo*. "Around your desk, the first things I saw were a few small accessories. Just having a little tray or any small boxes you like can really clear space. And the electric cords—if you don't need to keep them all connected to a power source, it might be helpful to designate a spot to store some of them. As for that pile of documents, it's amazing how much difference it makes to store them vertically in a file folder. It really allows you to keep track of what and how much you have."

In regard to Chad's "office," she says, "I think it's very important to demarcate when you're using the bed for work and when you're using it to relax and sleep on. So disconnect the cords at the end of the day, and put them in a box at the foot of your bed, or anywhere you'd like, but just make sure you're clearly shifting gears. Anything that allows you to move from work mode to relaxation mode is very important."

Much of her work involves teaching her pupils to let go of things. But that can be especially difficult in a time like this, when people are losing so much already. When I ask Kondo if she has any advice, she bows her head and closes her eyes like a passing meditation. "A lot of people have anxiety about what's ahead for us, but I do feel that now is precisely the moment to reflect on how precious the things are that we already possess," she says. "The question of what sparks joy allows you to shift your perspective and foster gratitude for why you do what you do, and the people and things you have in your life." Even that trusty computer cord, trip-wired across the living room floor.



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