

THE DECLUTTERER:

Caroline Basham - Director of Caroline B Personal Management

Starved for space in Hong Kong, yet our lives are filled with 'stuff'.



"You start with understanding the extent of the problem," Caroline begins, "this may require some policy decisions around what stays, is scanned, shredded, sold, donated or recycled. Technology plays a part, so the next stage is preparing the technology base, which our technical manager deals with. Sometimes, decluttering can also include upgrading to more modern systems. So preparing the systems is the next stage. After that, we work to a timetable that suits the client. It's important not to rush the process and then realise later you made the wrong decision about how to treat something. In short, every client is different, so our service is customised around their specific situation and the outcomes that they are looking for".

After reviewing my own home, I can pinpoint the specific area that would require the most immediate attention. My wardrobe. "My simple rule for reducing clothing? If I haven't worn something for three years I recycle, or give to charity or if I really love it, I store it in PAKT". Caroline advises. "Over the last couple of years, Hong Kong has finally started to accept that it is okay to recycle clothing and there are more options to do this, such as Hula,

Vestiaire and Carousell. Personally, I don't buy much fast-fashion, so my turnover is low. What I do keep, perhaps longer than most items, are the classics that I know will always be in vogue".

I can't help but think that Caroline's own home must be a neatly labelled, organised dream space, and ask if she heeds her own advice. "Yes to a degree, but there is always room for improvement. I am disciplined about clothes and have a scanner and shredder, but I find it impossible to throw away books I love, which are like family photos. Having said that, under my work desk is a big box of photos that I have promised my husband I will send off to our A2D lab for digitising".

It seems no matter who we are, we can all fall off the wagon when it comes to keeping things organised. But there are ways to stay on track. "I encourage my clients to set some rules around bringing new stuff into their world. For documentation this is simple, read, consider, scan, shred. But for other things, it's more of a one in, one out rule". A rule I hope to take on board in 2019 - so long as there are fewer Zara sales.

Caroline B is a customised personal assistance service. Caroline first came to Hong Kong in 2000, and set up the business in 2012. Visit caroline-b.hk

Caroline Basham has helped people declutter their lives since before Marie Kondo taught us the life-changing magic of tidying up. Her business Caroline B Personal Management not only focuses on organising space for busy families, but also gives them back something much more important.

"It reduces anxiety, and you can get some peace of mind." Caroline tells me. "I find it cathartic! Remember, for some clients this involves looking back over say 20 years plus of information and belongings, a real trip down memory lane so to speak. It can be nostalgic, comforting but perhaps painful. If we are successful, the benefits of this sort of service are much more subtle than a simple 'Wow, that's great' reaction. We aim to improve karma and a sense of wellbeing through a practical improvement in control of your life".

So what exactly is the process of decluttering with Caroline and her team?

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Caroline making the most of storage space