## Cleaning Out the Junk Drawer

### By Chris Palmer and Matthew Lucas

It used to be that if you came to my house for dinner and were looking for the silverware drawer in the kitchen, you may have accidentally opened my aptly dubbed ‘junk drawer’.

The proverbial junk drawer is a sad abyss which holds a maximum of two useful items and a smattering of things which *used to* be worth something, *used to* have meaning, *used to* make sense to keep. Between the dried up tube of glue (“But, maybe someday I’ll drive a fish hook in there and find the still-liquid stuff!”) and the 32-cent stamps (“How much does it cost to send a postcard these days?”) lies that one useful item: the key-to-something-I’m-not-sure-what-but-it-must-be-important.

It’s junk! It’s clutter, and it doesn’t belong. But it’s so easy to hang on to these little items and let them clog up our space and muddle our lives. Clutter is more than just the knick-knacks in the junk drawer, though. Our heads can get cluttered every day with drivel we know we should let go of, but we can’t or don’t. That grudge you’ve been holding onto since the third grade when that slouchy kid, Devin, spilled four ounces of milk on you and said it was an accident, but you *know* he was dared to do it by your childhood nemesis, Steve... that’s clutter.

Why do we hang onto trinkets, junk, and bad memories? And what’s so awful about that anyway? Well, it’s not always unhealthy to cling to our stuff. Keepsakes remind us of times in our lives that we may never get back, and it’s important to stay connected to our past. But when things start to get in the way of living our lives, when we find ourselves unable to distinguish between what deserves our attention and what needs cut out -- therein lies the problem.

The stuff you keep around you and the way you feel about it is a direct reflection of how you live your life. If you’re constantly indecisive and struggle to assert yourself, chances are you haven’t been able to decide whether or not to keep that sweater you got for Christmas ten years ago that you will definitely never wear. On the flip side, if you’re streamlined and organized I would bet your junk drawer just has petty cash in it. Maybe a pen.

Tyler Durden, the antagonist in Chuck Palahniuk’s book *Fight Club* would say, “The things you own end up owning you,” and while he is neither a good role model nor a real person, the warning still holds. It can be easy to start caring more about all the stuff that’s standing in your way than you do about just getting on with your life. Focus more on the people you care about, striving toward your potential, setting goals, planning, and taking action. You may find it’s easier to get rid of the clutter. And when you clear out the frivolous, unimportant stuff and dump out that junk drawer, you’ll find room for real substance in your life.

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