

# NEAT & TIDY TV VIEWING

Why do we love a declutter show? What is it about seeing someone organise their home on TV that we find so appealing? Does it make us want to find the rainbow-coloured folded joy? Jennifer Morgan finds out...

First, we avidly watched *Tidying Up with Marie Kondo* as she showed us how to fold our pants and expunge the joyless from our homes, now we're glued to Netflix's *Get Organised with The Home Edit*, where the rainbow-arranging, clear-box lovers Clea Shearer and Joanna Telpin (for hire at US\$250 an hour) sweep into celebrity homes and 'edit', 'categorise' and 'contain'. It's good TV – who among us isn't curious? Who doesn't love seeing the clutter issues of Khloé Kardashian or Reese Witherspoon? And who doesn't have a slight addiction to acrylic storage boxes?

Of course, we've always loved shows that take us into people's homes, with *Through the Keyhole*, *Changing Rooms* and *60 Second Makeover* all TV gold. 'We are innately nosy about other people's houses,' says Dr Meg Arroll, Harley Street psychologist and author. 'We find ourselves comparing how we live to others. When it comes to programmes that focus on home organising, the "before" can make us feel a bit better about our messy living rooms and packed-to-the-rafters cupboards. We often think everyone else is more organised and in control than we are, so seeing other people struggle with clutter can offer a sense of comfort. Then, when we see rooms being transformed into neat and tidy spaces, we feel vicarious satisfaction – and often shut the door to our own junk rooms.'

Maggie Westhead, a writer and editor (@chiclittlelist) loves the idea of being super tidy. 'I'm a very organised person in the body of a slightly chaotic and very busy mum of three. Very occasionally,



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I'll achieve order.' She confesses to 'gorging' on shows like *Get Organised* and *Tidying Up with Marie Kondo*. 'I really believe the key to a happy, harmonious home is good storage. Such shows ultimately reveal that owning loads of bits and bobs brings clutter and chaos and having less brings order and serenity to the home.'

KonMari Silver consultant Sue Spencer ([alifemoreorganised.co.uk](http://alifemoreorganised.co.uk)) feels people relate to the homes shown in such shows – although the extreme cases make good watching. 'We've had a period of high levels of consumption, with shopping seen as a national pastime, plus we have limited free time and want to spend what we do have enjoying family life – as a result, there are some very full homes in the UK. We love watching the transformation elements of these programmes when we can recognise some of the issues facing people. We can pick up some tips to try, donate unwanted things to charity and be motivated enough by the final look of an organised space to give it a go.'

Molly Leese, partner & assistant buyer at John Lewis & Partners, admits to creating a few 'categories' at home after watching *Get Organised*. 'I completely reorganised my flat and sent things to the charity shop, but didn't quite colour code – although I wish I did follow such a system.'

Sue loves how Clea and Joanna's show helps clients create functional spaces that look beautiful, setting goals and organising by category. 'They are good at making the point that there's a trade-off between the amount of stuff you own and the space you have available to store it,' she adds. 'There are lots of similarities with the KonMari Method, but I believe Marie pushes people to go further, encouraging you to cherish things that make you happy and clear away things no longer relevant in your life. We can learn from the things we let go, understanding why they weren't needed.'

It's this emotional side that Dr Meg says we need to assess. 'While in the short term, watching such shows may be a bit of a boost to our behaviour around organising and decluttering, they are unlikely to change habits over a longer period. Rather, these types of programmes are a form of escapism and, like any good TV, they allow us to be transported to another world. Long term, we need to assess the practical, emotional and habitual roots for clues and solutions as to why we might live in disorder.'

One short-term fix might just be to buy more storage – but as Clea and Joanna advise, you need to do your 'editing' first to fully assess your space and all the items you need to accommodate. Yet sales of The Home Edit range, exclusive to John Lewis & Partners, soared during the first week of the show launching.

'People are looking for real-life solutions,' says Nicola Lewis, a professional organiser (@thisgirlcanorganise). 'It's about taking small steps when it comes to decluttering and organising.' Nicola's most-watched Insta reel sees her folding pyjamas into a parcel, which can be tucked behind your pillow or inside your bedside drawers. 'Organising doesn't need to be complicated,' she says. 'There are a couple of techniques that work for all. The first is when decluttering, always put items into piles of

"keep", "donate" and "recycle" and have bags or boxes ready to put items inside. Another is that ordering by colour and category will bring calm and clarity to any wardrobe.'

But you might need to introduce such new ways of living slowly, as Maggie knows; 'My husband Tim laughs at my attempts to Marie Kondo the drawers, but the girls, Evie, 11, and Lola, nine, appreciate how I've organised their wardrobe and bookshelf by colour, Home Edit-style, and they stick to it. I'm determined to get William, four, into good tidying habits, too.'

'It always gets messy before it gets tidy,' warns Sue, who sees a peak in website visits and enquiries after decluttering shows appear on our screens as people become overwhelmed by what they've started or want to replicate what they've seen. 'Start by storing similar items together, avoiding scatter storage – that way you'll know where to find things and where to put things away. Lots of my clients have a sticky drawer or basket, with everything from glue to Blu Tack and staples – if they need to stick something they know

where to look. Make use of containers you have around the home for storage, such as shoe boxes, old iPhone boxes, Tupperware, etc. You don't need it to look beautiful, you just need to contain things. Start off using what you have and once you know the system is working for you, then purchase the pretty storage if you still want to.'

But as Dr Meg cautions, 'Not everyone dreams of an organised home – in fact, some people find being surrounded by jumbled belongings soothing. That rainbow/folded/neat/clutter-free home is obtainable but it will be at a cost. It's up to us to work out whether the time, effort and cost of a perfectly organised home is worth the benefit. For most, a happy middle is enough. As anyone with young children or teenagers will tell you, the stress of keeping a home clutter-free isn't worth it! And this perfectionism may indicate a trend for cognitive distortions, such as catastrophising (e.g., "If anyone sees this mess, they'll think I'm a terrible person/parent and won't want to associate with me"), which can lead to anxiety and low mood. Hence, tidy enough is good enough.'

## 5 HANDY RESOURCES FOR MORE ORGANISING INSPO



**WATCH:** GET ORGANIZED WITH THE HOME EDIT, AVAILABLE ON NETFLIX

Check out the ultimate American makeover show to see what all the fuss is about



**READ:** THE LIFE CHANGING MAGIC OF TIDYING BY MARIE KONDO (£14.99, EBURY PUBLISHING)

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