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A Canadian Personal Organizer Reviews Marie Kondo's New Netflix Show (It Doesn't Always Spark Joy)

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DENISE CREW/NETFLIX.

Timed perfectly to line up with January motivation, new Netflix series [*Tidying Up With Marie Kondo*](#) is a reality show version of the Japanese author's life-changing cleaning craze. In it, couples and individuals employ the now-famous Kondo Method (discarding

items that don't "spark joy"), while ideally entertaining viewers for 44 minutes in the process. So far, it seems to be working — while Netflix doesn't release numbers, it feels like half the Internet is talking about this show (the other half are talking about [#FijiWaterGirl](#)). But how does the series stack up with a real-life professional organizer?

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Refinery29 spoke to [Jaclyn Ray](#) — aka "The Clutter Wrangler" — a Canadian professional organizer with 15 years of experience in the field to find out which aspects of the show spark joy and which ones annoy.

Sparks joy: The show raises awareness of personal organizing and the people who use it

"I remember when I first started in this business and told people what I did, they thought I meant community organizer, or party planner. Even today a lot of people hear organizer and assume that I work with hoarders. That's one aspect of the show I really like: The people who appear on the show are pretty typical in terms of the types of clients I work with — people who are overwhelmed and want help getting rid of normal, average amounts of clutter, rather than something more sensational. Hoarding is a mental health issue as much as an organization one."

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Annoys: Organizing is a hands-on job

"The people are realistic, but the process — I'm not so sure. In one episode, Kondo meets with the client and tells them what to do and then she

returns a week later and it's done. I *wish* my clients did homework, but 95 percent of them don't. The kind of person who is calling me is doing so because they can't do it on their own. When I work it's side-by-side, step-by-step, question-by-question, item-by-item: Does this fit? When is the last time you wore it? A huge part of using an professional organizer is that it forces you to set aside the time and just get it done — sort of like how working with a personal trainer motivates a person to do their workout. I guess the people in the show are motivated because they know the cameras are coming back."

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Sparks joy: No judgment

"One of the things that is really important in professional organizing is to avoid judgment and Kondo is a master of that — she never flinches. It's like, 'Oh, your basement is full of Christmas ornaments or your closet is still filled with your dead husband's clothing — totally normal, no problem.' In our line of work, we don't really care what the stuff is: A thousand photographs, a thousand books, a thousand baseball cards. It's about taking the time to parse through everything to make sure you are only keeping the things that add to your life."

Annoys: Joy has little to do with de-cluttering

"Kondo asks her clients to keep or discard an item depending on whether it "sparks joy," which doesn't make a lot of sense to me. Why would a can opener joy? That's not the point. In my work there are only a small number of things where joy or happiness is the determining factor. It's mostly is this useful and functional? The other problem with the "what sparks joy?" question is that sometimes the things that have brought a lot of happiness still need to go. I'll be working with a 60-year-old man who is still holding onto the giant model train table he used when his son was a kid — and his son is now 35! If it's not being saved for a grandchild, I will suggest taking a picture and then donating it

somewhere where it will bring a lot of joy to someone else.”

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Sparks joy: All the feels

“There are times in the show when Kondo is acting as almost an amateur psychiatrist, and that definitely resonated with me. People who call me are generally ready to get rid of things, but they still cry, they tell me about their divorces, their dead relatives, the happy times, the dress that they wore on their first date before it goes to Good Will. We look through photographs and they cry because their kids aren’t little anymore. There is a lot of emotion involved in going through a person’s home, and often you develop an intimacy. You see that in the show and it’s something I really enjoy about the work.”

Annoys: Too cutesy

“There’s this whole kind of mystical aspect of the show that wasn’t for me. Like when Kondo blesses the house. It’s not that I don’t appreciate taking a moment to appreciate the homes that people live in, but I wasn’t really clear on what was going on. Does she really think she’s communing with the spirit of the house? To me it was like when you’re in a yoga class with an instructor and you’re doing your poses and then the teacher just goes way off into the woooo. And then there’s the part where she “wakes up” the books, which is part of the Kondo Method — she’s tapping the books and the clients are just kid of giggling and going along. She’s famous and successful and so cute, but I feel like if I was working with a new client and told them we were going to wake up the books, they would think I was insane.”

Annoys: Sweating the small stuff

“Folding is a big focus of the Kondo method and the show and to me it’s like folding... *folding!!!* If I walked into my client’s house and said one of the most important things I’m

going to teach you is folding, I wouldn't have a business. The only time I teach someone how to fold is when it's children. You don't want your clothes to be a wrinkled mess and the door has to close — those are the rules. I don't really see the point of Kondo's intricate folding method, and the idea that clients will maintain that — visit those houses 10 months later. Eighty percent of my clients are repeat customers, which is not something expressed in the show. Ultimately there is no magic folding method that will change the fact that you have to get dressed every day. Life continues to happen and maintaining an uncluttered home is a process.”

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