

# TO YOUR HEALTH

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## Spring Cleaning

By Marcia Feldman,  
Palliative Care Coordinator

Years before my mother was even close to the end of her life, she began cleaning out the belongings that she had acquired over a lifetime. Her mission was to spare her children from having to deal with the contents of her 4-bedroom house after she was gone. Knowing that sometimes families can be torn apart when dividing up their parents' possessions, she was determined to pare down so we wouldn't be overwhelmed. Little did we know at the time that the term for what she was doing was called, "Swedish Death Cleaning."

As morose as this may sound, it is not meant to be sad. Swedish Death Cleaning refers to a kind of decluttering in which people put their affairs in order in anticipation of death someday. The Swedish word "döstädning," (dö means "death" and städning means "cleaning") is described in Margareta Magnusson's book, *The Gentle Art of Swedish Death Cleaning; How to Free Yourself and Your Family from a Lifetime of Clutter*.

Many of you had to downsize in order to move here. You may have already sifted through years of "stuff" and been forced to decide what is truly necessary and what you could purge. Were you able to find homes for your possessions with people that needed and appreciated them? Was it an overwhelming or painful task that forced

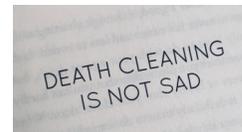
you to revisit the past? Did you feel lighter after letting go of things that no longer served you? While the process of clearing out can stir up emotions, it can also be uplifting and freeing in the long run.



Decluttering our homes can lead to many benefits. When we are surrounded only by things we need and love, we can feel happier in general from a lightening of our load. Clearing clutter can lead to feeling less stress at home. When we clear out extraneous possessions, there are fewer items to clean, organize and worry about. We can donate or gift things we no longer use to someone who is in need, which in turn can bring us satisfaction. And having less stuff means less things to trip over!

*"Putting your house in order, if you can do it, is one of the most comforting activities, and the benefits of it are incalculable."*

-Leonard Cohen, -The New Yorker



## 7 Tips for Swedish Death Cleaning

1. Remove excess
2. Go digital
3. Discard with intention (no guilt)
4. Buy less
5. Be gentle and considerate
6. Take care of yourself
7. Allow yourself to feel and reflect

**Where do I start?**

Magnusson advises to start with clothes. When going through the closet, make one pile for donations and one pile for clothes to keep. If you haven't worn it in the past year, get rid of it. Regift what you can and make someone else happy on the receiving end.

Save sentimental items like letters and photographs for later. Before throwing an item away, ask yourself, "Will anyone be happier if I save this?" For particularly sentimental items that you are not ready to let go of, put them in a box marked "Mementos". If it feels right, give your family instructions to destroy them when you're gone. Honor the memories that are the reasons you've kept the item for so many years. Give yourself space to relive the memories,



remember what made the item special and then let it go. This can be a pleasant experience and doesn't have to be sad.

If something were to happen to you, does your family know how to access your digital life? Finding and accessing digital accounts can be a daunting task for those left behind. Do you have your passwords, account numbers and login information stored only in your head or scattered on little pieces of paper? Do your family a favor and organize your account numbers, passwords and logins as part of your estate planning.

The process of cleaning out can be overwhelming to tackle alone. If you prefer to wait until family members or friends are able to visit again so they can help, there is still organizing or planning you can do now. During this time of limited activity options, our muscle tone, agility and balance may be decreased. Be aware if you have more physical limitations than usual and don't overdo lifting or moving into odd positions. Instead, start small; just reorganize a manageable pile of papers, a bureau drawer or a section of a closet.

Swedish Death Cleaning is not a "one and done" activity. It's an ongoing process that we can chip away at a little at a time. It is one last gift we can give to those we love.

*"Do not imagine that anyone will wish, or be able, to schedule time off to take care of what you did not bother to take care of yourself... it is your duty to sort out your life."*

- Margareta Magnusson

**ANNOUNCEMENT**

We are pleased to announce the addition of a new NP to the Clinic team.

Deborah Jean-Baptiste graduated from the University of Massachusetts Worcester in 2015 as an Adult Gerontology Primary Care Nurse Practitioner. Deborah is also the Director and Assistant Professor of the Adult Gerontology Nurse Practitioner Program at Regis College in Weston. She will be working every other Saturday and covering for some of Susan's days off.

Beth Duffy and Elizabeth Keane have both taken full time jobs elsewhere. We wish them the best in their new positions.