



by Ellen Kazanoff

# IT'S ALL ABOUT THE STUFF

buying it, caring for it & making room for it

When people learn I'm a professional organizer, they immediately start spilling their guts about the love-hate relationship they have with their "stuff"! Most have more than they need, and definitely more than their homes can accommodate. Allow me to enlighten you about the possibilities of a life "without all the stuff". A simpler, easier and less stressful life awaits those who are ready to let go! Are you ready?

## HER STUFF, HIS STUFF

**There is nothing that separates the sexes more than their relationship with their stuff!** While there are exceptions, most would agree that men and women buy it, store it, organize it, care for it and think about it very differently. As a professional organizer and coach, I'm often caught in the crossfire!

Men buy what they need, while women buy what they want. Our male partners often ask, "how many pairs of shoes do you need, you only have two feet"? Hey guys, when did it get to be about need? For us, it's all about variety, and if the shoes are half-price, it's a no brainer! One might say, "If the shoe fits, buy it," except for the fact that a woman's comfort, unlike a man's, often goes by the wayside when it comes to style. Have you ever heard a man say, "I just can't stop thinking about that suit I saw in a store window"? My guess would be almost never.

As a woman, I can honestly say that I rarely return from a shopping trip with only the one item I set out to buy. I automatically scan for possibilities, and take in all that is being offered. My husband, however, returns with only the one item he had on his list. If it's not on the list, he doesn't buy it. Women buy in "multiples", particularly if they've had a hard time finding an item, while men buy only one, regardless of how hard it was to find. The male population doesn't shop with the future in mind; it's all about the here and now.

And what woman wouldn't die for the closet of her dreams, one with drawers, cubicles, jewelry boxes, and of course, storage for all those shoes. When it comes to accessories, there is no contest. Women have many more shoes, purses, belts, scarves, and jewelry. On the other hand, most men are totally satisfied with a closet that has a rod and a shelf, and maybe some hooks for their ties and belts.

A few years ago, I decided it was time for my husband to do his own laundry. I prepared a laundry primer for him, covering sorting, temperature and dryer settings, and detergent amounts, and wished him good luck. When I came back to check on him to see how he was doing, it was obvious that he had devised his own system. Everything was being washed in one load, and on one temperature setting. When he even offered to do my laundry, I politely declined; I like my whites to stay white, my delicates to live on, and my socks to stay paired.

Now that we've established that men and women relate very differently to their clothing and accessories, let's look at electronics. When it comes to our cell phones, laptops, iPods, and other electronic toys, there is more of a difference between the generations than there is between the sexes. While

my eighty-seven year old mother is computer literate, most of her contemporaries have little or no interest, and even less capability. *The baby boomers depend on their electronic toys, and there doesn't seem to be much of a difference between men and women.* The younger generations, of course, have grown up with technology, and see it as part of the landscape. However, when it comes to the TV remote, all bets are off! Men rule!

Let's talk about men and their cars, and more specifically, how men and women differ when buying them. For women, it's often about color, interior design, comfort, spaciousness, and gas mileage. On the other hand, men are more concerned about the size of the engine, handling, resale value, and, these days, gas mileage as well. It seems that women need their cars to "get things done", while men are more tuned into the performance of the vehicle.

*During the course of my work, I have been surprised by many things, most notably by the degree of attachment men and women have to their "emotional" clutter.* For many people, emotional clutter is the most challenging to control, mainly because we feel intimately connected to it through our family members and other loved ones. It might consist of a child's artwork from preschool, matchbooks from memorable restaurants, old family photos, furniture inherited from deceased family members, and much more. *What has been most surprising is that there is very little difference in the reaction of men and women when I suggest they "thin out" their massive collection of memorabilia. Both sexes strongly resist.*

Women are always thinking about what to wear, what to pack, what needs altering, what's on sale, how to wash it, is it a good color for me, and, of course, does it make me look fat! On the other end of the spectrum are the men, whose thoughts can be boiled down to, "which shirt looks best with my jeans, the red or the blue"? We're just different when it comes to our stuff!

*Ellen Kazanoff, professional organizer and coach, has been organizing people, places and things for over 30 years. With an undergraduate degree in education, a graduate degree in counseling, and, most recently, a graduate of a comprehensive coach training program, she has developed a unique understanding of the underlying issues and challenges relating to clutter. Clean Slate Solutions is a combination of her passion for organizing, her love of teaching, and a desire to help others. After raising two children in Westfield, she now lives in Mountainside with her husband Alan. 908-403-6217 | Clean.Slate@att.net | www.cleanslatesolutions.com*

### DO YOU HAVE THE "WRITE" STUFF?

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