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Clutter's Last Stand ***by Don Aslett***

Too often we confuse ownership with companionship, not realizing that certain things, even good things, change and lose their value, and we don't need them anymore. We've outgrown them, outlasted them, or something new and better has come along. We have to release them, but our greed and possessiveness and "loyalty" outdo the monkey and hang on, even at the peril of our physical and spiritual lives.

There's no escape from the toll clutter takes of our life. The most valuable "someday useful" junk will stymie our emotional freedom if we let it pile up on us. Everything stashed away or hidden discreetly or indiscreetly, is also stashed away in our mind and is draining our mental energy. We can't hide junk in our mind. Once physically discarded from our mind, and we're free from keeping mental tabs on it. But as long as we own it, we'll mentally tend it. We feel obligated to use our junk, whether we need it or not.

The well-known 80/20 rule of business: If all of a given category of items are sorted in order of value, 80 percent of the value will come from only 20 percent of the items. Think about that in terms of clutter. Eighty percent of the space on our shelves (and in our minds) is occupied by stuff we never need. Eighty percent of our beauty and hygiene routine makes use of only 20 percent of the cosmetics and potions we have stacked around. (How much of the remaining 80 percent is junk?) Eighty percent of our family fun comes from 20 percent of the games and equipment and puzzles we've got jammed into our closets. (How much of the remaining 80 percent could be junked without it ever being missed?) Eighty percent of our reading enjoyment and information comes from 20 percent of the material in our bookcases and magazine racks. (How much of the unopened 80 percent would we miss?)

Clutter is one of the greatest enemies of efficiency and sealers of time and that includes yours! For every chore he tackles, the average person spends more time getting ready — hunting for a place, the tools, a reason to do it, a nail, often 10 minutes to find nails and hammer. If a job is buried in junk, we never get started — we just trash it.

We've been taught we're bad if we waste — waste not, want not. But we waste more valuable time and energy working over and trying to save worthless junk that many and object was ever worth originally.

The picking up of other people's junk is the most inefficient and expensive clutter cost of all! Like the mother who spends all her time picking up after a cluttering husband or careless kids. Women all over the world are wasting their youth and high spirits and creatively playing janitor to their families. If your family habitually leaves clutter around, they're going to keep doing it — are you going to keep picking it up?

When you clutter your closets and drawers with things, you're cluttering your feelings and thinking — freedom in your dwelling allows freedom to dwell in you!

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