



Junk collector helps you get rid of the clutter

By JOANNE RICHARD, SPECIAL TO SUN MEDIA

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Mike Thorne of JustJunk.com helps people get rid of unwanted items they've managed to collect over the years. (JOANNE RICHARD/SPECIAL TO SUN MEDIA)

Got a skeleton in your closet?

Well, seems some people actually do – just ask Mike Thorne. The professional junk hauler and owner of JustJunk.com and has literally hauled out a skeleton from someone's closet.

While doing a basement cleanup for a customer moving, "we made our way over to one particular box at the back of the customers' closet. As we opened the box, we both jumped back as there was a human skeleton lying at the bottom," says Thorne. "It turns out that the customer was a doctor and the skeleton was wired together - it was quite shocking at the time."

Thorne likes to talk trash and there's plenty of it. New research by Kijiji.ca reveals nearly 80% of Canadians are clutter collectors and Thorne is out to help people junk their junk. He's come across a variety of wacky, and even valuable, stuff while junk collecting, as more people move towards downsizing and simplifying their environments.

"People seem to save useless items either because the materials hold sentimental value or simply put, they don't know how to get rid of them," says Thorne.

But being surrounded by junk and clutter can be quite draining emotionally, says the garbage guy, adding that clients often express relief upon purging. "Removing junk from one's environment can be a very therapeutic experience."

Life balance is negatively impacted by being disorganized in daily activities and/or physical space, says stress and wellness expert Beverly Beuermann-King, of worksmartlivesmart.com. "Simplifying our routines and de-junking our physical space can increase efficiency and effectiveness and eliminate some of the little things that can push our buttons and send us over the edge."

In order to get order, "treat your household like your own small business. If daily tasks are re-organized and routine, everything is easier," she says, adding that 30% of our time is spent tending to "pile-up" items, annoying tasks that grow when ignored – dishes, laundry and raking leaves.

When de-junking, remember if it means something to you then keep it – but don't get caught up in collecting for the sake of collecting. "It just adds to the 'clutter' and complicates cleaning and locating the important items," adds Beuermann-King.

Professional organizer Jaclyn Ray says that people feel overwhelmed when it comes to identifying and getting rid of unwanted items – "they often have no clue where to start."

Ray says "the key to breaking any bad habit is to take small steps... The first step is admitting you have a clutter problem and that you want to change it. The second step – removing clutter – is where most Canadians have trouble because it can be time-consuming and tedious."

She suggests selling your stuff using an online local classifieds site, like Kijiji.ca, in order to make extra cash while getting rid of one big headache.

Meanwhile, if the thought of doing it yourself makes you ill, Thorne will haul it away and recycle as much as possible. "Metals will be recycled at scrap yards, paper will be delivered to recycling facilities, furniture/household items can be brought to Goodwill and building supplies can be donated to Habitat for Humanity." Items that can't be reused go to the transfer station.

Right now is a great time to dejunk, adds Thorne, since people need to get the snow blower out of the garage, and if they're lucky, the car into the garage.

And it's really the last chance to clean up the outside around the house before the snow flies. "Once items are covered with snow they become inaccessible and a safety hazard," says Thorne, who got into the junk removal business six years ago with a cell phone and rusty 1975 Ford Cargo van.

So what's Thorne do with any new-found treasures? Is his house overflowing with stuff? "My house is not full of junk. I am a minimalist and live on a needs not wants basis. JustJunk.com donates most of the treasures to charities or museums."

Sidebar

One man's junk is Mike Thorne's treasures – sometimes. The owner of Just Junk has come across:

One full human skeleton, hundreds of years old

800 lb. bank vault door

15 truck-loads of Bingo dabbers

2000 lbs. of Jack Daniels whisky bottles

Eight motorcycles from one customer

Basement-full of individually labeled tree branches

Back half of a sail boat

Circular bed

WWII vintage shell casing and WWI memorabilia

A 1900's record player with flowering horn and old records

1950's Coca Cola cooler

1950's Barbie dolls

1930's Parker Brothers Monopoly game

1920's wood pinball game

1920's copper shoe shine kit and a 1910 cast iron horse head hitching post.

1820's silver dishes

The long haul

Just holler and they'll haul 'er away! Here are the main items being hauled away at this time of year, says Mike Thorne, of JustJunk.com.

Toilets and tubs - renovation debris

Broken down pool equipment

Old sofa-beds

Out-dated and energy guzzling appliances

Sports equipment

Patio furniture

A world of packrats

Clutter is growing – 4% more Canadians are looking to get rid of clutter than they were one year ago.

79% of men say there are clutter collectors

76% of women admit to the bad habit.

Men, more than women, hold on to items because of the hassle associated with getting rid of them (53% versus 47%).

- Kijiji survey

Dejunking tips

Kill the clutter with tips from wellness expert Beverly Beuermann-King.

Keep only essential items in kitchen drawers. Do not use closets and garage as storage space. Weed out clothes that do not fit. Purge unused files, give away knick knacks and if it's broke, either repair it or get rid of it.

Designate a place for everything; e.g. bills, pens, tools, keys, shoes, coats, laundry.

Ensure adequate, accessible storage and hangers for kids to put away their items.

Get rid of mementos if they have lost their meaning.

Deal with flyers, junk mail, newspapers and magazines only once. Keep what's important and recycle the rest immediately. Don't store these under your desk.

Courtesy of worksmartlivesmart.com.

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