



— YOUR —
Simple Home
HANDBOOK

30 projects to
help your home
breathe

Elsie Callender

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30 projects to help your home breathe

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RichlyRooted.com

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This book is dedicated to Eric, my husband and best friend. I love making a home with you!

Special thanks to Mom, Dad, and Emma for their input about various sections of this book. Thank you also to my dear blogging friends, for your daily encouragement as we blog together, and your excitement about this endeavor! Thank you Margaret Anne, for making this book beautiful. And to Erin Odom, for being a teacher and kindred spirit.

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The following is an excerpt of the
Keepsakes section from Chapter 6.

Enjoy!

KEEPSAKES

This is one of the hardest areas to simplify because it's one of the most emotional. You've probably kept these items for sentimental reasons, and purging them feels like giving away a piece of your soul. If you were living overseas for a year and deciding which essentials to take with you, your keepsakes probably wouldn't make the cut. But you wouldn't want to get rid of them either!

If your childhood artwork, old photo albums, and trip souvenirs stay hidden away in boxes, you aren't doing yourself any favors. They'll contribute to the clutter in your house, and you won't enjoy them or be able to share their stories.

Still, it's a hard area to purge. I've found that one of the best ways to simplify my keepsakes is to **not** get rid of them on the first look-through. When I open a box of childhood papers or old letters, long-stored memories come flooding back. I find a few things to purge right off the bat, but mostly, I repack everything and set it aside for a few months. On the next look-through, it's easier for me to detach. I savor all the memories again, cementing them in my mind, and then I'm able to say goodbye—choosing just the best items or those that represent a certain era of my life.

How to evaluate an item's value to you

When you simplify your keepsakes, ask yourself a couple of questions as you pull out each item.

- Why does this item have value to me?
- What's the story behind it?

If you don't remember the story (and no family member can tell you) then it's a candidate for purging. If you're not particularly attached to the item, perhaps you can get rid of it or it may mean more to one of your family members than it does to you.

What to keep and what to purge

The goal with simplifying your keepsakes is to pare down your collection to the very best or most memorable items. To keep a sample of those memories, but not have every memory represented by an object.

I recently went through several boxes of old letters, papers, and childhood drawings. I decided to save out only the items that were most memorable, were particularly funny, or showed my personality in unique ways. **If I had multiple examples of one item, I saved out just one or two to represent the batch.** One thing I was very into when I was little was making “cookbooks” using construction paper and magazine clippings or drawings of food. I decided to keep a cookbook or two to represent this hobby, but I didn't need to keep the whole stack!

I also uncovered a lot of childhood drawings of the same subjects over and over again—pigs, bears, and my parents. I kept one or two drawings (usually the ones that looked like I'd taken more time and care to create) from each category, and threw the rest away.

If you have three or four boxes of childhood papers, can you narrow it down to just one small box? Keep just a sampling, not the whole archive!

Digital Memory Boxes

If you find lots of letters and drawings that you can't bear to part with, one option is to transfer them to a digital memory box. Scan the drawings or take pictures of them, store the photos on your computer, and then throw away the originals. You'll be able to enjoy the memories without storing the clutter.

Old photographs

Our children may never have to deal with this area of clutter, but those of us who grew up before the era of digital photos certainly do! I thought that going through my old photographs would be incredibly difficult, but it was

actually a pretty easy task. I purged stacks and stacks of old pictures. For one thing, my photography skills weren't stellar growing up, so there were a lot of blurry or oddly composed pictures that went straight in the trash.

I also realized that many of the memories that I thought could only be captured by a photograph actually lived on in my head just fine. I have wonderful memories of a summer camp in junior high, but I don't need a whole photo album to remember it by. I no longer stay in touch with many of the people in the pictures, and it won't mean much to show them to my children someday. So into the trash they go. One day, I can tell my kids about the great times I had at summer camp. I can show them the one or two photographs I kept from the week, and that will be enough.

Instead of filling up bookshelf space with photo albums, **I decided to store my simplified photo collection in one shoebox.** At this point, I'd rather have the shelf space. I organized the photos by trip or life season; they're easy to flip through and enjoy if I ever want to pull out the box, but they take up hardly any room.

Children's keepsakes

You might have oodles of keepsakes from your past, but you can make sure your children have less to deal with someday! Imagine if your child grew up and you handed them just one box of childhood keepsakes, and one binder of papers and notes. It would be a special gift that they could enjoy and share with their own children someday, but it wouldn't be a burden.

If you save your children's artwork and schoolwork, **go through everything at the end of the school year and choose just a couple of items to keep** (they can help decide!). Slip the items into page protectors and keep them in a binder. Their keepsake binder will keep everything tidy and organized, and set parameters for how much to save.

For toys, articles of clothing, or special knickknacks that you want to save for your children, keep just one medium-sized box per child.

Organizing your keepsakes

Before you put your keepsakes back into storage, make an inventory of what's in each box. Keep an itemized list of each box's contents in a file on your computer or on Google drive. You can also write out the list and slip it under the lid of each box. If you're looking for a particular keepsake piece down the road, you can glance at the list rather than unwrapping all of the tissue paper from carefully-packed items.

Decorating with keepsakes

One of my favorite ways to enjoy my keepsakes is to use them as home décor. Rather than buying a sculpture, vase, or figurine that has no meaning for me and is simply sold as a decoration, I pull from our own little collection of items. The things we decorate with are meaningful to us and have stories—a vase that belonged to my grandmother, a wooden elephant my great uncle carved for me, an obsidian jaguar my husband and I bought on a special trip to Mexico. These are the kinds of keepsakes we like best—some of them can serve a function, but all of them add beauty to our home.

Instead of buying ready-made decorations or wall art to fill your home, work with the story-filled items you already own. If you have limited space, you can rotate the keepsakes you have on display. Rotating out your keepsakes every once in a while will remind you of what you own, and uncovering old pieces may help you decide if they're worth hanging on to or not.