

Throw Out Fifty Things: Clear the Clutter, Find Your Life

Gail Blanke

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"Our lives are so filled with junk from the past-from dried up tubes of glue to old grudges-that it's a wonder we can get up in the morning," exclaims motivator, best-selling author, columnist, and life coach Gail Blanke.

"If you want to grow, you gotta let go," is Blanke's mantra; and that means eliminating all the clutter-physical and emotional-that holds you back, weighs you down, or just makes you feel bad about yourself.

In **THROW OUT FIFTY THINGS** she takes us through each room of the house-from the attic to the garage-and even to the far reaches of our minds. Through poignant and humorous stories, she inspires us to get rid of the "life plaque" we've allowed to build-up there.

That junk drawer (you know that drawer) in the kitchen? *Empty it!*

Those old regrets? *Throw 'em out!*

That make-up from your "old" look? *Toss it!*

That relationship that depresses you? *Dump it!*

Once you've hit fifty-you'll be surprised how easy it is to get there-and once you've thrown out that too-tight belt and too-small view of yourself, you'll be ready to step out into the clearing and into the next, and greatest, segment of your life.

Throw Out Fifty Things: Clear the Clutter, Find Your Life Details

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Tracey says

Okay, this book isn't THE must-have, only-one-you'll-ever-need decluttering book (which, for me, remains undiscovered), but *Throw Out Fifty Things* appeals to pack rats like me in one fundamental way: Gail Blanke gives us permission to keep the things we love even while encouraging/prodding/slightly nagging us to get rid of things that we don't need and don't suit us anymore. Amid the TV shows and books advising people to dump everything unused and keep a near-empty home, Blanke counters with the fabulous idea that folks should keep what they love--tokens, clothes, collections, whatever--as long as they truly love it and feel good having the stuff around, even if (here's the great part) they never use it again. I read that and sighed aloud in relief.

Now, the drawback here is that one pair of shoes or thirty pairs of shoes counts only as one "thing" being thrown out, which might discourage some of us (ahem) from including as many items within that "thing" as we could. That aside, Blanke focuses on mental clutter as well as on physical clutter, without getting too mired in pop psychology. It's not important why we keep things--mental or physical--past the time they are important or useful; the point is to identify what's hanging around that's doing us no good and getting rid of it. Simple idea, smartly presented.

Hol says

I skimmed this after grabbing it from the Free Book Room on my way out of the office for winter break, as I love throwing stuff away and thought some how-to support for the process might be nice. Quickly I discovered that the author has far greater faith in the conscious mind than I do. She advises the rapid chucking of not only old books and clothes but old beliefs and attitudes. In this way her reader may achieve a totally new life in two weeks. I could try that, but my subconscious mind would meanwhile laugh itself silly.

Kelli says

"I'll tell you what I'm not throwing out, a stack of kerchiefs that have adorned the necks of all three of our golden retrievers..."

I should probably be clear that the quote here is from the author, not from me. I have no words. I respect that this is meant to be a serious book to assist others in purging clutter. There is a system to how items are counted and room-by-room suggestions but this just didn't work for me at all. It reminded me of Delicious Dish from SNL.

Anastasia says

Yes - check it out - I'm writing a review. I can't pick apart prose nor make cross references to 16th century

literature and Sylvia Plath when reviewing a modern day preternatural bestseller, but I can be honest. I'll confess - I read cheesy self-help books. I've read ones that, afterwards, I felt were full of crap as well as ones that hit a little too close to home. This book, however, made me think. It made me shift my worldview of myself just a teensy bit, but it's made a lot of difference. I originally checked this book out of our local community library in conjunction with Brian taking the last two weeks of December off of work, thinking "I can finally go through the kids' rooms and those boxes in the garage!"

Well, no such luck in the clean-out department. And it wasn't her chapters on throwing out physical items as much as the mental debris that set my unconscious working. Gail Blanke has a lot of examples of how to reframe negative attitudes and assumptions, or "attacking the mental mess," as she puts it. I know how to reframe. I have been in counseling for years to attack my personal mental messes. This book isn't a magic wand; I'm not touting it as an instantaneous fix that turns one's life into rainbows and fairies; but I liked the simple, straightforward way she writes and the pragmatic examples used to underscore her suggestions. It's probably really only a three-star book, but in my world it deserves an extra star for its personal impact.

Melody says

I picked this up at the library. Based on a quick glance at the cover, I thought it was a book about clearing clutter from your house. I should have looked at the pile of words under the title, which include "broken heart, promises, missed opportunities" and various other self-helpy buzzwords. The writing style reminds me of the women's magazines I read as a teen, rife with unbelievably uplifting anecdotes and breezy, we're-all-friends-here tone. Do I even have to say I hated it? I didn't think so.

Jessica says

This book definitely helped me part with some items I would have normally held onto for no good reason.

SoManyBooks SoLittleTime says

A smug self-help book masquerading as a clutter clearing guide.

Oh, the practical "guide" to reducing one's stuff is preciously thin and short, as she quickly moves on to the "clutter of the mind" and chirps about throwing out beliefs and ideas that no longer serve you (because it's just as easy as thinking about it!).

I despise this sort of "Just think differently!, I did it!, I'm so great, just do the same as I did!" magic wand waving huckster boosterism. So uplifting and inspiring! I like my self-help to provide insight and understanding, not bubble away with pronouncements on how to live totally devoid of depth.

And if you must read it, don't choose the audiobook.

Lauren (LaurenHannah.net) says

Skipped like, half the book because the second half is all about mental clutter and I feel like I'm doing pretty well with that. I mean, I'm doing well with physical clutter too but I just want a book that tells me what to get rid of and how to stop my parents from being total hoarders

Sher says

I am not a hoarder, and really don't mean to be a pack rat, but things stack up on me. I am grateful that this book has given me permission, so to speak, to get rid of so many things in my life that I will never use again. I love that Gail Blanke made the connection between physical clutter and mental clutter. Cleaning up one leads to cleaning up the other. I think I've known that for a long time. I just sent two huge bags of clothing and two bags of books to D.I., our local thrift store, and I happily waved good-bye to them. Maybe this is a life changing book.

Julie (jjmachshev) says

I was very excited to read "Throw Out Fifty Things: Clear the Clutter, Find Your Life" by Gail Blanke. If you could see my house, and especially my 'reading room/office', you would understand immediately. I have such a hard time getting rid of 'stuff'. I have clothes in my closet that I bought three years ago that still have the tags because I haven't yet worn them...but can I throw them out? Uh, NO! Why? Well, duh...because I haven't worn them yet! If you don't understand that, then you are likely an organized kind of person that I love to envy.

I found this book very clear and the 'system' incredibly simple. Each chapter covers a different area/room in your house (bedroom, bathroom, kitchen, etc) and the author provides advice and suggestions (if not outright orders) for what types of things you should consider in each of the rooms. There are even very informative 'box' suggestions in each chapter with data on recycling, donating, tag sales, swapping, hazardous waste removal, etc. And a handy resource section at the end provides websites and/or contact information by type of item. That's the good news about the book.

The only downside (for me) was that the constant 'cheering' and 'philosophizing' tended to wear on me. In that regard, I think I would have been more pleased with the audio book version...but then I wouldn't have gotten all the handy charts in the book! So, if soul-searching and imperatives don't drive you batty, then "Throw Out Fifty Things" may be just the ticket to help you clear out those things you really don't need. As for me? Well...let's just say I didn't quite make it to fifty.

Anna Balasi says

This is a great book to get rid of the unnecessary clutter in your home and in your head, cleaning out the junk and having more space for the important things.

I think one of the best things about this book is how "throwing" isn't exactly dumping all the things you deem useless in the trash. The book, in fact, encourages getting rid of the junk the right way, either through recycling, swapping, and donating. For a book that encourages throwing things away, it's actually green and almost nothing is wasted.

It takes some work, but consider the proper disposal of things as a cleansing of the mind and body. By making your things accessible to those who need them, and giving them to the people who have use for

them, you're doing the earth and your community a favor, and your mind gets some much needed cleansing therapy.

Lisa says

I liked this a lot because half of the book deals with physical clutter, and the second half is the emotional baggage that tends to hang around and drag us down. Blanke really gets to the heart of this second part, and gives the reader real ways in which to deal with his heavy clutter of the soul. I liked all her little stories and personal examples. Yup, this was a good one.

Donna Radcliff says

I haven't quite finished this book yet, since I had to turn my book loan in for inventory, but I pulled the workbook offline and I have started with my "purging". This is my list of 50 things I'm throwing out, selling or giving away (it is a work in progress). Note: multiple items of the same type (like jewelry or clothing) counts as one item.

The Bedroom

1. Hard plastic storage case for free weights that disappeared years ago.
 2. Old jewelry (including the silver and turquoise necklace my ex- husband gave me from a trip he went on and I couldn't go---it was "business" and the real reason I couldn't go was because he took his girlfriend. I kept the necklace to give to a granddaughter someday, and reading the book it occurred to me, why would I give a beloved grandchild something with that kind of story behind it?
 3. 20 flimsy plastic hangers (the kind that you get at Meijer's or Target with clothing)
 4. A verrrrry old macrame double plant holder, hanging empty in my room because the plants died a couple of years ago.
 5. 1 broken camera, too expensive to fix and can't find film for.
 6. 3 no longer used metal shoe racks
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Dreamybee says

Didn't quite finish this as the second half of the book was more philosophical ("throw out" those old, negative thoughts about yourself) and less action-oriented (throw out your old cinched-waist, tapered-leg, acid-washed size 2 jeans from high school). I probably would have given this 3 stars, but I didn't like the author. To me, she always sounded like she had to prove to you just how cheery! and motivational! she was, which just got annoying after a while. I did like that she threw in a lot of useful tips for *how* to get rid of stuff-charities that can take particular items that you don't want to throw away, organizations that can repurpose items that are difficult to dispose of, etc. There are also worksheets in the book and a related web site where you can track your progress if you're into that sort of thing.

I thought this was a pretty good kick-start book, a good way to help get you motivated and thinking about things productively. One piece of advice that the author kept giving that I really didn't agree with though was that if you have to think too long about whether or not to get rid of something, are really agonizing over the decision, that means you should get rid of it. I think if the decision is that difficult, maybe you're not ready to give it up just yet. I know I've gotten rid of sentimental things in the name of practicality before that I've later regretted, but maybe that's just me.

Robin says

This would (and did) make a better magazine article than a book. Here, I'll do it for you: "Throw out fifty things. It'll get the ball rolling and then you'll get rid of more stuff."

Ironically I only made it about fifty pages in.
