

On stuff

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It is only upon moving that one comes to truly understand the sheer volume of stuff that one has come to possess. Supplies are accumulated, tucked away, and lost over time. Nicknacks are admired and then placed on a shelf to become dusty. Clothing gets lost at the bottom of the drawer, never re-surfacing between laundry days. Junk drawers are created.

It is only when moving that one, out of necessity, removes every bar of soap, unworn pair of pants, every last pen, candle, hair elastic, and half used bottle of lotion and exposes it to the harsh light of day. You begin by putting like things together. All the lotions from the bedroom, with the lotions from the bathroom, with the lotion in the living room, oh- and the one in the desk, and the two from the office- before you know it, you have an entire box devoted to lotion, which now must be moved. It is then that you must come to grips with the weight of the accumulation. At times, it feels as though it is bearing down on you with the force of an avalanche, but you must press on.

We have now come to a crossroads- to store, to donate, to throw out, to hope that it too will fit in the house. We started sorting when moving out of the house in Somerville, but soon the deadline to move out arose in front of us and we were doomed to fail if we didn't become more efficient... On the last day of packing, Dan approached me with a power cord to something that was not with its appliance and asked, "do you know what this belongs to?" My response was not polite and definitely bordered on hysteria, "Dan, if it's not at least as large as my head, I can't think about it. Just put it in a box and keep packing," and so we packed everything that was left without discretion.

Looking back over our time at 1241, I don't know why it seemed so much easier to just buy new replacements in lieu of finding, using, finishing what we had already. I suppose we thought, "well, when we find it, we'll put the like items together and have them ready and it's only space... we have space. We can just store the extras." I definitely regret that mentality now as I now deliberate over every object and try to simplify our lives.

The decision making process is complicated by a number of factors- the first being that Dan is the KING of "What ifs". Seriously, he can "what if" circles around anyone.

"What if Irish Spring goes through a merger and there is a shortage of soap while the operations people figure out who's responsibility it is to make the soap?"

"What if there's a nuclear attack on NH? Then we'd need a bomb shelter."

"At least a month's worth of food, I mean, what if there's a serious shortage of food and we end up feeding ourselves and a couple other families who didn't prepare? Are we going to send them away?"

Probability does not factor into the equation in this game. If it could happen, that's good enough. So for every item that I consider throwing out, I have to consider it's potential value in the event of a disaster and weigh that against the complete lack of space in this building and the increasing likelihood that we're going to lose it amongst all the other storage items.

Beyond pacifying my husband, and perhaps more seriously, the decisions are made ever harder since our income is now 1/3 what it was while working in the city. The real "what if" with good odds right now is "what if we can't afford to replace it when we actually need or want it?" This is where most of our current discussions come to a stalemate. I know that we need satellite internet, but the last two times Dan asked me if he should go ahead with the \$700 installation, I dodged. Dan and I want so desperately for this to work that I think we have, or at least I have, become crippled by this unceasing internal discussion.

I must rise to this challenge and make myself useful since I'm no longer working and this makes every decision of paramount importance.

Not working is a lot of work.

