

Janet Lee(left) and friends



# Clearing the clutter

Don't let your home become a museum of unwanted trinkets, gadgets that don't work and obsolete equipment. Three women tell **BOEY PING PING** how they keep their homes free from disorder.

**W**OMEN are natural-born hoarders. If they spent as much time clearing off clutter as they do shopping, their houses would be spick and span. It's fine if you live alone but what happens when you get married and find that you and your hubby have enough rubbish to fill a garbage truck?

Spurred on by the desire to be house-proud and unable to ignore the eyesore of a messy apartment, three women found ways to remove the rubbish from their homes while making money and helping the needy.

#### The gift of giving

A plastic bin sits in Angeline Liew's house and in it goes things that have not been used for more than six months. After another three months, they get donated to charity.

Over the last five years, Liew, in her 30s, has been diligently cleaning out her cupboards, wardrobes and shelves every four months. The co-founder of Strands Bead Gallery and Academy says, "It started when I got married, and my husband and I bought our own home. Imagine two singles coming together with their own baggage. There was just too much rubbish!"

Initially, Liew wanted to sell off her wedding presents – extra dinner sets –



Janet Lee's jumble sale

but gave them away instead to the needy.

The lady entrepreneur says, "We all accumulate things over the years which are hard to part with or have sentimental value. But in the end, they all end up at the back of the closet."

So as soon as the clutter grows, Liew and her husband spend Sundays cleaning the house. Three weekends later, their house is clutter-free. The duo follow an organised system that begins with the wardrobe.

"If the lines on a shirt look permanent, it has to go."

Everything is separated into neat little piles of t-shirts, shirts, blouses, skirts and dresses.

Liew says, "After one or two years, you ask yourself whether you're still going to wear it. I'd rather put it to good use and let someone less fortunate have it."

When husband and wife are done with the wardrobe, they attack the bookshelves, throwing out back issues of magazines.

The only thing Liew refuses to part with is her collection of books. "Books I hold near and dear."

When all is done, Liew says, "There's always a sense of satisfaction cleaning up the house. And along the way, you sometimes

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find things you thought you had lost or didn't know existed."

Everything is packed neatly and thrown into donation bins conveniently situated near Liew's house in Subang Jaya. Over the years, Liew noticed that the amount of clutter has slowly decreased. She tells, "You get this wake-up call. It's made me less impulsive on my shopping sprees and I find myself asking whether I really want or need something before I buy it."

And as much as we dislike how our mothers used to nag us to spring-clean, Liew says, "You end up doing it as you grow older because you want to be house-proud."

**From clutter to cash**

When Sharon Gay Parin's two sons started outgrowing their clothes, she tried selling them over eBay Malaysia. She says, "At first, I was sceptical but somehow the clothes sold pretty fast. Every time I listed something, it would be bought the next day so I continued digging up other things at home."

Soon the stay-at-home mum had sold off enough spare kitchen items to contribute to the household expenses.

"I do less dusting at home now," says Parin with a laugh. "And I know now that my junk could be someone else's treasure."

The 33-year-old mother says she's seen all kind of clutter being sold on the Internet from broken cameras to spoilt VCD players, fans, lingerie, hampers and movie tickets.

"No matter what it is, if the price is right, someone will buy it."

Sales of RM50 to several hundreds of ringgit have given Parin a reason to spring-clean the house almost monthly.

"I just dig into my closet. If I find anything I don't need, I put it in a box. When I have the time, I take pictures of the items and put them up for sale."

Parin lets her clutter go at half its original price or less. She rationalises, "If I don't need or plan to throw it away, I might as well sell it. At least I'll get something out of it."



Sharon  
Gay Parin

At times, she makes a killing like when the proud mother sold off her son's winnings from baby competitions.

"He received so many hampers this year that I think I have enough baby toiletries to last until next year!"

Selling used or unwanted items over the

Internet has helped the mother of two get rid of things she no longer uses and has no place for. But it's more than just extra money in her pocket; she's also made new friends. Parin says, "I sold my baby's car seat for RM100 to a lady who is now a good friend of mine."

**Real bargains**

"I'm a believer of real bargains when I shop at flea markets so when I sell at flea markets, I make sure it's a bargain too," says Janet Lee, who flogs off her handbags at RM3 to RM10 and charges only RM20 for a beaded dress.

The 29-year-old performing artiste says, "I clear my wardrobe whenever I get irritated with the mess which is quite often, about every three to four months as I keep buying clothes."

Within a day, Lee is able to sort out all the clothes, CDs, books, accessories, shoes, bags and knick-knacks she wants to discard. But parting with her clothes is hard for Lee who says she has to make a conscious decision to sell off items she thinks she won't miss in the next year or so. Clothes that are cleared go into one of three piles – 'to sell at markets', 'to give friends' and 'keep for future interest'.

Having tried her hand at flea markets, Lee later attempted to clear her clutter at a jumble sale in her apartment. But she cautions, unless your house is in a well-known area, be prepared for traffic to trickle in. Even after sending out e-mails, blogs, flyers and putting up ads on free online media, a handful of strangers and mostly girl friends turned up at Lee's apartment. But having a jumble sale at your doorstep is advantageous, as you don't have as much packing work cut out for you. Just ensure you include a map in your flyer and try stuffing them into all the mailboxes in your apartment block.

Lee likens de-cluttering her house to clearing out her head. She says, "When I throw out items I learn what bad shopping habits to kill in the future and what not to buy. Most of the time, I manage to salvage a few items in my 'to give away or sell' pile by revamping them or reinventing a new use for them. Clearing out my flat is fun. Each time, it takes me down memory land and at the end of it, I get a nice feeling of having achieved the goal of cleaning out my clutter." ♣