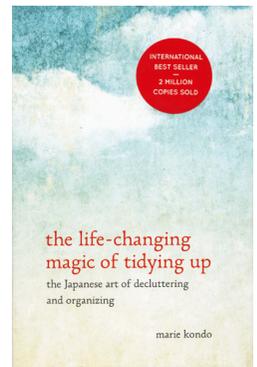




# LIFE- CHANGING MAGIC

**Time** magazine listed tidying-up evangelist Marie Kondo as one of the world's "100 Most Influential People" in 2015, and her book has sold over three million copies globally. Why do people follow her so avidly?



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## TAMI KAWASAKI

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**T**HE year 2015 is turning out to be a special one for Marie Kondo. She was named one of "The 100 Most Influential People" in the world by *Time* magazine, and walked the same red carpet graced by luminaries such as author Haruki Murakami and actress Emma Watson. Her best-selling book *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up: The Japanese Art of Decluttering and Organizing* has been reviewed in famous publications across Europe and America such as *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Times*, and sold over three million copies worldwide. For a Japanese-written how-to book, sales like that qualify as truly remarkable.

People who have read her book and practiced its organizing techniques proudly upload before and after shots to their SNS platforms. In turn, people who see the dramatic results become intrigued by the "KonMari" (an abbreviation of her name,

Marie Kondo) method, read her book and try out her decluttering techniques themselves, leading to a continuous and magical chain reaction of behavior.

This phenomenon has led to the birth of a new verb, to "*kondo*," which refers to decluttering a room using the KonMari method. Kondo uses terms associated with fantasy such as "magic" and the "spark of joy" when describing her decluttering methods, but in actuality her method is extremely logical and easy to understand, consisting of ways of sorting out your possessions, techniques for folding, and advice on storage.

On the other hand, Kondo also appreciates the Japanese spirit of anthropomorphizing objects, with her "ceremony" for paying respect to things before discarding them evoking an empathy in this ecologically conscious day and age that transcends borders. The disparity between her combination of cute, user-friendly terminology with a philosophy that calls to mind a Zen sensibility—as well as the dramatically effective results of executing her



methods—creates an incredibly emotional response that has driven her booming popularity.

Kondo is acknowledged, both by herself and others, as an “organizing *otaku*” (geek). Although she had an interest in housework even as a young child, the one thing she had problems with was tidying up. Using her characteristic intelligence, she devoted herself to researching better methods for organizing and tidying up. After working at a company, she decided that tidying up—which had become more than a hobby, and a major part of her life—should be her profession and calling. So she took the unconventional step of establishing herself as a decluttering consultant.

“A lot of people have problems organizing themselves, and want to improve their living environment,” Kondo says. “I believe that my methods are valued because I offer clear and precise ways for people to solve their problems themselves.” The benefits of getting organized are not limited to having more space and enjoying the feeling that your room has gotten bigger. You also gain awareness of the things you own, the ones that are unnecessary, and most of all the things you truly wish you had.

Kondo adds, “Through tidying up, you can rethink the way you live, think about your work or your interpersonal and romantic relationships, and consider how you want to live from this point on.” Her tidying-up methods help to solve the problems and stresses of life in the modern age.

Kondo grew up in a generation in Japan that



found it only natural to work, regardless of gender—one that often went through self-reflection to discover what their individual strengths were, and how they could best market themselves to society. Possessing the conviction that her strength was in tidying up, Kondo went on to world acclaim. She is a mentally and spiritually strong, new generation of Japanese woman equipped with her own specialized expertise.

In July of 2015, Kondo gave birth to her first child, a daughter, making this year even more special. “Right now my life is filled with joy,” Kondo says, and she speaks of her ambitions to “create a joyful family, and to continue offering my contributions to tidying up the world.” **7**

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- 1 Kondo being filmed at work in Germany
  - 2 Describing the “KonMari” method at a U.S. bookstore to a packed house
  - 3 It’s all in the details: folding clothes