

What Do You Permit?

Earnie Larsen was an author, lecturer, pioneer in the field of recovery, and expert on issues such as codependency and addictive lifestyles. He coined a simple phrase that I haven't forgotten from the mid-'80s: "What we permit, we promote." The phrase is apropos to decluttering. The excess you permit, you promote.

It's impossible to deceive yourself, pretend, or ignore excess with this mindset. Look at what surrounds you. What excess do you buy, shelve, save, or store? Whatever you pay for, store, and care for—even disregarded or ignored things—is a view into what is important. Every habit, like old, unread newspapers stacked in a corner, an unmade bed, a countertop, or a sink full of dishes, has a green- light.

Face the real relationship you have with these things. Look at your stuff from an objective perspective. Become a casual observer of your environment. Explore, notice, and accept responsibility for the things we have in excess.



Take fifteen minutes to understand what the space and the things in this space reflect about what you permit and promote. Be honest with yourself. Without judgment, answer the questions below:

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Each room or section of a room sheds light on your interests, hobbies, how you manage food and necessities, how you express your creativity, and the treasures you keep.

What Do You Permit?

What do you permit or say yes to in any given area?

I am saying yes to: _____

I am saying yes to: _____

I am saying yes to: _____

I am saying yes to: _____

Conversely, look at what you are saying no to. Look for things you haven't dealt with or have given up on. Things you're not fixing. Not unpacking. Not cleaning. What are you actively or passively doing or not doing in this area? Accept what you have given up on. Recognize where you have thrown in the towel.

I am saying no to: _____

I am saying no to: _____

I am saying no to: _____

I am saying no to: _____

Why go through this exercise? Because to actively declutter, we must first identify our habits and alter or eliminate many of them. Decluttering is a partnership between noticing and changing.

Challenge your attachments. Is the reason you are attached to stuff still valid?

What are three things you will do differently as a result of this activity?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

You can no longer enable all of this excess if you want less clutter. What we permit today will be different than what we permit post-decluttering. Develop a clutter-free mindset.

What will your future-self refuse to permit and promote in your dream space?