In these Covid times every day is a life changing experience.

Words like apocalypse, end times, crash, are very scary. And we experience all of these gut wrenching, mind bending, emotional rending moments make us feel like we are being broken down in to dust.

It's a trial by fire, a crucifixion, a transformation that requires breaking apart and coming back together again. There is rarely joy or inspiration mentioned, trying to process this every day, especially its thoughts, moments, and experiences as they happen is like eating too much late at night.

Is this what it means to be "mind-full"?

Think of all the things that fill up our thoughts: Lists- of lifechanging ideas, dreams- heroic, dramatic, erotic? Memories- yesterday, year, or minute. What about emotions? Grief or anticipation of both joyful and not so joyful things become storage bins that can't be stacked well.

When we are so stuffed, so cluttered up, how do we face this, our own mess?

It's a big question.

One we aren't comfortable with addressing.

Thank goodness someone named Marie Kondo wrote a book about it!

Who is Marie Kondo? She is the author of the book-*the life changing magic of tidying up.* She has some wonderful approaches to decluttering your house and as a result, making space for the things you love. Being around things you love, she claims, sparks joy.

Sparking continuous joy, Marie says, is the main reason none of her clients go back to the darkness of being messy.

Wow. What is her secret?

Marie talks a lot about how to approach mess. Marie herself says that this process sounds easy but difficult to do. "Think about your life as you organize your clutter." She states and I quote: "the root of the problem lies in the mind." [1] When we physically remove actual clutter, Marie goes on to say, our minds are engaged and experience a shift. We feel better.

Marie Kondo's idea of keeping only those things which spark joy, surrounding yourself only with the things you love can also be applied to your view of life. It can also challenge how you approach your thinking, and how you process your emotions. In Marie's television show, we see her

[1] Kondo, Marie the *life-changing magic of tidying up* [non-capitalization intentional as copied from cover] 2014 TEN SPEED PRESS, Berkeley, CA

clients transformed by their own process of revelations about themselves and how they view the world as they fold or discard their life's accumulations.

We can fold or declutter the habits or feelings that no longer create a positive space for what we intend at that moment. And we can see our intentions of why we created the clutter in the first place. It's not the tidy house itself that brings this lifechanging magic. Marie reminds us: It's the intention of how to tidy. She says, and I quote, "when you put your house in order you put your affairs and your past in order too. Only then can you truly find joy."

In Tibetan Buddhism and in the Zen traditions, the concept of *alaya* is a key element to finding joy and emotional freedom. *Alaya Vijnana* means "storehouse consciousness", a place where we store those elements of our minds that cause us to repeat cognitive and emotional patterns or habits.

This storehouse is where all our mind mess is maintained but it's also a space you can tidy up and as a result feel transformed.

So how do we get in there? Actually, we do it all the time, usually during a moment of shock or surprise.

In Tibetan practice, there is a belief that these moments of shock, crisis, or fear are the keys to that alaya storage-house place. This comes from that experience of spacetime keenly felt as a sense of expansion and precision during extreme duress.

But not many of us can greet those intense moments with such clarity. When we experience loss or crisis, it consumes us. We can think of nothing else, often for years. And it feels impossible which is why Meditation is the training for these times. Meditation teaches you to recognize that you can pause in these difficult places, hover for a moment, and see how much cleaning up we can do.

In the Lotus Sutra, Buddha is often portrayed as being so powerfully clear that whenever he appeared flowers fell from the sky every day, he gave a teaching.[2] Did you know He said the same thing every day? His teaching was simple: stop cluttering up your Mindspace with these things you think you need. Stop being attached to things and desires around you. Let go. Only then can you see the true nature, the beauty of the world around you.

His students, ordinary beings, got worried. What did this mean? We need some of those things to live.

Here's where the translations vary: Western perception cluttered this tenet of Buddhism by viewing it with a Protestant-style work ethic, deny and give up things you love because life is hard. Flowers in the sky are only for the privileged who work hard to earn it.[3] When our Buddhist

[2] Reeves, Gene *The Lotus Sutra* 2008 Wisdom Publications, Sommerville, Mass
[3] Stone, Jaqueline and Teiser, Stephen*, Readings of The Lotus Sutra*, 2009 Columbia University Press, New York.

shrine fractured in transport, it was hard not to feel shocked and fearful. We also could not find the valuable inherited Tibetan wool rug that came with the shrine.  Was this…a sign of things to come?

Then we had to move again, but this time it was to our forever home. As we greeted the new place and slowly unpacked, we found the missing Tibetan rug. The fractured shrine was not a broken as we first thought and easily sat where we placed it.  The delicate shrine items survived being packed away. We gently repaired the areas that caused the breakage which oddly made it look more radiant than before.

It felt as if we had experienced the Japanese method called kintsugi, where broken vessels are repaired with gold.

It was a moment of surprise, and in that moment we were able to unpack some insight and be grateful for the ease of our transition to a new community.

In Indigenous folk lore, Hummingbird is seen as the messenger of hope, joy, and beauty. It's also a symbol of rebirth

Its visitation can cause us to stop in surprise! Our mind is suddenly full of beauty and joy! And just a quickly it vanishes into the sky. But the moment we experience this beauty, we are automatically transformed. .  Its brief and beautiful flash of color as it hums through life, being able to navigate in all directions, Hummingbird is a living representation of what it is to be fully present in life, showing up in the moment as we truly are. It is a good thing in a small package.

We can choose to remain in that momentary flash of beauty. To be Mind Full of this…joy. Like the lifechanging magic of facing your stuff, you are choosing to make time and space for what matters to you.

And it's here that *alaya*, our storehouse, can be opened and aired out, gently making space for a way to clear out those habits, those memories, those emotions which clutter our vision to be in the beauty of the moment.

Let us make space for, as Marie Kondo says, things that we love to do, to see, and to experience without the clutter of our old ideas, opinions, methods, and fears.

Joy doesn't need to be ignited like a gas stove. Life changing magic exists within our full minds. We just need to make space in front of ourselves to see it. Your spark of joy is waiting to greet you, perhaps on the wings of a tiny humming bird.

https://tricycle.org/magazine/storehouse-consciousness-yogacara/

https://owlcation.com/stem/Hummingbird-Facts-and-Symbolism