

My Decluttering Diaries: What I Kept & Tossed in a 650 Sq Foot Apartment

00:00 Hey guys, it's Chelsea and Mona from the financial diet. And this week's video is sponsored by M&T Bank. And today we are here because it is a special and kind of bittersweet but kind of awesome day, and that is the very last day that I will be filming this show in this apartment.

00:18 In fact, just outside of frame, the entire apartment is packed up and ready to move except for this exact part of it because I wanted it to be here for filming obviously. And as you can see Mona even got a very special and kind of ridiculous haircut for the occasion, so she'll be all fresh and ready for our new apartment.

00:38 We're actually only moving about two blocks away. So it's going to be a pretty painless move, but it's a big change for us. We're very excited about the apartment and one big reason for that excitement is because it is 300 square feet bigger than our current apartment. Our current apartment is about 650 square feet and the new one is about 950, which in New York City terms is a mansion.

01:03 It's by far the biggest place we'll have ever lived in and more importantly, it's a place in which every room has its own dedicated space.

01:11 I've had to really work some magic over the years, with things like my dining nook. Or when I had my office in my bedroom or having to use my clothing dresser as my TV console. Basically, my whole New York city life has been about making the most of not having a lot of space and getting really, really creative about how I use it.

01:29 And that is a lot of great lessons that I'll take into this new space even when I have things like a dedicated dining room, which is like ooooh. When I watch things like Marie Kondo, or shows on minimalism or downsizing or decluttering, or Tiny Homes, I'm always a little bit mystified, because having limited living space is treated like this crazy foreign thing.

01:49 And having so much stuff is just taken for granted. When you live in New York City or someplace like it, being really conscientious about your your space and how you're using it and what you're putting in it is just a way of life. It's not some special thing.

02:02 So to continue with my decluttering diaries and I will link you guys to the first decluttering diary video in the description. I wanna talk about the best and worst things that I bought for my 650 square foot apartment. I love the apartment, don't get me wrong. I will miss it in a lot of ways, but I also made a lot of mistakes in it when I was first moving and hopefully my mistakes and maximizing a limited space, will be a lesson to you so you can avoid them.

02:26 But let's get right into it with one of the best purchases I made. And that is benches with storage. As you guys can see in my dining nook, I have two benches that go along the corner and form a little banquette. I added big pillows to the back of it to be like a little banquette situation, and both of those benches hold a ton of stuff.

02:44 One of them I use to store a lot of linens and the other one I will use to store offseason clothing. But whatever you decide to put in them, having something that serves a great function, aka using them for dining seating and also can provide a ton of storage, is a huge hack for a small space. I've got these particular benches on wayfair for about \$120 each, and they have proven infinitely useful. I will be

taking these benches to my new dining room, where they'll be going lengthwise along a much larger dining table with two chairs at the end.

03:12 On the sadder side, one of the worst things I bought for the apartment is non-washable rugs. From this point on in my life, I shall only buy rugs which are machine washable. Now yes part of that is because I have a dog and dogs sometimes have accidents or they shed their fur or they are fun rugs. Because for some reason dogs really love seeking out like soft surfaces such as rugs to barf on like, I guess because they hate us and want us to, our upholstery ruined.

03:39 But also even if you don't have a pet, if you live in a small space it is guaranteed that your rugs will get dirty. Basically every part of a small living space gets foot traffic, so there's not really going to be any rugs that are purely ornamental. And although we take off our shoes when on our own rugs, I am someone who firmly believes that when you have people over, they have a look going on. I do not require people to take off their shoes at the door, certainly not when we are having a big party.

04:04 So after that happens, you need to clean the hell out of your rugs as well as your floor. From now on, I will only be buying rugs which can be easily tossed into the washing machine and restored to their former glory. In this move I've gotten rid of several rugs which were like, I don't even wanna talk about the state of those rugs. But suffice to say they made me feel really bad about myself.

04:24 One of the best things I bought for the house though, was a wardrobe and by this I mean instead of a dresser, something that is incredibly important to remember in small spaces is that vertical height is everything. I used to have a really big wide dresser, it was the IKEA hennas which a lot of you are probably familiar with. It's actually solid wood and a good dresser overall. And as I mentioned earlier, we ended up using it as a TV console because we couldn't fit it in our bedroom but it still had our clothes in it, all kinds of janky.

04:50 And while a dresser can be great for the right space, if you have limited space in your bedroom, you're going to want something like a wardrobe which has a relatively small footprint but goes up high and utilizes that vertical space. As you guys may have seen in my last decluttering video, I have my clothes being hung on it as well as a chest of drawers in it to organize.

05:08 I have my shoes in there and I utilize the space on top with baskets for storage things like scarves, belts, etc. I'm also in my new space going to be getting a clothing rack, because they also have a very small footprint on the floor and utilize that vertical space. But the wardrobe again, you can stack things on top of, so it provides several opportunities for maximizing that space.

05:28 I've never looked back since. However, one of my worst purchases were my useless kitchen tools. Some of you guys seem really into instant pots and slow cookers. Frankly I feel like big instant pot is like paying you guys or something to like be constantly going off about them in the comment section and more power to you. If you love your slow cooker or Instant Pot have at it.

05:47 I know particularly because I have a Dutch oven that I use for basically all of that stuff and I really like cooking. So I don't really feel the need to do stuff that I can just let sit all day, I like to be more active and dynamic in my cooking, but also I love my Dutch oven and I use it for everything. So it's just not abuse to me basically never used my slow cooker.

06:05 Similarly, I bought a Soda Stream and what now seems like a hallucination, and have used it approximately three times before realising you'd have to go to like staples to get the refill canisters. I was like very confused about that. But also I don't really have time for that. I'll just get soda water if I need it. I don't even drink that much soda water.

06:21 Anyway in a small kitchen and for New York standards, I actually have a decently sized kitchen. Every centimeter counts. Your counter space is precious, your cabinetry is precious, you're under stuff storage is precious if you have it. So every single tool you bring into your home should be one that you love and one that you will actually use on a regular basis.

06:41 A good litmus test is have you had at least three occasions in the past few months where you wish you had a tool, then it's probably a good sign that you would use it regularly. If not, skip.

06:52 However in my kitchen one of the best decisions was rolling kitchen carts. I have two, I have one that I actually got on the street and then repainted and refinished and all that stuff. It's one of those wooden kitchen carts that rolls, you can see it here.

07:05 You guys follow me on Instagram, I post food a lot and usually my food is displayed on my white kitchen cart. Love that thing, so functional and so useful. I also have this rolling gold basket, which I use to hold the stuff I use frequently when cooking because it's easy to take it where I need it in the kitchen and it's always out for easy grabbing. Anything that rolls in a small space, especially in the most functional room of your home, the kitchen is incredibly valuable.

07:29 But back to the bad purchases, anything made out of melamine slash MDF, which is medium density fiberboard. Basically that stuff that's like particle board on the inside and that grows plastic-like stuff on the outside. Couple reasons why this stuff sucks, one it's really easy to damage and difficult to put together because that particle board like breaks and crumbles when you're trying to **** into it.

07:51 When you nick or damage it, usually the surface is paper thin and then you've exposed to the like terrible cardboard interior. But also you can't paint it which is like one of my favorite things to do to spruce up an old item, paint doesn't hold to it. The only option you really have is contact paper, which I'm currently attempting to do to resuscitate this really janky bookshelf I have and even then we'll see how that works.

08:12 The thing is, wood furniture is one of the easiest things to find on places like Craigslist, thrift stores, junk sales, or even when people are putting stuff out on the curb. And without fail that good material stuff, usually things like wood but also things like metal or stone are going to be infinitely more valuable. They last longer you can take them apart and put them back together more reliably and they just look better.

08:35 There was a time in my life for melamine, but now I love myself so that time is over. One thing I will say though, was a huge, huge lifesaver and I'm going to get tons more for the new place, is boxes and organizers for your shelving units. It is so easy for a shelving unit to become like a biohazard zone, with just stuff all over it and piles of things like cramming stuff behind other things.

08:57 And aside from the fact that it looks like you're in a depressive episode, it also makes it really hard to find stuff or even know what is important to keep, the more your shelves can have individual

boxes with various items in them. I'm fond of things like hat boxes and paper boxes, cuz they look cute, the more your shelves can be organized, productive and pretty looking.

09:16 Plus, as I've mentioned in a recent video, the more your items are sorted and packed together and therefore have limited space to contain them. The more you will be inclined to sort out what is actually important to keep versus what you can get rid of. Which is of the essence in a small place.

09:31 Now, back to my worst purchases, one of the worst ones has got to be uncomfortable dining chairs. When we first moved in, we suffered on some Ikea units that I swear to God were designed to make people feel uncomfortable while dining. And you know what the result of that was, not eating at the dining table as often as we should.

09:48 I'm one of those people who believes that eating at the couch should be for when you're having a fun movie night or you just wanna chill. But that dinner should happen at the dinner table, mostly because it fosters conversation for whomever you might be living with, if you live with someone. But at the very least because it helps you focus on your actual meal rather than being distracted by something in front of you.

10:06 And when you have uncomfortable dining chairs, you are not going to be inclined to do that. And now that we've spent a little bit of energy on our dining table eating there is something we look forward to.

10:16 Lastly, one of my best purchases has been hellish shelves. Basically every room in my home has shelves along the wall. My kitchen has them, my dining area, right above me our shelves or bedroom over the bed has a shelf. As I mentioned earlier in a small space, you have nowhere to go but up. There's very little you can do in terms of floor space and every centimeter counts, but your walls are kind of a blank canvas.

10:40 So if you only learn to do one thing in terms of being handy, make it mounting shelves. Because I cannot tell you how many times for example, when I'm cooking in my kitchen, having those convenient shelves right over me to get the stuff I use most frequently has been great to have. Plus I always believe that the best designs are ones that are about function, that look like they are useful and not just frilly and for decoration.

11:04 So putting shelves in places where they're actually beneficial to you means that they will be functional and therefore look like they should be there. I've been dreaming about getting into this new place and putting up those shelves.

11:15 Whatever you may choose to do in your small space, just remember that ultimately having limitations is a gift. Because it allows you to reduce your life down to what's important and to quickly sift out what is versus isn't a good purchase.

11:28 And no matter what your next move might be, as you reach different milestones in your life. M&T Bank is here to help you find ways to manage your finances and to make financial decisions that make sense for you. M&T is committed to finding lending solutions for all of life stages. No matter what type of loan you're looking for, you deserve competitive rates and personalised services from start to finish. Together, we can evaluate the borrowing options that fit your home buying or renovating needs and your budget.

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12:14 Bye bye.