

NOW MORE

LESS
IS



**THE KIDS ARE GONE.
THEIR STUFF ISN'T.
GET READY TO
DECLUTTER YOUR
HOUSE—AND
YOUR LIFE.**

BY JEFF INMAN

Judi Culbertson had her epiphany over a saucepan. She was on vacation, cooking up a feast in the kitchen of a Delaware beach house. Suddenly she realized that she wasn't searching for items she needed. Everything was right there in plain view. "The entire place was like that," she says. "It was stocked with all the things we needed and nothing more. There was no clutter."

The experience made her envious. Her own house was a jumble at best. "I wanted that vacation house feeling—permanently," she says.

Making it happen wasn't easy. There were hard decisions about what to keep and what to junk. There were fights over knickknacks, a breakdown over a bridesmaid dress. It was as if Culbertson were waging psychological warfare on herself, challenging her beliefs about things she thought she needed but really didn't. It took her a year, and

when she was finally done, she says "I actually felt physically lighter."

That was 30 years ago. Now Culbertson writes books such as *The Clutter Cure* and *Scaling Down*, which help empty nesters shed their extra stuff. It's never a simple process, especially since we love to hoard. Consider this: The size of an average U.S. home has grown 60 percent in the last 30 years, yet there are still 45,000 self-storage facilities nationwide. "People get this idea that they have to keep an accurate record of their lives," she says. "You don't. The accuracy police aren't going to show up."

THE PLAN

The first step is just admitting that it's time to let go. "It's extremely hard for people to do that," says Duffy Spencer, Ph.D., a social psychologist and addiction specialist who helps people declutter.