

Dear Friend,

It's September! And while summer is not technically over, it is time for kids to go back to school. How prepared are you for what comes next -- papers, projects, keepsakes -- oh my!

Perhaps it's also time to look at our own keepsakes and systematize them once and for all!

Francesca

## Treasure or Trash?

September always means back to school. And back to school means paper coming into your home. **But it's not just paper. It is projects and essays and artwork -- all potential treasures or keepsakes.** How do you decide what to keep? In what capacity do you keep it and for how long?

When I work with clients who have children, it is always a point of conversation to talk about how to deal with the amount of paper children bring home after one day of school -- let alone all five days! Often, I find parents don't want to let go of their second grader's first "real" art project or essay about their summer vacation. And in turn, the children don't want to either.

The reality is if you deal with incoming paper for your kids the same way you deal with your mail and it won't pile up. The funny thing about those art projects or special papers is that, like the mail, they keep coming in -- day after day and month after month. **The idea of saving certain things as a treasure is not the issue; how much, where, and why you save is what needs to be looked at.** If you don't give thought to the things that come into your home, you will be cluttered.

I think it is important to save (for a period of time) things that remind you of your growth or your child's. What I find equally important is to teach your children the lesson of how to determine what to keep and for how long.

As adults, we have to practice this lesson as well, and children learn from our examples. **Do you have tucked away in the back of your hall closet or attic keepsakes from your grandmother, great aunt or best friend from college?** Are you keeping them because you like them or because you think that person's feelings will get hurt if you get rid of them? Spaces cluttered with unused, unneeded, and disliked items leave a heavy feeling in the space and they don't inform the space positively. I believe treasures that are kept should have a function or a purpose. They should be on display, used, or better yet -- needed!

**Learn to question why you keep something. Does it have a purpose? Does it bring back a memory? Is it a good memory? Is there something somewhere else in the house that gives you a similar happy feeling?** Like your child's potential keepsakes that come into the house weekly, our own keepsakes need to be sorted and the determination made whether they are true treasures or just trash. This is a life lesson you pass to your children.

The tips below will help you make the determination of what to keep and in what capacity you keep it.

## HOW TO...Deal with keepsakes

1. **Have a keepsake box for each child.** When they are young, keep a few things each year they are in school that you feel they might want to see/reflect on when they are older. As they get older, ask them to choose what they might want to keep. **Ask them why they might want to keep it and make sure they do a sort and purge as the box gets full.**

2. Don't clutter your refrigerator with too many projects from your children. **Instead, have each child pick their favorite from the week and display it on the refrigerator.** This allows your children to be part of the process of choosing what is most important. It not only declutters your frig, it begins to teach your children how to sort through and make decisions on things that have some meaning.

3. **Have your own keepsake box.** When your children make you something extra special at school, save it in your keepsake box. Limit what you save to 3 items a year, if possible. As with any paper you save, you must look through it at the end of the year and pare it down. Once that box gets full, you shouldn't go get another. Instead, make decisions on keeping only those things that are unique and that you feel represent a specific, important event or time.

4. **If you have keepsakes or items in your home that you don't like, don't use, or don't need -- DON'T keep them!** You must look at the item for what it is and what its purpose is, not at who gave it to you. People mean well. But what they see as a treasure might not appear to be one in your eyes. It might not fit your style, your home decor, or be your taste. Don't be afraid to gracefully decline a gift or to donate one that you have had tucked away in a closet, collecting dust.

5. Remember, everything must have a home. When you decide to keep something, be sure you have a proper place for it. **Avoid stuffing things in closets or on the top of shelves.** If you can't see the item or can't get to it easily, you won't use it. If your only "home" for it is out of reach or out of site, you might ask yourself what the true value of your treasure really is.

### Quick Tip

Shutterfly.com and other photo sites can help you contain your keepsakes!

Take a photo of your keepsakes; download your photos to one of these sites and make a picture book of your most treasured treasures! It is inexpensive and a great way store many treasures and be able to flip through the pages to enjoy them.

#### **ABOUT VERRI ORGANIZED?**

Francesca Verri Gove is a professional organizer and coach and owner of *verri organized*. Having a knack for making order out of chaos, and a passion for creating workable systems to improve efficiency, Francesca sees a great need for her talent and services among mothers, businesses, home owners and children.

A former assistant dean for administration at a college outside of Boston, Francesca has spoken to mothers, college students and businesses on how to get and stay organized, and has coached professors, professionals, home owners and doctors on how to experience life in a lighter way by getting verri organized.

Francesca believes life should be "light", and in order to experience it in that way, we need to look at what we "have", assess our "systems", and believe in our own ability to become verri organized.

For more information about verri organized and the services it provides, please visit [www.verriorganized.com](http://www.verriorganized.com), or call 978-337-3614.