

#### PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

# Episode 114:

# How to See Through the Mess and Declutter Your Life with Tracy McCubbin

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Jen Riday: Hey there, welcome to the Vibrant Happy Women podcast. I'm Dr. Jen Riday and welcome back. Vibrant Happy Women is all about helping you make that journey from burned-out to taking better care of yourself, loving yourself, healing relationships, and ultimately, living your purpose; which feels so amazing because you're doing the things you were born to do, living your life in balance, with meaning and fulfillment. Welcome back to the show. Last week, I chatted with Whitney Hansen; we talked about becoming financially savvy. Many women don't care a lot about their finances and they leave that to men. But I think part of being an empowered woman is taking control of all areas of our life, so that we know what's happening and we have more choices, and that leads to more freedom. So if you haven't listened to that episode, you'll love it; it's at jenriday.com/113. And today's guest is Tracy McCubbin, and we're talking about decluttering, specifically about mindfulness. In this episode, Tracy and I talked about the mindful closet, and you'll learn what that means in a moment, and also taking that mindfulness to all areas of the home so it feels the way you want it to feel; which, if you're like me, you want it to feel vibrant and happy. Let's go ahead and jump in and learn what it means to mindfully de-clutter.

Tracy McCubbin is a decluttering expert and author of the forthcoming book, 'The Clutter Code', coming in spring of 2019. Tracy has always referred to herself as obsessive-compulsive delightful, but who knew she could turn that trait into a booming business? Over the years, Tracy discovered she had the ability to see through any mess and clearly envisioned a clutter-free space. Coupled with keen time management and organizational skills, Tracy soon found more and more people were asking her for help. And before she knew it, dClutterfly was born. Tracy has completed over 1200 decluttering and organizing





jobs all over the country. Tracy lives in a loft in downtown LA. And we're so glad you're on the show, Tracy.

Tracy McCubbin: I'm so excited to be here. I'm super, super excited!

Jen Riday: Yay!

Tracy McCubbin: I love happy vibrant women.

Jen Riday: Well, thank you, thank you.

Tracy McCubbin: They're my favorite thing. (Laughs)

Jen Riday: Well, and I love talking time management organization, so this is a match made in heaven.

Tracy McCubbin: Somebody said to me recently, Jen, they said, "The key to happiness is time management." And I thought, "You know, you might be right."

Jen Riday: You know, I think it's true; just getting... making sure your priorities take the front seat instead of the back seat, yeah. Well, let's have a quote that you want to share with us today and then hear your story.

Tracy McCubbin: Well, it's interesting. My assistant got me a birthday present and she asked me, she said, "What's your favorite quote or what's your motto?" and I thought, "Well, I don't know." And then I said... I texted her back and I said, "March forth." And my birthday is actually March 4th and it is the only date in the calendar that's also a sentence and I've always kind of said it. And I thought, "You know, that's it."

Jen Riday: Oh!

Tracy McCubbin: "Like I just keep on keeping on; like march forth." Like... and I mean that in sort of the like powerful strong way of walking into the future. So I just recently made that my motto, and I'm super into it.





Jen Riday: I like it. It reminded me of, "Just keep swimming." But, "March forth," has... has a lot more power to it; you know, you're like determined, you're not just swimming around. (Laughs)

Tracy McCubbin: Exactly, exactly! That's what I... but I said it and she got me this really cute market bag and it had it printed on the outside. And I'm like, "I like this!"

Jen Riday: Aww! Aww, that's so good! Well, tell us your story, you know, were you born able to organize and manage time? Did you have to learn it? You know, how did that look for you?

Tracy McCubbin: You know, I was... I definitely was organized from a very young age. I also... part of my story is that I'm the child of a hoarder; my dad is an extreme hoarder. So I grew up seeing the other side of it. He and I didn't live together for most of my childhood because my parents got divorced, but I saw his battle with that. So, for me, being organized was a way to maintain control and to kind of make order out of chaos. So I definitely, in terms of stuff, that was all along. I really liked shoes lined up, I liked my closet color-coded, you know, I like to know where everything was. Time management was something I had to learn.

Jen Riday: Mm-hmm.

Tracy McCubbin: It was something that I had to... I'm a procrastinator by nature so I had to really explore kind of where it was affecting my life and really teach myself some things. My niece is graduating from high school on this going off to college, so we are deep in the conversation about time management. And here's another thing I like I just said to her yesterday. I said, "You know, you got to plan your work and work your plan," someone had said that to me years ago. And so that's something that I am constantly refining, if that makes sense. I don't think there's ever... I don't think we ever sort of fall into a way of being and then it works forever, as your life alters. Like, right now, I'm writing a book and running a business and, you know, trying to work out and have a social life. So I've had to learn how to redefine my time management within those new parameters.

Jen Riday: Right. And it's constantly changing as life changes.





Tracy McCubbin: Constantly changing. And your priorities change. You know, it used to be that I wanted to have my free time to go out, you know, 5 nights a week and meet friends and go to the movies. And now, I'm like, "You know what I really want to do? Watch Law & Order SVU."

Tracy McCubbin: So it is interesting. I think that's one of the things that I tell my clients all the time that, "Time management is fluid." And in the same way that you will never... it's an unrealistic expectation to think that you're going to have an empty to-do list. Like you're never going to have an empty in... email inbox; you're never going to have an empty to-do list. So instead of sort of working for this goal that's impossible, it's about kind of chunking up your time and getting things done.

Jen Riday: Right. And choosing what you're going to say no to. (Laughs)

Tracy McCubbin: Yeah. It's a huge part of it. Though, as you get older, saying no it gets easier. (Laughs)

Jen Riday: Yeah. Why do you think that is?

Tracy McCubbin: I could... you know, I'm in the age where my friend's parents are starting to pass and we're losing a little bit of friends and, you know, the most of that wave. And I think life just gets a little more precious, or you see how fast time goes and I think you want to just not waste it doing things you don't enjoy.

Jen Riday: Mm-hmm, exactly. Times going too fast and, "Hey, I want to be happy now. What the heck?" Yeah.

Tracy McCubbin: Yeah, yeah. Well, somebody said to me that, "The days are long and the months are short," and I thought, "Oh yeah, that's how it feels these days." So, for me, it's about... it's just, I want to be doing what I want to be doing and I don't want to... you know, that's it. And being happy, exactly, in a really kind of... in a really simple way.

Jen Riday: Well, so if someone feels... let's imagine, I think everyone out there would be able to say they feel overwhelmed at times. Where do you tell people to start if you were



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to give advice on organizing, minimizing, simplifying all of the things you teach?

Tracy McCubbin: Yeah, that's such a great question. So the first thing that I tell people to do is to create a vision for the way they want their home to run and to look, right? So, you know, I'll go into clients houses and they'll have downloaded all these things on Pinterest and show me their Pinterest board they say, "I want it to... you know, I want a pantry that's completely decanted and chalkboard labels and every jar says 'Cheerios' and 'nuts' and..." you know? And I like, "Okay, well, that's a full-time job and you have 4 kids and you have a job." So I ask people to create a vision for how they want their house to look and how they want it to run; and then we work backwards for the trouble spots. So for instance, you know, I moved to family in; they have 3 girls, they moved into a new house. And, you know, they got to get everybody out the door and on the bus and out the door to work and it's crazy. And she said to me, "You know, this is going to sound weird but I need a hair station in my kitchen. I need brushes and hair bows and sunscreen."

Jen Riday: Mm-hmm.

Tracy McCubbin: And I was like... like, to me, I was like, "Ugh, hair brushes in the kitchen!"

Jen Riday: (Laughs)

Tracy McCubbin: But she's got to do 3 little girls hair in the morning while feeding them and get out the door. So it was like, "Well, that works for you." And, you know, she said to me... she texted me the other day, she goes, "This hair station makes me so happy."

Jen Riday: Aww!

Tracy McCubbin: So I tell people to look at knowing what they want their house to look like and how they want it to flow, but also then to go, "What's not working? Where are you getting log-jammed?" So, for example, if getting dressed in the morning is just a nightmare, you know, you're trying things on, you're throwing a lot of chair and you can't... you know, I'd say, "Start with your closet."

Jen Riday: Yeah.





Tracy McCubbin: Right?

Jen Riday: Yeah.

Tracy McCubbin: Like look where your log-jams are and then start in those places.

Jen Riday: Ah, look for the log-jams. Well, what are typical log-jams you see?

Tracy McCubbin: Closets are a great one. You know, we only wear 20% of our clothes 80% of the time. So people have way too many clothes and then closets are stuffed and they're not categorized. You know, the reason to have a categorized closet, shirts are 'shirts', skirts are 'skirts', pants are 'pants', is to get... make getting dressed easy. "Oh, my shirts are right here. My pants are right here. Here are my shoes," put it on, get out the door.

Jen Riday: Yeah.

Tracy McCubbin: You know, right? But people, it's just... it's counterintuitive to people sometimes. Another big log-jam I see for people is paper; mail and paper. You know, people are just overwhelmed with the amount of mail that comes in and the amount of paper that they keep. And so, you know, that's a question of telling people like, "Read your mail over the shredder. You know, don't..."

Jen Riday: (Laughs). Yeah, right! That's so smart!

Tracy McCubbin: It's such a simple... it's like a game changer for people! They're like, "Right, I just read my..." then you get rid of half. Then, never go more than 3 days without reading your mail and have an actionable spot. So a spot where you put the stuff that you need to deal with and, you know, exactly where to go get it. It's about setting up habits. It's about setting up... you know, the keys belong in 3 places; in the car ignition, well, not many cars anymore, your purse, or a bowl by the front door or a hook by the front door. That's it. Keys don't belong anywhere else because you need to always know where to go exactly to look for them. So what I like to do is help people set up really simple concrete changes that work moving forward.





Jen Riday: Yeah, that's smart. So what would the process look like where you're walking them through this... this vision? Do you have them go throughout their day imagining each step of what they're doing and where they get stuck?

Tracy McCubbin: Well, yeah. If they get me in person, we walk through the house top to bottom. And I take copious notes and we, you know, figure out like, you know, "Okay, you know, this isn't working; like the kitchen working," and it's like, "Okay." You know, I just did some clients that had somebody else unpacked their kitchen. They moved into a great loft in New York and the person that unpacked just didn't understand kitchen flow. So I was like... I was like, "Oh, well, you have your fancy crystal glasses above the dishwasher and your coffee mugs are in the hutch across the street... you know, across the kitchen." Like it was a rethinking of that.

Jen Riday: Yeah.

Tracy McCubbin: So I walk people through their house. The great thing is, in the book that's coming out, I'm going to take people through their houses, room by room by room. So I'm going to break down each room, the entryway to the living room to the dining room, so that people can really focus on the part; either the whole house or the parts that don't work for them.

Jen Riday: That sounds great. And that's coming in another year, it's called 'The Clutter Code', right?

Tracy McCubbin: Yes. As of right now, it's coming spring 2019; not even a year.

Jen Riday: Ooh! Oh yeah!

Tracy McCubbin: I'm so excited.

Jen Riday: Oh!

Tracy McCubbin: It's so exciting. So, you know, I think it's telling... you know, so I think it's really identifying... you know, because when I walk into a client's house, they're like, "My



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house is a disaster. We are so..." and I'm like, "Okay, let's pull back a little. What isn't working? As a family, can you guys all sit and eat dinner together on the dining room table?" A lot of my families are like, "No, we have too much crap on it!"

Jen Riday: Yeah.

Tracy McCubbin: So it's need to start there. You know, "Can you park your car in your garage? Is that what you want to do?" You know, "Can your kids... can your kids tidy up and clean their room and a half an hour? you know, "Can the playroom be put away at the end of the night?" or, you know, also, "Is your house full of..?" You know, I have a lot of people with what we called transitional de-cluttering; so after a divorce or after somebody's passed away. And so a lot of times, I'll go into a house and it'll just be full of sad memories.

Jen Riday: Mm-hmm.

Tracy McCubbin: You know, and so like, "Okay, maybe we can let some of that stuff go or box it up and get it out of eyesight."

Jen Riday: Wow, that's big. Well, do you ever have people call you up and just say, "Help me organize my whole house,"? I mean, do you do that kind of thing?

Tracy McCubbin: All the time; uh-huh, all the time. We do lots of 'top to bottoms'. You know, also what happens, you know, I work with seniors who've been in a house for a long time and they'll say, "We've been here for 40 years. Our kids are grown. Our grandkids are on their way. We don't want to but we just have too much stuff." So we sort of... that house, we'll approach it, "How do we kind of reduce the clutter and then also keep the house safe so that they can stay living in their house as long as possible?"

Jen Riday::Hmm, yeah.

Tracy McCubbin: You know, and then also families, they sort of have babies, they get through toddler-dom or they're like, "Okay, we can breathe now," and then, you know, it's shifting the house to accommodate how the family is living now. Sport, everybody's





playing sports and everybody is on a different food plan. And, you know, so it's really looking at... I just want people's homes to work for them. I want them to be happy in them. I want them to, you know, love them and I want them to work. Because, at the end of the day, your home is a tool, right?

Jen Riday: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Tracy McCubbin: So that's kind of a mind shift that I'm trying to get people into say like, "Yes, of course you want a beautiful home and, you know, nobody loves that stuff more than me, but you also need it to work for you.

Jen Riday: You live in a loft in LA and you mentioned before we began recording that you're trying to live your talk. Tell us more about what that looks like to really make our homes be the tool we want it to be with the decluttering and minimizing kind of movement that seems to be growing.

Tracy McCubbin: Yeah. So, for me, I really... the.... kind of the first place I started. I mean, I moved into a loft. So I went from a craftsman with 5 closets, you know, and 1700 square feet to 900 square feet with 2 closets. So I really had to pare down and it's fantastic; I haven't missed a thing. I haven't thought about anything I haven't... you know, it's been great. For me, really the place I started in my own life was the closet. I got really pared down. I got rid of the stuff I hadn't worn and I just was trying to be very mindful about buying less and buying higher quality, better made things so that I could keep them longer. And that was a really, really, really big shift because I admittedly, you know, get a bit of a high from shopping; there's a lot that comes along with that. So I had to get kind of reckoned with that and be like, okay, for me, fast-fashion, you know, clothes that you wear for one season and you throw away because you only paid \$9 for them, wasn't resonating with how I wanted to be living my life and how I wanted to kind of acknowledge what's going on with the planet. So I just got really mindful about, "Okay, where are my clothes being made and where are my shoes being made? And maybe this is more than I want to pay, but..." I just recently resold a pair of shoes that I've had for 25 years.

Jen Riday: Ooh!





Tracy McCubbin: Yeah, they were my first expensive... you know, I paid \$350 for them 25 years ago, which was a fortune, and I just had them resold and I still wear them all the time.

Jen Riday: Really?

Tracy McCubbin: Yeah. So I started my mindfulness in my closet.

Jen Riday: Okay. So have you heard of the Capsule Wardrobe idea?

Tracy McCubbin: Mm-mm.

Jen Riday: And what are your thoughts on that?

Tracy McCubbin: I think it's great; I think it's great. I know a lot of people who do it. I think it's fantastic. A lot of my clients and friends who travel a lot for business, it's really successful for them.

Jen Riday: Ah!

Tracy McCubbin: And it's great. And so I think... you know, and sometimes... I admittedly recently started working with a stylist because I'm doing so much on-camera stuff. And I was like, "I don't know what to do," and she really believes in that. Like, "You know, here are some of the core pieces that you need. Here's where you spend the money. You know, here's a few other pieces, and then you can switch it this way. Like here's this beautiful blouse, you can wear it this way or you can put a white tank top underneath it or you can put it under a blazer." And her mindset is really, you know, trying to get 5 and 6 different outfits out of the same pieces, and it's been fantastic!

Jen Riday: Ah!

Tracy McCubbin: I don't stress out when I open my closet, I'm like, "Oh, everything goes together. I've got everything I need." I really... and I have seen this in play. I've been doing





this for a very long time and I can say this with confidence that, I really think a smaller curated closet with good choices is so much easier to deal with than someone with tons and tons of clothes.

Jen Riday: So where do you like to shop for your favorite, you know, high quality pieces? Are there brands you recommend?

Tracy McCubbin: You know, I really like this brand, 'Equipment'. I'm obsessed with these shoes out of New York called 'Coquilleo', it's a woman shoemaker who's fourth-generation and she has her shoes made in Mayurka and they're all sustainable. And they're technically comfort shoes. (Laughs)

Jen Riday: Uh-huh.

Tracy McCubbin: But they have a little bit of a heel. So, you know, I just I'm trying to ask more questions. And look, of course... I mean, I just bought, recently bought, you know, five t-shirts from Zara because they were good t-shirts and I'll wear them through the summer. I mean, I'm not saying that, you know, you can't ever, but it's about, for me, I would say the decluttering movement, the minimalist movement, the real key to it is a mindfulness, right; making choices.

Jen Riday: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Tracy McCubbin: Thinking about, "Okay, this shirt that I bought, you know, at the Gap, where was it made and where does that... you know, what does that mean to have a shirt made in Bangladesh? Who's making it? How's it getting here?" So it's... you know, it's about an awareness. And, you know, interesting, I think the mindfulness movement, I love a lot of it, I think it's a lot of pressure, and I think it's real hard for people to live that way.

Jen Riday: Mm-hmm.

Tracy McCubbin: But I think that having that conversation and having it kind of be that extreme is helping a lot of other people become aware of how they're consuming.





Jen Riday: Right, and then shifting the bar; shifting the boundary for everyone.

Tracy McCubbin: Mm-hmm.

Jen Riday: Yeah.

Tracy McCubbin: Exactly, exactly. You know, it's the same thing about sort of, you know, vegetarianism. Like, I'm never going to be a vegetarian, but when you start to go, "Oh wow! These are the effects that, you know, growing beef has on our planet. Okay, you know what? I'm going to eat beef once a month."

Jen Riday: Right.

Tracy McCubbin: "And I'm going to eat I'm going to eat vegetarian dinners twice a week."

Jen Riday: Mm-hmm.

Tracy McCubbin: Like, you know, I'm a big fan of... I'm not an extreme person, so I think a lot of little steps make a huge difference.

Jen Riday: So taking that conversation from mindfulness in the closet to...

Tracy McCubbin: (Laughs). I love that!

Jen Riday: Yeah.

Tracy McCubbin: "Mindfulness in the closet," that's great.

Jen Riday: There's your book title; your second...

Jen Riday: Taking that title and thinking about mindfulness in the whole home, mindfully purchasing things. I'm recording this, my office is in my bedroom, I have 6 kids, so I don't get to have an office space right now. But, you know, how do you begin to think mindfully



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as you're walking around doing this process and thinking, "How do I want my home to look?"? How do you know what you need to keep or get rid of; what you should purchase if it's the quality you want or need? I mean, any guidelines on how we could number what to focus on?

Tracy McCubbin: Absolutely. Here's the thing I tell people, "The very first shift that you can make that is super, super simple is, when you're out in the world and you're thinking..." I hear people say all the time, "Oh, I need a new pair of jeans. I need a new sweater," and I'm always like, "You don't. You have 10 pairs of jeans, you have 5 pairs of jeans, you want a new pair of jeans." So just change your language; start there.

Jen Riday: Ah!

Tracy McCubbin: because when you start to go, "Oh, right, I don't need it, I want it."

Jen Riday: I like that.

Tracy McCubbin: Yeah, sometimes it's easier to do. So one of the other things that I tell people is, I have these 5 questions. And this is actually something we could... I would love to do this. I have a guide for this. I caught the 'Should it stay or should it go?' guide.

Jen Riday: Ooh!

Tracy McCubbin: And I'd love to offer it to your listeners.

Jen Riday: Okay.

Tracy McCubbin: So maybe you and I got a way to do that; it's just a little PDF and it would be great to get them to them if they want it.

Jen Riday: Yes, I'll put a link on the show notes page at jenriday.com/114; we'll have a link to that guide. 'Should a stay or should it go?' guide, is that what it's called?

Tracy McCubbin: Yeah.



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Jen Riday: Okay.

Tracy McCubbin: Perfect; perfect, perfect, perfect. So one of the things I tell people, so these are the 5 questions when you're looking at any item; and this... this applies to any item in your house. So number 1, "Do you use it on a semi-regular basis?" By 'semi-regular', I mean more than once a year. You know, for example, I have this giant turkey platter that's huge and it's kind of hard to store, but I use it every Thanksgiving. I have a hosts on Thanksgiving for 24 years, I use it every Thanksgiving; it stays. You know, if you have an old sleeping bag that you haven't been on the camping trip in 10 years, that can go.

Jen Riday: Ah.

Tracy McCubbin: So the first question is, "Do you use it on a semi-regular basis?" The second question is, "Is it making you money?" So, "Is this something, this is an item that you use to generate income?"

Jen Riday: Mm-hmm.

Tracy McCubbin: Now, this doesn't mean the pile of junk you have in the corner that you're thinking, someday, you're going to have a garage sale on a list on eBay.

Tracy McCubbin: That does not count. Then, "Do you have a place to store it? Do you really, really have a place to store it?" Like, and I'm saying, you know, not your old wedding dress shoved in the... underneath the bathroom sink. I mean, you know, a place in the garage, an appropriate place to stay... store it, It can stay. So semi-regular basis, "Is it making you money? Do you have a place to store it? And do you love, love, love it?"

Jen Riday: Ah!

Tracy McCubbin: Because there's just some stuff we love, right?

Jen Riday: Yep, exactly. 'Spark Joy' from Marie Kondo. (Laughs)



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Tracy McCubbin: Exactly. And look, you know, I think that's a great way to start but I also think that, you know, sometimes people get a little tripped up over that. Because I had a client say to me something the other day, she said... well, this is funny. She said, "Is guilt-tinged sentimentality the same thing is joy?" (Laughs). I was like, "Well..." You know, but there's some things in our life that are tools, right? So you're like, "Well, this screwdriver, I don't know if it sparks joy but it's really handy and I need it." So I think, you know, we can go a little bit deeper into how the things that we use in our house.

Jen Riday: Mm-hmm, I agree. It's funny, for me, I would imagine you would have the same joy, but, for me, letting something go gives me joy; like a lot of joy.

Tracy McCubbin: Mm-hmm.

Jen Riday: It's almost a little disturbing for my husband who gets joy from nothing ever changing. (Laughs)

Tracy McCubbin: Right, right.

Jen Riday: So it's funny to think about the psychology behind... you know, you said your dad was a hoarder but, you know, where that's all coming from; why we all feel we're deriving pleasure from these objects. And... and then when you apply mindfulness to think, "Hey, you know, maybe I can find some joy from another thing and not have to purchase one more item. But I'm going to go on a walk instead or sit under this tree. It's all free and I don't have to collect it and maintain it," and just changing that thinking it's so interesting.

Tracy McCubbin: Well, you know, I sort of did it instinctually and then, I've been reading a lot about what they've been talking about, the... how they've been correlating people who are happy experience a lot of awe, a w e, in the world.

Jen Riday: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Tracy McCubbin: And so oftentimes when I'm with a client and they're really wrapped





around the axles or they're upset or, you know, going through a hard time, I'm like, "Let's... let's take a walk outside," you know, I'm like... and you sort of go like, "Look at that amazing tree; it's in bloom this time of year," or, "Look at those clouds," that I have found when working with clients, if I can get them to experience a little bit of awe in nature, it really cracks through something.

Jen Riday: Ah!

Tracy McCubbin: Right.

Jen Riday: Yes.

Tracy McCubbin: That there's something sort of bigger and just takes them outside of their self because, look, we get emotionally attached to our stuff.

Jen Riday: Mm-hmm.

Tracy McCubbin: We imbibe all this meaning in it and we are... but at the end of the day, it's just stuff.

Jen Riday: Right, right. And I've heard it said that, a lot of times, we will accrue extra pounds on our bodies to protect ourselves emotionally.

Tracy McCubbin: Mm-hmm.

Jen Riday: I would imagine there's a similar safety mechanism going on when we're accruing a bunch of stuff. It just makes us feel safer maybe we get the dopamine hit when we spend the money in the store and get to buy it. But I found the more I meditate and get really, really grounded with who I am inside and recognize that, this person is completely independent of all the stuff and all... even all the other people around me, then I become less and less attached to stuff. I just really do want to be under a tree. And if I had...

Tracy McCubbin: (Laughs)





Jen Riday: If I had my way and I wasn't with 6 kids and a spouse who likes to keep his stuff, we would be minimalist, for sure; living in a tiny house if we could or something smaller. It would be so great. So...

Tracy McCubbin: Yeah. You know, it's interesting, I definitely agree with you about the dopamine hits off shopping. But I also... I kind of look at clutter... I see... I think a lot of people have a lot of clutter or have a lot of stuff as a way to kind of stave off loneliness.

Jen Riday: Uh-huh.

Tracy McCubbin: You know, because they're always busy, right? I remember a friend of mine said to me years ago... I had a friend who was an on-again, off-again smoker, you know, one of those friends that you're like, "Really, you're not really quitting this time again?" and she ended up having a kid which changed everything and quit, and hasn't smoked since. But I remember her saying to me in kind of one of those times, she said, "You know, there was a thing about smoking," she said, "I'm never lonely," right? Like...

Jen Riday: Oh, wow!

Tracy McCubbin: "I got home on a Saturday night by myself, you know, I'm having a cigarette and watching a movie" she said, you know, "I'm not uncomfortable at a party, I'm out on the balcony having a cigarette," she said, you know... And I... I was like, "Oh!" And I really see that with how people respond to clutter, right? It's busy... you know, it's... you've got to deal with it, right? "I'm moving stuff around, I'm closing my own closets, I got to get to that, I got to get to that," it's really kind of a lot make work.

Jen Riday: Mm-hmm.

Tracy McCubbin: So I think that that's a huge part of it, that we keep a lot of clutter to keep ourselves busy so we don't have to just sit with ourselves.

Jen Riday: Wow! That's so profound. And I feel that's exactly why we make our lives too





busy. People, when they first begin to meditate and get in touch with who they are, that whole mindfulness thing, a lot of them freak out because they are truly running from some painful memories or they don't want to be with that quiet reflective space. And so what do you recommend? You know, I guess you said you take people out into nature and have that moment of awe, but any other tricks for that where we're running from something?

Tracy McCubbin: You know, here's what I tell people when they start the decluttering process, "Don't start with the hard stuff. Don't start with the family photos."

Jen Riday: Yeah, right.

Tracy McCubbin: You know, "Don't start with the box of letters from the guy who broke your heart; don't start there." (Laughs)

Jen Riday: Yeah.

Tracy McCubbin: You know, "Start with the really easy stuff. Start with a really simple, you know..." And it's funny, I used to say to people, "You know, start with the magazines." And I have so many clients that are like, "(Gasps) Magazines! I can't let go of my magazine!"

Jen Riday: That's funny.

Tracy McCubbin: So, you know, start with what's easy for you to let go of. And, you know, kind of work up to it, which is fantastic, right? So sort of, you know, build on your success; so start with what's easy. For instance, if you're like, "I have no attachment to my socks. I'm good, I can let go of socks," like filter your sock drawer and let go of the ones that don't have matches, let go of the ones that the elastics all worn out on.

Jen Riday: Mm-hmm.

Tracy McCubbin: You know, and then put it back, and you're like, "Oh, that felt really good. Like..."

Jen Riday: Yeah.



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Tracy McCubbin: "I'm excited to get dressed in the morning." So start small and build on your successes; and don't overwhelm yourself. And, you know, I always say, "Look, Rome wasn't cluttered in a day."

Jen Riday: (Laughs).

Tracy McCubbin: "You didn't get here overnight so it's not going to get undone."

Tracy McCubbin: And don't beat yourself up, it's really hard; it's a hard process! I have a very successful business, people fly me all over the country to do this. It's emotionally hard, it's physically hard, it's time-consuming, it's doable and it's so satisfying but, you know, know that you come by it honestly. And that's what I always... you know, but people are so hard on themselves.

Jen Riday: Yeah! Not shaming, just slowly shifting and making the change; I like that.

Tracy McCubbin: Yeah.

Jen Riday: Where can people find if they want to learn more about you?

Tracy McCubbin: Oh, absolutely. So tracymccubbin.com, t r a c y m c c u b b i n.com, is my website. I have a private Facebook page called Conquer Your Clutter with Tracy McCubbin, and it's a community of people who are dealing with clutter in a really safe space. And I've actually started to do some virtual decluttering on it. So group members, I'm doing a Facebook live with them, in that, we're decluttering a space in their house and the rest of the group can tune in and watch, which has been really fantastic. So that's a great place to find me, is Facebook.

Jen Riday: Oh, great! We'll have a link to that on our show notes at jenriday.com/114. Well, let's hear, Tracy, about a few of your favorite things. So you're a time management master, or at least we're going to give you that title.

Jen Riday: What does your morning routine look like when you first wake up?



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Tracy McCubbin: You know, it's so interesting. I just changed my morning routine.

Jen Riday: Ah!

T: I had to go on a little bit of medication that sort of takes a bit to kick in; I've had some thyroid issues. So... and I heard a speech about making your bed every morning. And I would make my bed before I left for the day, but I'd sort of wander around. And so I just recently shifted. So I wake up, I take my thyroid medication, I make my bed, and then I do a little gratitude exercise; just in my head, I've got 3 to 5 things I'm grateful for. And then I do these little stretches and then I make my cup of tea, and then my day is off to the races.

Jen Riday: Yeah!

Tracy McCubbin: And you're doing some things that help you to feel good to start your day.

Jen Riday: Exactly, and not sort of shot out of... you know, and I'm waking up a half an hour before I really need to be up. I used to push it to the limit and now I'm... you know, now I'm half an hour earlier so I can kind of have moments. And I make my cup of tea and then I turn on The Today Show, like to watch a little bit of Savannah and Hoda, you know?

Jen Riday: Yeah.

Tracy McCubbin: And just not feeling so rushed in the morning, but the making the bed first thing. And I... I heard somebody give a commencement exercise and talk about it. And one of the things that they said was that, "The benefit of doing it is that, the first task you set for yourself of the day, you are successful at. And so you're starting your day in success." And I was like, "Oh, that makes so much sense."

Jen Riday: Ah.

Tracy McCubbin: So I've been doing it for about 2... this little routine for about 2 months now and it's a game changer! It's just a game changer.



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Jen Riday: Really? Okay.

Tracy McCubbin: Yeah, it's great! I just... I'm like, "Oh!" and then I come home, you know, and I live in a loft room the first thing I see is my bed and I'm like, "It looks so pretty! I love those pillows! Oh!" (Laughs)

Jen Riday: Aww! That's good, I might have to try it. I don't know, I've resisted that one for a long time. (Laughs)

Tracy McCubbin: It's interesting, I did too, and I didn't really kind of... and especially when I first moved to the loft and I was singing all by myself, I was like, "I need to make the bed; it's only me." And then I was like, "No, it's only me!"

Jen Riday: Yes.

Tracy McCubbin: "I want to come home and see..." You know, and like I have all these pillows from fabrics I've collected on travels, and I'm like, "I want to see that stuff."

Jen Riday: Yeah.

Tracy McCubbin: And it's really a game changer. It's a really simple thing. It's 5 minutes and it changed... it just had a huge shift.

Jen Riday: Oh, that's great. And what about simplifying your meals; what's your favorite easy simple meal?

Tracy McCubbin: I'm a salad girl. If I can mindfully shop on Sunday, even get to the farmers market and just have lots of vegetables and lettuce and some kind of protein, I make my own salad dressing that I got from my friend's... my friend, Gene's grandma taught her this recipe and we call it granny's dressing because it was her granny that taught it to her, and I have a jar of that. And it's just... but it's... you know what it is? I find the mindfulness, the simplicity with meals comes in the pre-planning.

Jen Riday: Really?



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Tracy McCubbin: Right?

Jen Riday: Okay.

Tracy McCubbin: Yea, you've got to like have the ingredients. So...

Jen Riday: Yeah, that's true, you have to have it there or else you're always running. (Laughs)

Tracy McCubbin: Yeah, exactly. (Laughs). Or ordering takeout and like, "What! Where... where did this 5 pounds come from?"

Jen Riday: Yeah. (Laughs)

Tracy McCubbin: You're like, "Oh, that."

Jen Riday: What is your favorite way to boost your mood if you're having one of those days?

Tracy McCubbin: My favorite, favorite way to boost my mood is a soul cycle spin class.

Jen Riday: Ooh!

Tracy McCubbin: That would just... I know they're not everywhere, I am lucky enough to live a half a block from a studio. That just changes it for me. Loud music and sweat and I can just lose myself in the class and I... it's a huge... you know, I love a good yoga class, but I contend my monkey mind will get going. And in spin class, I'm like, "I don't want to die! I don't want to die!" (Laughs)

Jen Riday: Yeah.

Tracy McCubbin: So, you know, I'm pedaling away. So that's a great way, and then if I don't have that, honestly, it's just a little bit of gratitude; just to stop and go, "Here's 3 things I'm grateful for."





Jen Riday: Exactly.

Tracy McCubbin: "Here's 5 things that I'm grateful for." And, you know, it just kind of... it flips you. Somebody once said to me, "It's hard to be an upset... anger and gratitude at the same time."

Jen Riday: That's true; that is true. Just to force yourself to shift the thoughts. And what's your favorite book?

Tracy McCubbin: Oh, my favorite book ever is 'To Kill A Mockingbird'.

Jen Riday: Oh, wow.

Tracy McCubbin: I re-read it once a year.

Jen Riday: Oh yeah.

Tracy McCubbin: It's just my favorite book. Yeah.

Jen Riday: Atticus, everyone wants Atticus to be their dad.

Tracy McCubbin: I'm like, "I think I'd get..." and maybe... maybe it's the age of my life, I'm like, "I would like to find an Atticus and marry him."

Jen Riday: Yeah! Let's do it.

Tracy McCubbin: (Laughs)

Jen Riday: Everyone, set an intention, send the vibes for Tracy to find Atticus. Yes. (Laughs)

Tracy McCubbin: I love it. Oh, I love it; I love it.



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Jen Riday: Good.

Jen Riday: Well, what does it mean for you to be a vibrant and happy woman? What's your formula?

Tracy McCubbin: Yeah. For me, it is... I think it is a combination of doing the work I love, my business, and being of service, finding some way to give back, and adding in a good solid dose of self-care.

Jen Riday: Mm-hmm, exactly. Yeah, you have all of it.

Tracy McCubbin: Mm-hmm. You know, to really... look, I love my business, I love what I do, I love my clients. I bounced out of bed in the morning excited to do it. But, you know, they're just some days where I'm like, "You know, I'm just going to take Sunday off. I'm not going to go on the iPhone, I'm not going to check my email, I'm going to watch a couple movies or wander around farmers market or meet a friend for brunch." And I think as I'm growing older and as the businesses getting more successful, I'm realizing how important really simple self-care is.

Jen Riday: Mm-hmm, yep; rejuvenating. I agree with that combination. I also love the work I do and does make you more vibrant from the inside out when, you know, you've taken care of yourself and you're living your purpose and helping others, that's a great formula; I agree. Well, let's have a challenge from you to our listeners and then we'll say goodbye.

Tracy McCubbin: A challenge; oh, I love it! Okay, I'm going to challenge all of your listeners to declutter, and donate to a local charity, 5 items of clothing.

Jen Riday: Okay. Alright, we can do it!

Tracy McCubbin: And by 'donate', I mean, not put the bag in the backseat trunk of your car and drive it around for 6 months.

Tracy McCubbin: But 5 articles of clothing; everybody can do that. And especially, you





know, now we're really making this shift. I mean, the weather's been so country... so crazy this year but, you know, we're really making a big seasonal shift. So look back at your winter clothes, it's a good place to start. Go, "I didn't wear that stuff all winter. I can do it." So 5 items of clothing.

Jen Riday: Okay, excellent. Well, thank you so much for being on the show, Tracy. I loved every minute of it.

Tracy McCubbin: Thank you for this opportunity.

Jen Riday: Yes, thank you for being here. Take care.

Okay, my friends, hop to and go declutter something, anything. You're freeing up some energy for what really matters; those relationships, quiet time, thinking, whatever it is, a nap. Let me know how it goes. You can send me an email at support@jenriday.com and I'll be back later this week with a happy bit. And we'll continue our decluttering theme next week when I speak with Allie Casazza all about intentional simplicity. "Ooh!" right? I want that. Alright, I'll see you next time, and until then, take care.

