

UFYB 311: Shedding Expectations, Shame, and Clutter: A Conversation with Shira Gill



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Kara Loewentheil

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Welcome to *Unf*ck Your Brain*, the only podcast that teaches you how to use psychology, feminism, and coaching, to rewire your brain and get what you want in life. And now here's your host, Harvard Law School grad, feminist rockstar, and master coach, Kara Loewentheil.

Hello my chickens. I am looking at a vision in white. My friend, Shira Gill is here on the podcast and her video on Riverside is just impeccably styled, of course, because she is an organizational guru in all the ways of your house, of your mind, of your life. So Shira is going to tell you more about herself. But I know Shira from, where did we first meet? I mean, we met as coaches.

Shira: Yeah, I think I hunted you down on the street and begged you to coach me.

Kara: I kind of walked by and you were at dinner at a restaurant.

Shira: Yes, that's true.

Kara: We had met at a mastermind.

Shira: That sounds less aggressive than how I phrased it.

Kara: There was some aggressive coaching in those days. Shira needs a firm hand sometimes. But she has come a long way and she is now a published author, a world famous organizational coach. Her next book, this is your third.

Shira: I'm working on my third but we're talking about one and two, yeah.

Kara: The second. The first book, *Minimalista*, you have seen all over the place. Her second book, *Organized Living*, will be coming out on Tuesday,

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October 3rd. Tell us a little bit about yourself and what you do other than write amazing books.

Shira: Okay. Well, thank you. I'm thrilled to be here. As you know, you're one of my favorites to talk to about all the things. So for those who aren't familiar with my work. I am a values based organizing expert, an author and a coach. I merge home organizing and life coaching and minimalism. And really my goal is to help people clear physical and mental clutter to create space for the things they actually care about. As Kara mentioned, I'm the author of two books.

Minimalista breaks down my simple toolkit and process into actionable steps. I really wrote this book for busy, overwhelmed people who still want to clear clutter and get organized but feel like they don't have the time. So it's very bite sized and actionable.

And then my new book that is out on October 3rd *Organized Living* showcases a wide range of homes and tips. And really distinct organizing strategies from 25 different home organizers across the globe who I traveled to meet with and look in their cabinets and snoop around and ask all the questions. And so you will see homes ranging from itty bitty studios in Brooklyn, New York, to sprawling suburban homes in middle America and everything in between. So that is my latest project.

Kara: I have a bunch of questions about your work in general but I'm so curious about this project. Do you feel like there was something, was there anything in common between all of the organizers?

Shira: Yeah. It's funny because I made a point of, I really wanted to kind of step outside of my minimalist box and see how does a maximalist organize, how does someone who lives in a huge home? I'm in a small home myself. So I really wanted diversity on every level, but I found so many overlaps.

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With the 25 people that I met with I think one of the biggest ones was just everyone is overwhelmed by clutter and wants to live more intentionally with less stuff, even the people who considered themselves maximalists.

I think when you spend your days and nights culling through other people's messes, stuff starts to become more and more oppressive. And so that was kind of the most universal thing in these interviews was that lack of organization and clutter leads to anxiety and overwhelm and stress pretty much for everyone across the board who I spoke with. And there is just this desperate yearning for less, less stimulation, less overwhelm, less things to manage on the day-to-day.

Kara: This totally ties into what I talked about in my last interview [inaudible] and I was just telling you that we were both like, "Can we go live in a hut in the woods, is that an option? We wouldn't need anything, just some dried herbs and a book maybe."

Shira: She has some basil and a single book.

Kara: But then you know somebody would end up on Pinterest or Instagram with their hag witch hut aesthetic and then color coding your drying herbs according to your personality type.

Shira: Hysterical, yeah.

Kara: Let's talk about what you mean when you say you have a values based approach to kind of organizing. What is that and how is it different from mainstream organizing we might see on TV or social media?

Shira: Yeah. So I think, I mean, first of all, there's so many misconceptions about minimalism and organization that I come across in my work. So I would say, when I started and I would talk about organizing, everyone

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would initially jump to, “You must love the container store and you must love color coding things and buying plastic bins.”

Kara: The joke’s on you, I don’t have any color.

Shira: Yeah. I’m not interested. Unsubscribe. So I feel when I say values based, it’s to me organization is not about seeking this cookie cutter level of perfection. It’s really about optimizing your space and your life. And so in order to do that, what I’m interested in is what do you care about? What do you want to make space for? What is important to you right now? And that’s always where I lead in my work, whether it’s in writing a book or coaching an individual client or running a program, it’s always starting at that point of questioning and auditing your life.

What is working and what’s not working? What do I want more of and what do I want less of? Otherwise, you’re just moving piles around randomly and buying bins. And so my strategy is really to start with the why, why do you even want to get organized? Organization is simply a tool. It’s a process and a practice. It’s a means, but it’s not the end. I don’t think anyone feels like my goal in life is to be organized. It’s I want to get organized so I can x, y, z.

So I always start with those questions. And I think once you have a sense of what you want and where you want to be going. It’s much easier to then look at your stuff through the lens of is this hindering or helping? Is this stuff getting me closer to the vision of the life that I want or is it in fact just clutter that’s blocking me and preventing me from getting what I want?

Kara: I just want to pause you because I feel like why we want to be organized is super important. Because I do feel like for some women the socialization that women get around the home and they’re sort of what their home’s supposed to look like and how they’re supposed to take on all of

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the logistical and emotional organization for the family coincides with the sort of social media imagery business. And, I think, can make it feel like being organized is somehow virtuous in and of itself.

I feel like there are probably a lot of people who, if you ask them, “Why do you want to get organized?” They’re just like, “Well, you’re supposed to be organized. Good to be organized. My house should look like somebody’s house on Pinterest or on Instagram.” As though, there obviously are people in the world who live perfectly happy lives, surrounded by clutter. But we assume that that’s inherently bad or a problem.

Shira: Correct. And I always say, sometimes I have people challenge me and say, “Well, what if I like stuff?” And I say, “Fantastic, live your stuff filled life.” I’m only here to help people who feel like they have a problem that’s taxing on their mental health. And it’s interesting because I’ve certainly had men buy an organizing package with me for their wife. And I always say, “Does your wife want this? I’m not going to be part of this scheme of yours unless they are.”

Kara: [Crosstalk] was he stopped letting women buy them for their partners. The guys didn’t want to change how they dress.

Shira: No, I don’t do it anymore. And I know, I mean, you speak a lot in your work about how women are socialized to believe their value lies in being of service to others. And I see popping up in my work, a lot this toxic expectation that women are expected to curate a perfectly tidy and organized home, regardless of what they have on their plate, regardless of what they actually want.

So I think of it as my job as an organizing expert to help people get to their vision of what organizing means to them, whether that’s just I want to find my keys so I can get out the door. Or I want a Khloé Kardashian pantry

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with Oreos stacked in perfect circles. We have a full range of options. I know you are.

Kara: I am horrified just hearing it.

Shira: I know you are.

Kara: The thing that comes to me when I think about organization and mindset partly is also that people think it's this perfectionist fantasy. I'm going to get organized and then stay there as opposed to, I don't know, at least in my experience, you get organized and then things get a little chaotic in the house and you've got to put them all back where they're supposed to be. But we think of it as, well, when I just get, it's like a fresh start in a diet, it's I'm going to hire an organizer and then I'll be organized. And then there'll never be anything on the dining table again.

My partner will never leave their socks out again. My kids will never make a mess again. One of the graduates of my Advanced Certification in Feminist Coaching, Amelia Pleasant Kennedy, calls this "The Promised Land." It's like, I'm going to get to the promise land of home organization and then everything will be perfect and I'll just stay there forever.

Shira: There is no promised land. I think that myth was really perpetuated, some larger organizing influencers of this is a one and done set it and forget it. And it's simply a lie because life isn't static and your mother-in-law is going to buy you shit. And your kids are going to have birthday parties.

Kara: Groceries come in and out of your house. Your clothes come in and out of your closet. You're not a plastic doll living in a dollhouse.

Shira: Yeah. And I think of it, there are these pillars. There's volume, there's systems and there's habits. And so to me, volume is where the

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minimalist philosophy comes in. It's about looking at how much can you manage, how much do you want to manage and really thoughtfully intentionally curating the things that you own. Then the systems is now taking those things and organizing them in the simplest way possible.

And I think people really overcomplicate organization. Organization literally, it's not rocket science, it's grouping similar things together and deciding where they go.

Kara: For some of us that is rocket science. I get to decide. The first time that Shira came and helped organize my house, I was like, "Wow, we have different brains." Because she was like, "Let's pull everything out, this will be so fun and then put it back together." And I was like, "I would rather die." The executive function required to look at a bunch of stuff and decide where it should all go. I want to lie down. I can build a business from zero to millions. I can write a bestselling book. I can do any of that stuff.

If you're like, "Here's a pile of objects, please sort them and put them away." I'm like, "No, I'll just move. That's fine."

Shira: Yeah, I think you did flee the room at one point.

Kara: Yeah, at least once. The second time she came, I was just like, "Great. Here's the kitchen. Bye. Do whatever you want."

Shira: Good luck. But the thing is, Kara, decision making is so powerful and satisfying. And I feel like that's so much of your work is helping people make decisions. And I think that's why I love organizing so much because it is this tangible, actionable thing that we can do, that there is a result. If you make a decision, this goes here. You're done. That's a wrap. I just find it so satisfying.

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Kara: For me I think it partly comes with not being spatial. So I feel fine making decisions about what to keep and what to throw out, but that's easy. But looking at a bunch of stuff and then imagining my house and figuring out where, I think it's the spatial element. But part of the reason I bring this up is that if you are someone like me who would like to be organized and struggles with doing it in certain ways yourself, hire an expert.

The [crosstalk], perfectionism and the belief that having an organized, beautiful household is supposed to come naturally because of your chromosomes is ridiculous. That's socialization and so if you would like your house to look like a Pinterest house and you cannot figure out how to do that yourself and you have the means and you want to. Just hire an expert to help you. It's a lot easier, for me certainly, it's a lot easier for me to maintain it than to create it myself.

If I know where everything goes then I can do it and I can coerce my poor family members who are living in chaos to live the way I want to. But I would never have been able to figure it out myself and that's fine.

Shira: Yeah, it's fine. It's just like I don't know how to do quantum physics. If I needed to figure that out I would hire someone and have no shame about it. But for some reason there is, I mean I primarily work with women and the level of shame that I hear and experience in my work is staggering. I would say it's across the board, most people who work with me cry at some point. You're maybe one of the rare exceptions. We had a tear-free journey together.

Kara: That's the power of thought work, my friend, [crosstalk] cry.

Shira: Not crying, but I would say I mean what I hear again and again is, "I should be able to do this myself, it's so embarrassing that I have to hire

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you. I can't believe that I can't tackle this on my own." I just hear that I would say more often than not this sense of absolute shame. And these are people who are literally NASA scientists who are telling me that they're ashamed that they need some support.

Kara: Right. They're like, "I should be able to do quantum physics and organize my pantry." I should not be able to do both those things, those are not the same skill set.

Shira: It's such a different skill set. I mean all of that, I do want to debunk the myth that some people are born with the organizing gene and others are just failed to never be able to organize. Because again, I do think organizing is simple. It may not always be easy, but I do think if you take it out of that context. If things have to be over-organized and complicated and alphabetized and systematized. And you literally just think of it is, all I have to do is group similar things together and decide where they go.

So if I use something frequently, I need it front and center and accessible. If it's the thing I pull out once a year for Thanksgiving, I can put it on a high shelf. Those are really the two pillars of organization.

Kara: Yeah. If I think that what happened to our pantry it's that you threw out a bunch of stuff we didn't use. And then you put things on Lazy Susans and in containers. And I was like, "Oh, my God, this is life changing." Which is not to devalue what you do but that is what [crosstalk].

Shira: Yeah, it's simple.

Kara: You group things. You put things into, it sort of feels like it's contained things as opposed to [crosstalk].

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Shira: It's creating boundaries. Yes, visual boundaries are very helpful for the brain. It's less thought work when you see something contained and even labeled because your brain can identify in a millisecond, that's a basket of granola bars. They're all together. I now know where to find granola bars.

Kara: [Crosstalk] cognitive load of where are the granola bars? Where were they yesterday? Where could they have gotten moved to today?

Shira: Exactly. Our brain has so much to digest and process every single day. So the more we can make our visual clutter more manageable, the less our brain actually has to work and process. So that's why I always think, organize like a kindergarten classroom or a supermarket, make it so that a five year old could come in and know where to find a snack or the chocolate or the milk.

Kara: That makes sense. So what do you think is, I mean you've talked about shame. Are there other mental or emotional blocks you see kind of come up that are keeping people attached to items they don't really need or want or that are sort of keeping them from creating order? Do you feel like it's more that people have too much stuff or is it that the stuff is not organized or both?

Shira: So yeah, it's kind of a chicken egg thing. I mean we have a massive overconsumption and volume issue specifically in western societies. So I think my profession wouldn't exist if everyone just stopped buying less stuff. That's the truth. When people hire me to get organized, the first thing I always deal with is volume. Because if you just cut your volume in half, you may not even have to organize because you have so much less to process and manage.

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But on top of that, what I see is a lot of really thinking that's rooted in scarcity is kind of across the board. I would say the questions that people are constantly asking themselves are, "What if I need it? Or what if this random person who gave me this thing comes over to visit on a Tuesday and I have to admit shame that I've given said thing away?" So I find that the dialog that is kind of circulating through people's brains is always rooted in scarcity when it comes to their home and organizing.

Kara: And people pleasing it sounds like, this kind of you're worried about ever getting rid of something that somebody else gave you or what other people will think.

Shira: Yeah. It's that whole what if, what if. And so I like to say, "Well, what if that did happen, God forbid, your friend says, "Where's the scarf I gave you in 1992?" You can say, "I don't know", or you can say, "I donated it in the last round. I loved it and enjoyed it and now I'm paring down." And the world isn't going to end.

But I do find people being crippled by the gifts and the guilt, the sunken cost fallacy of I spent so much money for this. So now I couldn't possibly part with it because it's almost then I'd have to admit defeat, which is embarrassing and shameful.

Kara: [Crosstalk] think about themselves that they're wasteful. That's the kind of thought work element is if I throw out something expensive then I have to think to myself, I spent the money wrong. I'm frivolous with money. I'm wasteful, all of these thoughts. So instead I'll just keep a hulking thing I don't want, which is not wasteful or frivolous.

Shira: I know. Or doing anyone any good. If you keep all of these things out of guilt that they then gather dust, wouldn't they be so much better serving someone who actually needs that thing and would use it? So those are the

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things I find, these kind of limiting or just scarcity based. There's a lot of what if, what if I take up yoga again and need this coursework? What if I go back to scuba diving in 10 years? These are actual things people have said to me.

Kara: Right. And you're like, "People have updated safety for that."

Shira: Yeah. If you want to scuba dive in 10 years, you can rent or borrow or buy. That's not going to be an impossibility and likely you're not going to want to scuba dive in 10 years.

Kara: We have this question in my house around batteries a lot, things like that or things where I've introduced my partner to, it's the 20 rule. If you can buy it for less than \$20 in under 20 minutes then don't keep it in your house just in case you someday need it. Which covers a lot of things in his toolbox. So I mean we talked a little bit about how thought work can kind of come into it. There's the coaching or self-coaching that you need to do on your shame around needing to hire someone or buy Shira's book or just this idea that you should already be perfectly organized so you don't even try.

And then there's thought work that comes up when you're trying to get rid of things and you have scarcity or people pleasing or whatever else. Are there other kind of ways that you see coaching kind of integrating into this process or how people can integrate self-coaching into this work?

Shira: Yeah. I mean, I think what I find is that people always start with the shame part of where they are now instead of focusing on what they want to create for their future. And I think just simply switching that lens from, oh, my God, how did I get here, I'm so ashamed, this isn't who I want to be. Just stop it. That has no upside. And I think just flipping into having a future focused mindset around what do I want to create? What do I want my

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home to look like, feel like? How do I want it to function? What am I moving towards in terms of my bigger goals and how can I curate a space that supports that?

I think just getting out of that beating yourself up, going backwards and anytime that starts happening in your brain to just kind of be kind, press pause and say, “We’re not going backwards. We’re going forwards.” So, even if you’re giving away 10 Nordstrom bags full of stuff that you bought that cost you thousands of dollars that you regret and you feel terrible about.

I say to people, “Just free yourself from the shame and the guilt of all of that. Move it along and instantly put all of that energy to use working on what do you want to create now? How do you want to shift your spending now? How do you want to be a more mindful consumer? How do you want to be more sustainable moving forward?” So a lot of it is just simply getting out of that backwards thinking and that dwelling in the past and checking your brain and saying, “It’s cool. We did the things. What are we doing now? What are we doing moving forward?”

I also see a lot of shame for women around spending and over-consuming. So the huge piles of Amazon boxes at the front door and people are turning purple and just mortified. I don’t know how I got here, where I’m tripping over boxes or store returns. Again, it’s interesting to just try to get to the root cause of why are you here? Let’s stop focusing on I’m a bad person and start being curious and deconstructing.

For many of my clients, it’s coming from a place of similar to when people overeat or over-drink or do drugs. It’s like a numbing agent or a buffer of there’s something lonely or painful that I don’t want to deal with. And I love the dopamine hit of shopping. And so typically when I’m working with people, I challenge them to go on a purchase pause where they don’t buy

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anything unnecessary for a period of time. Typically I start people with a month.

And what happens is they then have to deal with all of their thoughts and all of the pain that's going to come up around whatever they're grappling with. For some people it's a loss or a trauma or a divorce. For some people it's just feeling completely stuck or stagnant in their life or relationship or career.

But I think that the shopping and the overspending is always a band-aid for a bigger thing. So that's to me always really interesting to just say, "If we stop the shopping, what are we left with?" And then that's where you can really dig in with the thought work and the coaching and getting to the root cause and solving the problem.

Kara: Yeah, because if you don't do that, I think I see this desire myself sometimes, I definitely see in clients of the sort of, it's almost like a binge and purge. You sort of get rid of stuff, organize and then start to accumulate more stuff again. You're going to keep doing that cycle if you aren't changing the thought patterns that lead to shopping. And I feel it's so often, especially for women, there's so many industries that are aimed at sort of hijacking that natural human brain flaw of thinking something I can buy will give me the feeling that I want.

Something I can buy will make me feel confident, will make me feel if I just get these matching whatever's then I'm going to feel like the perfect mother whose family all looks cute on Christmas morning. Maybe this 10th lipstick I'm going to try is going to be the one that's going to make me feel like I effortlessly can wear red lipstick, and therefore I'm a glamorous femme fatale whatever it is.

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And American consumerism and capitalism teaches us this. If you just buy this thing, you'll become the person you want to be. And so if you don't like who you are then you are constantly purchasing to try to buy things to become this person you want to be. And the only way to like who you are is to do that thought work. So I love that sort of the purchasing pause. Okay, now we've got to work on all the stuff that led you to this or else you're going to be back here in two years, shopping.

Shira: Yeah, it's a never ending cycle because you get the dopamine hit. I mean I'm guilty of this. If I am bored or lonely or stagnant, a new handbag can feel like the answer. That's going to give me the little juice I need. And then, of course, two seconds later, it's gone. And now you have this thing you don't need and packaging that you don't want and credit card debt. So I think it's really looking at when I have that urge to buy, what's buried under it? What am I actually wanting to feel? And how can I do something, a replacement behavior or replacement thought?

So, an example, I had a client recently who was a nurse through COVID. And she was so stressed out, she was overeating and over-shopping. She had gained 75 pounds and her home was really almost unlivable. It was covered in receipts and shopping bags. And she was so stuck and paralyzed. And when we sat down and talked, what was under all of it is just the trauma of going through COVID as a nurse and not being able to fully process those difficult, painful emotions and the stress and the grief of everything she had been through.

And we just talked about, "What would you want to do instead of shopping or instead of eating?" And she immediately came up with all of these great answers. She was like, "Well, I love being in nature and I want to hike and I want to call my friends on the East Coast." And so just by coming up with things that were appealing to her brain that she could do when she was

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feeling that stress, in addition obviously to therapy and coaching and critical ways of solving for.

But I think she just was so unconscious, it was I feel bad. I'm going to go buy something. I feel bad. I'm going to eat a pint of ice-cream. And when we really just asked that question, "How are you feeling?" It was pain and grief and that's what was buried there. And I think once you can identify what that is for you, you then can find a much more constructive way of solving it rather than shopping.

Kara: Yeah, so important. I want to ask about a sort of, it's almost like a little cul-de-sac here because it's one thing to try to organize for yourself. And it's another thing to try to organize for potentially a spouse who's not into this project, but also children who accumulate stuff at such a rapid rate. I mean, I just think about how many stuffed animals my partner's children have. Children are not minimalists inherently. They are fighting for resources to survive. That's what they think is happening in their little [crosstalk].

They don't even have their prefrontal cortex yet. It's basically just the primitive brain in there and they are like, "I need as many stuffies and [crosstalk] as possible."

Shira: Not to mention sticks and rocks.

Kara: Right. It would be valid either way. So do you have any particular advice for kind of parents on how they can handle, there's a tsunami of stuff people give kids, but also you're dealing with somebody who's like, "I don't care about your organizational techniques, I need 300 stuffies." How do you deal with that?

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Shira: Totally. Yeah. I have so many thoughts on this. And I'm a mother of two kids who were stuffed animal hoarders and also rock and stick hoarders at a young age. And so I had to solve it for myself as well as solving it for my hundreds of clients who have kids. And I think what's been most effective is concrete, physical boundaries. So I like to say it's really a gift to give your kids, agency of choice. If I picked for my kids, I would pick beautiful Scandinavian toys.

Kara: Right. There's a store in New York that's all wood children's toys. This is a store that no child ever goes into. People just go in and purchase toys for their friends' kids [crosstalk].

Shira: Yes, I'm like, "Could we go to Stockholm and get the beautiful little?" And my kids are like, "Those are horrifying. Give me the googly eyed stuffies."

Kara: Or my sticks. I just don't want nice sticks. I only want backyard sticks.

Shira: Yeah, definitely dirty sticks everywhere. So basically what I figured out is I wanted to teach my kids the value of decision making, the value of having boundaries. We don't live in a world where you get everything you want. That is an important principle that I wanted to teach my kids. But I also think decision making and limits and boundaries is critical for children to learn. So a very easy hack is to give each one of your kids, I call it a treasure box. So my kids are named Emily and Chloe. So Emily has one big bin and Chloe has one big bin and they live in their respective rooms.

And from the time they were toddlers, "This is your treasure box. You get to put whatever you want in it. If it's 100 dirty sticks, fine. I'm not going to touch your dirty sticks. If it's 100 stuffed animals with googly eyes, you're prerogative. But once we reach capacity, once that is full, if you want a new

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stick, you need to get rid of an old stick.” It’s one in one out. And this is something kids can understand because it’s simple and it’s visual.

And what I find often is that the parents get in the way because the parents start saying, when the kid even wants to get rid of something, “But your grandma gave that to you or that was really expensive or you might really love that when this person comes over.” So the key is really let your child be fully in charge and make that decision over what they keep. For me, my rule has always been, we’re in a 1200 square foot bungalow with no storage to speak of.

And so I said to my kids, “Listen, I want the living room and dining room and kitchen to feel good and be clutter free. And I work here and live here and have people over. I don’t want it to be a preschool. However, what you do in your room is your prerogative.” And so they can be messy or they can decide what they want. I mean right now my daughter has literally stuck things all over her wall. I think there’s plants hanging from the ceiling. It’s wild in there but that’s her room. And so I try to give her full autonomy over having a space that can really just be hers.

And then the boundaries I set are, “Listen, before Hanukkah or Christmas or your birthday. We’re going to do a quick edit, we’re going to go through before new things are coming into our home. We’re going to get rid of things that you’ve outgrown or you don’t like or you don’t use. Otherwise, guess what? New stuff isn’t going to come in.” So a lot of it is just about teaching limits and boundaries and this idea of enough. And I think that’s our job as a parent is to set the limit and the boundary but then to give them the freedom to decide what goes in the bin.

Kara: I love that. I have accidentally or coincidentally, I had adopted the same policy of what happens in your room stays in your room. But the main areas of the house I’m like, “At the end of the day, if there’s your random

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stuff all over the house it's got to go back to your room." But I love this idea of nothing's coming in if we're not going through, because I do think there are children who'll be like, "Yes, I need and use all of these things even though I haven't looked at in 20 years." But the idea of balancing it out seems so good.

So your new book I know showcases, I want to make sure we have time to talk about your book, showcases the real homes of organizing experts across the world, Mexico City, Paris, New York, London, Lisbon. So what were some of your kind of, I guess both top takeaways from reading the book, but also what do you think, why should people buy the book? What will people get out of the book that I think, especially with organizing some science, the visual is easier to understand than the [crosstalk]. But just tell us a little bit about the book.

Shira: Yeah. So in the book really the idea was I want to show that organizing is for everyone. It's not for a specific type of person. It's not for a specific type of house. It's really something that people can leverage and customize for their own style, their own values, their own background. And so I really was very selective in curating these 25 experts who I personally visited all of their homes and interviewed them about their life stories and why they're organized and why they organize the way they do.

Because I wanted it to be kind of a choose your own adventure for the reader where they could go through. And I have my advanced copy. So it's been so interesting because I've even shown a few people in my family. And it's fascinating to see there are some that are more that traditional stark white neutral. And that's very appealing to me. My brain is so busy and cluttered and I just want everything to be white.

But for some people in my family, they look at it and they just go, "Oh, my God, that's so not for me." And then they turn the page and there's this new

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person who it's color and texture and pattern, but they're still organized. They still know how to find their stuff. There's a method behind the madness. So the goal in writing the book was really to present, look, there are so many ways to do this. There are so many ways to optimize your home and create systems while still being you. You don't have to have the rainbow order or the plastic labeled bins.

I have a woman who I showcased in Vancouver who lives in a 300 square foot apartment and everything in her home is vintage. And it's floor to ceiling, velvets and gabardines and paintings from all over the world and she loves it. And she knows where to find everything. And it's not the typical image you would see of organization. But in fact she is living a great life in a tiny space and is super organized. So that was kind of the impetus for writing the book.

The reason I think people will get so much out of it is that from each home I pulled out all of my top takeaways. So I learned from every person that I interviewed. And I would go home and apply these things to my own home. And so at the end of every one of these 25 chapters, there's a whole synopsis of here are actionable tips and takeaways and strategies that you can now take and customize to up-level your own home. And then in addition to that, there were these kind of bigger, broader themes.

So I created cheat sheets, working from home. That's a challenge many people are facing right now. I work from my dining room table, which also my kids do their homework at and we also eat dinner at. So I have round-ups of tips for everything from living with kids, working from home, living more sustainably, small space living. So my goal was really to solve all of the biggest organizing challenges in a way that will feel really actionable for people and fun to look at because it's such a visual book.

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Kara: Amazing. So where people can get the books starting October 3rd but are there pre-orders available? Where can we order?

Shira: Definitely. Yeah, you can pre-order the book from literally any book shop anywhere in the world, from Amazon, Barnes & Noble, but also your small mom and pop bookstores should have it. As well as *Minimalista*, which has been out a few years but is still selling super well. And that's really my personal organizing bible and my tips and philosophy.

Kara: And where can people find you?

Shira: They can find me on my website, shiragill.com. I'm on Instagram @shiragill. And I have newly launched a Substack, so that's been super fun. I'm doing workshops and I'm doing audio segments where I argue with my husband, so there's lots of fun bonuses on the Substack.

Kara: I love that, I'm going to tell the gentleman concert, we're doing that. Alright my friend go pre-order Shira's book if you think you want to, pre-orders are very important. And go get just a little more organized. It's much more doable than you think. Thank you for coming on, my friend.

Shira: Thank you for having me. This was so fun.

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