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THE OPRAH
MAGAZINE

LIVE YOUR BEST LIFE

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Healthier You

PAGE 64

De-Clutter Your Life!

HOW TO TAME YOUR MESS, CALM YOUR MIND, LIGHTEN YOUR LOAD

7 Secrets of a Master Organizer

Fast Fixes for
Every Room

Gayle King's Extreme Closet Makeover

One Woman, Many Shoes

"Six Things I'm
Finally Getting Rid
of—Hallelujah!"

—Oprah

Walking on Sunshine

Smart New Ways to
Kick Pessimism
to the Curb

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O MAGAZINE

MARCH 2012


De-Clutter Your *Life*

Journey
to the
Center
of
Gayle's
Closet

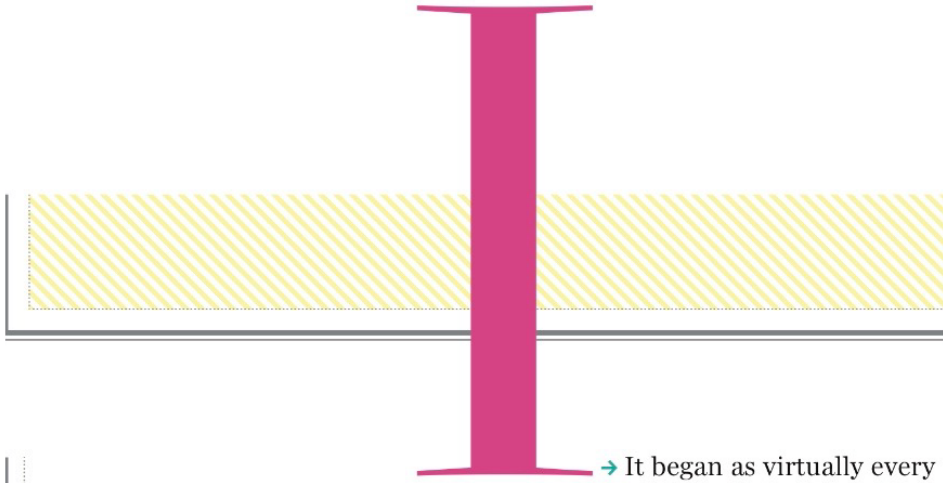
Photographs by JONNY VALIANT ●

Gayle King never met a piece of clothing she didn't want to hang on to. Adam Glassman never met a mess he didn't want to tame.

LISA KOGAN reports on the makeover that nearly killed them both.



→ **TANGLED UP IN TULLE** Adam declares this little number "the pale blue eyeshadow of ball gowns. It was fine in its day, but now it's time to let go."



Adam and Gayle adventure begins: Gayle lamenting that she can never find what she wants to wear when she wants to wear it, Adam, who lives to create beauty from chaos, immediately offering to stage a closet intervention, Gayle politely declining, Adam sweetly insisting, Gayle mumbling something about not wanting to be pressured into getting rid of the things she loves, Adam explaining that he'd merely be removing the things that clutter up her life, Gayle folding her arms across her chest and staring at the floor, Adam sighing heavily and fishing through his pockets for an Excedrin. But in the end, Adam was able to use his gentle powers of persuasion to quell Gayle's concerns and charm her into submission, or as Gayle puts it, "He kept browbeating me until I just couldn't take it anymore."

Which is how it comes to pass that early on a Tuesday morning, Adam arrives at Gayle's front door along with *O*'s assistant fashion editor, Kristina Lepore, and the extremely patient and incredibly talented Jeffrey Phillip, head of the New York organizing and design firm that bears his name. They study the hodgepodge of dresses, the heaps of sweaters, the tangle of scarves and belts, and the clutches, totes, and handbags occupying nearly every square inch of floor space. "The problem," Adam concludes, stepping over a mound of high heels, "is mass more than mess."

Adam's diagnosis comes as no surprise to Gayle, but what's a woman who cohosts *CBS This Morning* five days a week, while also working full-time as editor at large of this magazine, to do? She tries to explain that holding down two high-profile jobs requires a major wardrobe. She points out that styles change and weight yo-yos. She's even willing to acknowledge that certain items were wrong from the get-go. But perhaps the biggest reason her closet runneth over is that many of these pieces hold memories ("I was a 'mom model' at my son's school in that outfit! I wore this dress to the White House!") that feel too important to simply toss. "Gayle," Adam begins, "memories may be beautiful, and yet..." It's not quite 9 A.M. and he is already reaching for a Streisand lyric. He tries again: "Listen, if you like something and you use it often, you should definitely hang on to it. But you have to keep your eye on the prize. Our goal is for you to have instant access to the stuff you still need, love, and actually reach for on a regular

basis." Unfortunately, the only way to determine what those things are is to examine every single item.

Jeffrey sets up four areas outside the closet: give to family/friends, needs repair/reconfiguration, donate to charity, and do not remove under penalty of death.

They kick things off with a no-brainer: Gayle pulls out a terrific leopard wrap dress. "I read in *O* magazine that animal prints are very in," Adam nods his approval and the dress goes straight to the do-not-remove section. "I bought this because I know I'll lose weight," Gayle says, holding up a cherry red sheath with just a hint of defiance. "But Gayle," Adam counters, "why buy clothes that don't fit?" He suggests she ship the sheath to her daughter, Kirby. "I mean it's very old lady, which is kind of chic on a 25-year-old who wants to look more sophisticated, but on a woman who—" Gayle shoots him a look that's chilly enough to store fur in, but concedes the point. He pulls out a two-piece print. "This has definitely seen better days. It's pilling, it's stained, it's out." Agreed. Next comes a futuristic little number in black and cream. "So, Gayle," Adam asks, "are we auditioning for *Star Trek*?" She describes running into a friend, "and this thing looked so fantastic on her that I went right out and bought it for myself." Adam understands the urge to buy something we've loved on a friend. "But," he says, "your shape, your hair—you're working a very different vibe from your pal Lieutenant Uhura. You've got to stay true to your own style."

As the morning progresses, Gayle tries repeatedly to justify her purchases. Phrases like "It was in the window and I was in a hurry" and "It was a charity event, so I had to buy *something*" come up several times. She also tries to build a case for keeping her stuff: "Macramé used to be very cool!" she says, brandishing a pale peach cocktail dress covered in lacy little knots. "So was cigarette smoking," Adam answers, pulling the dress out of her hands and passing it to Gayle's assistant, Arianna, who passes it to Kristina, who passes it to Jeffrey, who rushes it out the door. "Oh, I love this dress! Oprah gave it to me in 1984," Gayle says, holding up a marigold and black Ungaro with the (continued on page 144)



→ "Whoa!" says Gayle, upon finding 34 cents, a bobby pin, and a tampon at the bottom of this old bag. How old? "I haven't had my period in six years!"

Gayle tries to build a case for keeping her stuff: "Macramé used to be very cool!"



→ "The key to a giveaway pile," Adam says, "is this: You've got to get it all to a charity fast, before anybody has a chance to rethink."



→ Gayle loves this Renaissance-style dress so much, she'd like to have it copied in a different fabric. Adam is not a fan. "But if you really love it," he says, "you can wear it next time you're invited to a jousting match."



→ Gayle bought this lemon chiffon dress on a hot day in Australia. "It may have looked terrific on the mannequin," Adam says, "but I don't want to know this much about your bra—this is way too sheer." Out it goes.



→ "I'm fat!" Gayle moans. "No!" Adam says with authority. "You are not fat. You're just not the same size you were when you bought this. Besides, I'd never let anybody talk about you like that—not even you!"



→ "Look," says Adam. "I know the fact that honeybees are endangered is a problem, but this is not the answer!" Gayle argues that the dress belonged to Oprah and she loves it. Alas, the memory can stay, but the piece must go.



→ Adam takes a deep breath. "Gayle, you know those paper cups they use for baking blueberry muffins..." Point taken. Gayle shimmy out of the dress she once loved and delivers it to the giveaway pile herself.



→ Even Gayle finds these shorts inexplicable. "I suppose I was going through an unfortunate safari phase," she says, baffled. She and Adam agree to file them under "seemed like a good idea at the time" and send them on.

(continued from page 142) kind of shoulder pads seldom seen outside the Pittsburgh Steelers defensive line. Adam looks at the dress, then at Arianna, and decides it's time for a new rule: "Generally speaking, Gayle, your dress should not be three years older than your assistant." He adds it to the charity pile before she knows what hit her.

Some lucky pieces do get a reprieve: A slightly dowdy jersey can be updated by removing the sleeves and scooping the neckline, pills can be shaved off a cashmere

sweater. A gown can be refashioned into a sleek party dress. A fabulous brooch is salvaged from a little black Carmen Marc Valvo that's way too short. More often, though, the verdict is thumbs-down. A midnight blue metallic wrap dress Gayle got back in the '90s is now deemed "dated"; same for a fitted tweed jacket, and it is decided that a pair of khaki shorts Gayle calls her "*Out of Africa* look" should be returned to Africa—pronto!

A poufy Cinderella confection, complete

with tulle skirt and satiny bodice, still fits just fine. "But it's trying too hard, Gayle," Adam explains. "You are chicer than this gown. You've moved on." Gayle tries on a floor-length milk-chocolate brown A-line that laces up the sides. Adam stares. "You don't think this is great?" Gayle asks. "I wore it to Alicia Keys's Egyptian party." She twirls her way to the mirror. Adam circles, looks her up and down, and finally responds, "You appear to be waitressing at some sort of medieval-themed restaurant. I

keep waiting for you to serve me a giant drumstick and a goblet of mead." Gayle looks to Jeffrey, who averts his eyes. She models for Kristina, who busies herself near the belts. "I love this dress," Gayle pleads. "My entire mission in life is to get rid of this dress," says Adam, refusing to budge. There is only one thing to do: Break for pizza.

After lunch everybody takes a deep breath and braces for the big bag clearance. Adam holds up a lovely malachite green Kate Spade with a large spot near the strap. "Is that bird poop?" he asks. "White hot chocolate from the airport Starbucks," Gayle answers, dropping it in the repair pile. Adam holds up four of the same tote, each in a different color, each in pristine condition. Gayle explains that they were a great deal and she got them "for bopping around." Adam tells her that they're only a great deal if you really use them. He then picks up a small evening bag that appears to be made of faux muppet. Gayle starts to laugh. "I was at a dinner party and I put this purse down near my feet and a very nice woman came over and said, 'Oh, what a darling little dog—and he's so well behaved!'" Bye-bye doggie bag. Still laughing, Gayle reaches for a handful of dried cranberries sitting on the counter as Adam asks her to focus on the better stuff. "I'd rather see you with a few quality bags than a lot of cheap ones. Out with the mock croc, in with the timeless classics." But Gayle is only half listening. "Where did we get dried cranberries?" she asks, popping two more into her mouth. "Um, Gayle," Jeffrey says quietly, "we found those in one of the bags, and we don't know how old they are. Actually," he pauses, "we don't even know that they're cranberries."

Shoes are the next Everest waiting to be scaled. In Gayle's life, clogs are a must; ditto flip-flops and slippers. Fair enough, but Adam pronounces a pair of hot pink, pointy-toed slingbacks "perfect for killing roaches in tight corners." Next Gayle slips into a Pucci pump that Adam vetoes on the grounds that it's even pointier. "Won't they ever make a comeback?" Gayle asks. "Yes," Adam says, "but the heel will have changed or something else will be altered enough that you can let these find a new place to live." Little green shoes with brown ribbon

trim are cool, comfortable, and a gift from Diane Sawyer—they stay. Supersexy rhinestone stilettos that are impossible to walk in for more than six seconds at a time will be donated to the first fabulous masochist the team comes across. Charcoal gray is hard to find, so mules in that shade

make the cut. After much debate, a lot of the shoes go to charity, a lot go to repair, but the vast majority stay put.

Day has turned to night. The leftover pizza has been reheated for the last time, *Dancing with the Stars* is winding down, and Adam opts for picking up the pace. ➤

Steal Adam's Storage Tricks

Visibility, efficiency, order: coming (we hope!) to a closet near you.



Baubles, Bangles, Beads

"If, like Gayle, you love to accessorize, your jewelry needs to be kept visible," Adam explains. "Expandable plastic makeup holders from the Container Store are an inexpensive solution."



Rise to the Occasion

"Whenever you're in doubt, always go vertical," says Adam. "But to avoid total chaos, invest in some wire kitchen shelving, like we did for Gayle's workout wear."



Homemade Stuffing

At last, a smart use for those bags that come with every pair of good shoes: Fill them with crumpled newspaper and put them to work maintaining the shape of your handbags.



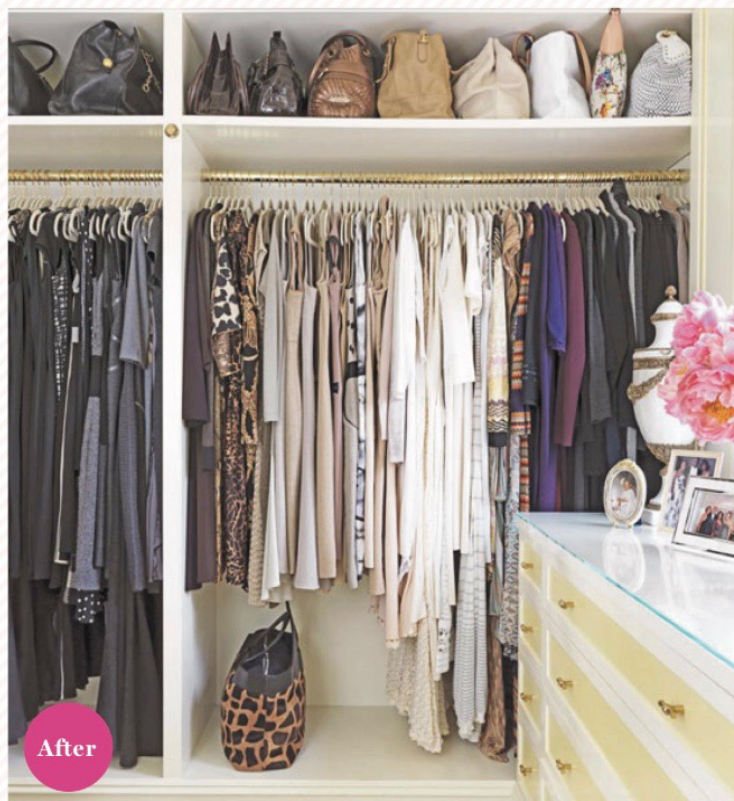
Spell It Out

What good are boxes and bins if you can't easily tell what's in them? Adam's rule: "People can last a day or two without food and water, but no one can live without a label maker!"

De-Clutter Your Life



→ There is no organizing principle at work here—just a mishmash of summer, fall, colors, neutrals, dresses, sweaters, and bags all over. No wonder Gayle has a closet full of nothing to wear!



→ Pieces are organized by color, coordinating bags are within reach, and summer clothes now live in a closet in the guest room. At long last, Gayle can see exactly what she has. Which happens to be peace of mind and the ability to get dressed with ease.



Because Gayle doesn't own as many slacks and blouses as she does dresses, and because her resistance is starting to flag, and because she is craving a little time off for good behavior, pants and shirts are tackled with relative ease. Sweats for long plane rides and days with a head cold: keep. All but a couple of baseball caps: toss. Jeans that are a bit tight can stay. Jeans that can't be pulled past the thighs can go, and it is made very clear that "in 2012 friends don't let friends wear jeggings."

Ultimately, 152 dresses, 77 sweaters, 17 skirts, 13 coats, 12 pairs of jeans, two pairs



→ What's a nice clutch bag like you doing in a place like this? These purses get moved to a shelf, where bookends keep them upright, easy to grab, and in a neat, clean row.



→ T-shirt drawers! They're labeled according to shirt style; the tops themselves are rolled rather than folded so the shirts' designs are clearly visible.

of pants, 13 belts, 62 pairs of shoes, and 67 bags will be finding their way to other people's closets. Jeffrey and Kristina begin pulling the bags earmarked for charity out the door before Gayle can start second-guessing herself, as Adam takes a deep

breath and surveys the open spaces. "You did a really good job today. You let go of more than I thought you'd ever be willing to part with," he says, exhausted but happy.

"Sometimes you just have to have somebody there to pull the trigger, and



Before

→ “How could anybody find anything?” Adam wonders. “There are hats and sweats and something that I’m really hoping is a wig. We need to find places for all these different things to live.” He looks at the ball of hair again. “Maybe *live* was a bad word choice.”



After

→ On a shelf above the bags, inexpensive linen boxes are labeled for everything from shapewear to tights to leggings. “This way,” Adam says, “even when Gayle has to get dressed at 4 A.M., she won’t show up to work looking like she got dressed in the dark.”

you, Adam Glassman, are a mighty good gunslinger,” Gayle says with a soft sigh. She is a little bit anxious, a little bit relieved, and a lot in need of a cupcake.

But Adam has something even sweeter to offer. He leads her to the dresser and opens the bottom drawer. Gayle stares deep into this drawer that once brimmed with necklaces, socks, scarves, and the occasional half slip, a drawer she’d dig through again and again before giving up on the pieces she knew were there but could never quite put her hands on, a drawer that drove her absolutely nuts. She is stunned. “I can’t get over this,” she says.

Jeans that are a bit tight stay. Jeans that can’t be pulled past the thighs go. And it’s made clear that “friends don’t let friends wear jeggings.”

“I used to think I didn’t have enough drawers, and now I actually have an empty one!” Adam pats his friend’s shoulder. “Gayle,” he says, “I’m pretty confident that one of these days, you’ll find a way to fill it.”

TWO WEEKS LATER, Jeffrey Phillip, organizational genius, and Adam Glassman, force of nature, have whipped Gayle’s world into shape. “We didn’t create the closet I’d want for myself, because what makes ➤

sense for my life wouldn't suit Gayle," Adam says, pointing to a rod full of hangers draped with sweaters. "For example, I never hang my knits because they lose their shape, but Gayle has to be out the door by 4:30 every morning, so she's not about to start hunting through drawers, unfolding and refolding her stuff. She needs a system that allows her to grab and go. And God knows, this is a woman who loves to shop. So now that we've de-cluttered, we've applied the same organizing principles that are used in a boutique. We've displayed things in ways that make sense.

"For starters," Adam says, "I've invested in some cheap and cheery linen boxes: one for opaque tights, one for sheer stockings, one for control-top Spanx, and one for leggings." Each box is labeled clearly because "you want to know where things are in an instant."

He points to the workout wear sitting on wire risers. "Jeffrey discovered these in the kitchen section of the Container Store. They're usually used in cabinets to create extra room for canned goods, but they're great for Gayle's Pilates stuff." Picking up a Joy Mangano Huggable Hanger, he demonstrates how a thin, well-made hanger can free up roughly 25 percent more space in your closet.

"Gayle responds to color," Adam says, "so we color-coordinated her clothes in different sections of the closet." Reds, oranges, corals, pinks, yellows, greens, blues, violets, and blacks each hang as a group, with prints going to the group with the dominant shade. On the shelf directly above each section of dresses are



→ Gayle finally has what she's always needed: the ability to shop her own closet. "Now the challenge will be to keep it together," Adam says. "She has to get into the habit of putting things back in the places we've created for them. If she can do that, it'll be smooth sailing from this day forward."

Should It Stay or Should It Go? In which Gayle begs some more, and Adam shows no mercy.

A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY



"This could work if I lose a few pounds."
—Gayle

"This could work if you vacation in Colonial Williamsburg."
—Adam

FOREVER IN BLUE JEANS



"Every woman should have a denim skirt... yes?"
—Gayle

"Let me see how best to put this... NOOOO!!!!"
—Adam

What Should I Do with My...?

Where to ditch your duds for the greater good.

WINTER WEAR

The Fred Rogers Company (yes, that's *Mr. Rogers*) will help you find or start a sweater drive in your neighborhood; the late, great, cardigan-wearing children's TV personality began the campaign to inspire kids to help others. (E-mail info@fredrogers.org for details.) For pure cashmere or Merino wool pullovers, though, consider **Babee Greens**, which turns worn garments made of natural fibers into absorbent diaper covers. (Babee Greens, 2002 Riverside Drive, Ste. 42-K, Asheville, NC 28804)

SHOES

Shareyoursoles.org sends casual footwear—1.25 million pairs and counting—to needy children and adults worldwide, from Appalachia

to Sri Lanka. (Plus, they'll take those heels you're not so high on anymore and sell them to fund the group's distribution efforts.) Pass along your old sneakers and a message of good health through **Give Running**, which encourages physical fitness by handing out rehabbed athletic shoes to disadvantaged youth. (giverunning.org)

CASUAL ATTIRE

Mid-Atlantic Clothing Recycling, a professional recycling organization, collects clothes and then sells them (proceeds benefit the antidrug program D.A.R.E. America) to companies that market the garments at deep discounts in the Third World. (E-mail info@mac-recycling.com to find out how to donate.)

Clothes4Souls cuts out the middleman by sending your castoffs directly to small-business owners in developing countries like Haiti, who refurbish and merchandise the items themselves. (clothes4souls.org)

COCKTAIL DRESSES AND BAGS

Worn that fabulous frock to one too many parties? **Wgirls.org** will gladly find a new owner at one of its prom dress giveaways—held nationwide for underprivileged young women. Donate the beaded, sparkly clutch (or any other purse) that accompanied your dress to **Change Purse**, which sells gently used bags to fund anti-human-trafficking efforts. (change purse.org)
—Wendy Grossman Kantor

camis, shapewear, bras (each folded neatly in half), and T-shirts (rolled, rather than folded, so the design is easily visible), which are again divided—short-sleeved graphic tees, long-sleeved crewneck tees, and long-sleeved V-neck tees.

Jeffrey removed a bar where Gayle's jeans were doubled over hangers in two rows. They now hang from the waist, organized by size to accommodate any weight fluctuations that might occur due to, oh, let's say, the stress of sorting through every item you've ever worn.

Expandable plastic cosmetic trays are placed in drawers to hold Gayle's jewelry. Jeffrey has divided her pieces into gold tones and silver tones, then organized the remaining pieces by predominant color. He keeps rings with rings and bracelets with bracelets.

Measuring the height of the highest shoe in the shoe closet at nine and a quarter inches, Jeffrey then moved the shelves up to gain more space at the bottom of the closet, where he was able to bring in additional shelving and give a lot of extra shoes a place to live.

"Okay, Gayle; I think you're all set," Adam says as he takes one final look around. "The key to this is maintenance. Now that we've created a space for everything, you've got to carve time out of your schedule—it could be five minutes each night, it could be 25 minutes every Saturday morning, whatever works for you—to make sure everything is back in that space. Otherwise things will snowball and I will be forced to move in with you." And for a split second, they both look terrified. **Q**

the bags that work with its particular hue. Jeffrey uses bookends to keep clutch bags upright in a neat row. He also stuffs Gayle's handbags with shoe bags that have been filled with crumpled newspaper. "The stuffed shoe bags help totes and hobos maintain their shape."

Adam says. "And when you're on the run, you don't leave balls of newspaper all over the floor. Everything stays contained."

Gayle's dresser, which is a large drawer-filled island that floats in the middle of the closet, is generally for underwear, but within this plan there are subcategories:



NOT
SUITABLE

"How can you say this Richard Tyler look is dated?"
—Gayle

"Oh, I don't know; the shoulders, the skirt length, the fact that I saw it on a rerun of *Ally McBeal*..."
—Adam



THEY
CALL ME
MELLOW
YELLOW

"This skirt was once very cute."
—Gayle

"This skirt was once curtains in John Quincy Adams's bedroom."
—Adam