

**From the Principal's Pen
May 2022**

Submitted by: Jennifer McGee, Principal of Atwood Primary School



I know, I know. I know I used this as my topic last May. I hope you forgive me...but...it was really helpful for me, and many of my co-workers said it was helpful for them...and I hope it was helpful for some of you. So...here I go again...

Welcome to May! Minimizing in May! It's become my new favorite holiday. Here's how it works:

On the first day of May, you throw, donate, or sell one item.

On the second day of May, you throw, donate, or sell two items.

And this continues right through the 31st day of May...when you throw, donate, or sell 31 items!

Many of us here at Atwood took this challenge last year...both in our school spaces and in our homes! Guess what? I don't miss one thing I got rid of and it really did lighten my load! I did this both in my office and in my home!

We are a nation of shoppers, collectors, and we accumulate so much STUFF! Newsweek magazine printed an article "This is What Clutter Does to Your Brain", and the reality is, clutter truly does affect our physical and our mental health. Just listen to this passage about "Why Clutter is Bad for Your Brain":

"Bursting cupboards and piles of paper stacked around the house may seem harmless enough. But research shows disorganization and clutter have a cumulative effect on our brains. Our brains like order, and constant visual reminders of disorganization drain our cognitive resources, reducing our ability to focus. The visual distraction of clutter increases cognitive overload and can reduce our working memory...

Clutter can make us feel stressed, anxious and depressed. Research in the United States in 2009 found that levels of the stress hormone cortisol were higher in mothers whose home environment was cluttered.....A chronically cluttered home environment can lead to a constant, low-grade flight-or-flight response, taxing resources designed for survival. This response can trigger physical and psychological changes that affect how we fight infections, and digest food, as well as leaving us at greater risk of Type 2 diabetes and heart disease."

Here are some great tips that helped me when I began to minimize (this comes from Minimalist Lifestyle Tips):

- Starting is the hardest part...so just start!
- Discard things if you haven't used them for a year
- Make three piles: throw, donate, sell
- Less is better
- Free yourself from the idea of "getting your money's worth"
- Understand the burden "things" have on you
- If you don't feel passionate about some things, throw or give them away
- Donating is a great way to say goodbye to something hard to let go of
- Realize there's no need to "stock up"
- Don't buy something just because it's a "good deal" (I have to really listen to this one)
- Would you buy it again if you lost it?
- The joy of less is inherited from the joy of freedom
- Getting rid of "stuff" feels so good!
- You find more time in your life by owning less stuff
- Time and energy are WASTED with clutter
- Quality time, not quality possessions, leads to happiness

If you have already minimized in your home, try your workplace. If you have minimized in both places, try your shed, your car, your garage☺. Have your children join in and learn to make do with less! Think how much easier it will be to clean the playroom!

Years ago, we started cleaning out our classrooms. Stuff = distraction, stuff = messy, stuff = disorganization. More air, more space, more purposeful materials, and fewer distractions increased focus, creativity and learning. Mind you, if you looked at my office a year later, you would never know I participated. But, I'll be back at it again beginning May 1!

I hope your May is filled with open spaces, uncluttered calendars giving you time to breathe in the spring air, and a renewed sense of energy and order. Join me in Mimimizing in May and I hope it brings you maximum joy and an increased quantity of time!

Educationally Yours,

Jenny McGee, Principal of Atwood Primary School

Dates to Note:

Monday, May 2 to Friday, May 6: Teacher Appreciation Week!

Tuesday, May 17: Early Release Day/ 12:00 noon release

Monday, May 30: No School: Memorial Day!