

O's Five-Point Plan to ...

DITCHING YOUR EXCESS BAGGAGE

We all have "stuff" hidden at the back of our emotional closets. When this hinders your growth, it's time to open the doors and let the sun shine in. Here's how... By **NABILA MAYET**

1 Do Your Dirty Laundry. Take time to clear your emotional "laundry basket," suggests Johannesburg-based psychologist Lynn Robinson. Write down the words *hurt*, *regret* and *disappointment*, and pop each slip of paper into a jar. Consider the effect each emotion has had on your life. Write down your thoughts or specific events on slips and add each to the relevant jar. "Some emotions may reoccur if they are deep-rooted," says Robinson. Use the symbolic gesture of tearing the papers to let go of the feelings. Do this periodically to prevent emotions piling up.

2 But Don't Ditch Everything.... The trick to cleansing yourself of negative emotions is to hang on to the lessons. Failing to close a crucial work deal can feel disastrous, but if you've discovered a new coping strategy (you realise you *can* ask your boss for help) or you learnt more about yourself, those negative experiences are turned into positive life lessons that make you stronger, wiser and better equipped to face new challenges. Sacha Sorrel, CEO of organisational development and coaching company REAL Consulting, says, "Courageous, powerful people learn from their past, let go and prevent it from holding them back."

3 Fill in the Gaps. Look at the different areas of your life (physical, mental, spiritual, social, financial and work-related). Is there an area in which you feel disempowered? If so, why? Ask yourself what's stopping you from achieving your dreams. "When you're not getting the results you want, clarify what it is you do want," Sorrel advises. For example, if you'd like to meet someone new, be proactive and accept your friend's offer to set you up on a blind date. Step purposefully into the grey areas of your life and actively colour them in.



4 Banish the Judgment. "Every time you judge someone or something," says Sorrel, "the impact of that judgment costs time, energy and the opportunity for new experiences." Judgment passed on those who have hurt us can make us appear bitter and resentful, which holds us back and closes the doors to new experiences. Like it or not, when we judge we're adding to our luggage. This leaves us overweight and forced to pay the price of fear: an inability to make the most of every moment.

5 Stop Being a Drama Queen! When we carry emotional baggage we enter into each new interaction with scars from our past. We may feel defensive, jaded or angry. But, according to Sorrel, "Anger prevents us from being present." And dramatising your hurt or pain only serves to feed it. Remind yourself that each and every experience you've had – good and bad – has helped you learn more about who you are right now. **O**

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