

Counselor's Corner

Garage Sale Education

Even in the fall, garage sale signs dot the landscape. For shoppers, there is a chance to snag a bargain or to buy something unique. For some, "garage saling" is simply a pastime, and there is more looking than buying. Those who host sales know that it is hard work, going through cupboards and closets, making sure items are clean and in good shape, pricing, cleaning the garage, setting up tables, and then mentally toughening one's self for some rude comments and unrealistic, insulting offers. I have been on both sides, but I have learned so much more from being a seller.

First, it has a social benefit that begins with selecting a sales partner to fill the down times with conversation and laughter. Second, it is an opportunity to meet neighbors. With all of the attached garages and busy people, we see cars drive up to houses and disappear. Few people have chats over the fences like they did long ago. However, neighbors flock to garage sales. In fact, I hadn't spoken with them since our giant tree was hit by lightning two years ago, and sprawled its branches across the street and all over the neighborhood lawns. I wondered why few of us knew each other, and I made a mental note to come up with a plan for change. We need to know those who live among us.

Second, hosting a sale opens our eyes to the different people who populate our community. Most came in jeans and other casual clothing while some were all dressed up from work. Others totally dressed down, because they spotted us as they were about to jog by. As individuals or families approached, there was a mental prediction of what and how they would buy. We began to identify those who were specific buyers, looking for tools, military collectibles, or large baby items. We sensed who would pay full price and who would haggle. The 25 cent buyers were generally easy to spot. We were accurate at times, but we learned that the exterior often did not tell us much about the interior wants and needs. Many surprised us by scooping up items that didn't seem to fit the stereotype we had imposed. It was a good reminder not to be too quick to judge others.

Third, we learned about ourselves. We were horrified to realize how much we had collected. Further, we often had no idea we owned some of the things. We lectured ourselves and promised not to let **things** take over our lives again. We mourned the money we could have had if we had made different choices. We talked about how the square footage of a home plays a significant part in its price. Yet we had chosen to defile more than a square foot with useless items. We also learned that we needed to donate, rather than put back items that did not sell. After all, our time with them had passed.

Fourth, we learned about materialism and misplaced values. So much of what we had purchased to make life easier, to help us remember a place we had visited, and to make our bodies and rooms look better was useless. We had gone crazy with our wants, not our needs. We had gotten duped into believing it was important to collect stuff. We found that even new items or those in good condition could only command a tiny percentage of what we had paid. Their value as well as our interest in them had greatly diminished. It was time to detach ourselves a bit from things that can be bought.

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