

LEARNING NEW TOOLS FOR MATERIAL REUSE WITHIN MY OWN HOME



Stephanie Wyler

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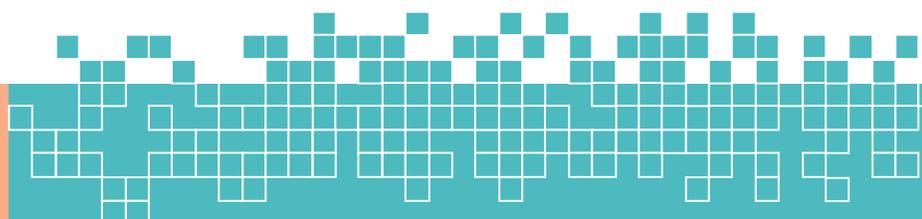
Passion Project

Passion Project – Learning To Sew By Creating A T-shirt Quilt

In recent months there has been a lot of hype about Marie Kondo's KonMari method of simplifying life by purging belongings and getting rid of things that do not "bring you joy". I personally didn't jump on the Marie Kondo bandwagon and have read a few unfortunate articles about the ripple effects of the gross increase in donations to second hand stores like goodwill and many of these items subsequent entry into the waste stream as a result of the decluttering phenomenon. That being said, I am all for simplifying life and decluttering as long as it is done with sustainability in mind.

The fact that I am living a semi-nomadic lifestyle where my life-partner's job has the potential to take us all over the country and provides a level of uncertainty about how long we will be in each city and state has brought us to make an agreement when we started off on this adventure that would simplify our lifestyle and scale down our belongings so as to facilitate easier moves and a more simplified existence. However, we also agreed that in an effort to live a sustainable lifestyle and make wise choices, we would do our best to find new homes for excess belongings with people who had a want or need for them instead contributing to the global waste crisis by throwing things away or flooding thrift stores with things that we could otherwise repurpose, sell, or rehome.

One thing that we have had a hard time parting with has been novelty and event t-shirts. We have made a lot of good memories in this collection of t-shirts from previous places of employment, events, and fundraisers that we participated in and have found that while we still love these articles of clothing, we don't wear them anymore and we wanted to find an alternate use for them since they hold so much sentimental value. We currently have 2 moving boxes of sentimental clothing that we just can't seem to get rid of and it would be a much more useful and meaningful use of these items to have them on display in some way.



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One idea I had was to turn the logos and extra materials from these shirts into a quilt that could hold practical and sentimental value for us as a way of keeping warm while enjoying the warm memories that these bits of material hold.

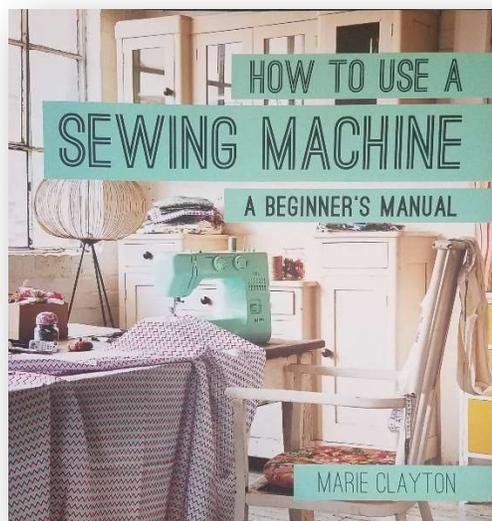


I have a practical understanding of sewing. And by that I mean, when my favorite sweater gets a hole in it or a button falls off I haphazardly hand-sew the item back together using my limited understanding of sewing and I have varying levels of success (I'm often fixing things again when my poorly crafted stitches fail). My mom is in the process of downsizing her household into a tiny house lifestyle and offered me her old Singer Merritt 4016 sewing machine to improve the quality of my stitches and provide me with a creative outlet to craft and create in a medium I am not well versed in.

My mother received the sewing machine in as a gift from my father in 1986 and she used it to make curtains for their first home. My mom actually worked on making a quilt as well which I think is kind of cool for me to follow in her footsteps a bit with this project. My grandmother, and my mother as well, had a passion for creating and crafting in general and I like seeing my growing passion for crafting and creating coming to fruition as well.

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I started by reading through Marie Clayton's book, "How To Use A Sewing Machine". It was an easy read with lots of pictures and diagrams for different stitches, techniques, and technical information about sewing machines in general. I think that I really needed a practical understanding of how a sewing machine works in general and what the different steps were that I needed to take before beginning work on an projects. I found out that the hand-stitches I've been doing aren't even really a stitch and that I could have been saving myself a lot of time and hassle had I just looked up a basic stitch format earlier.



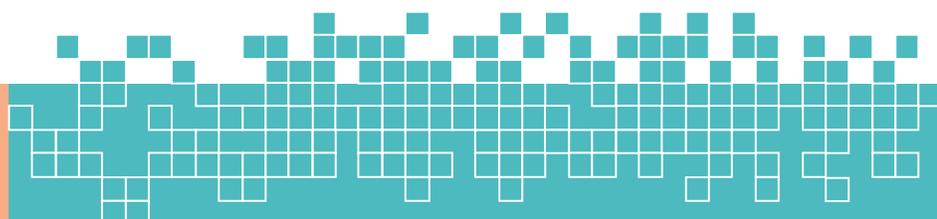
I skimmed the Singer user's manual as well. This was a much more technical read but it provided useful information that was specific to my machine and also I came across a brief overview of the history of Singer sewing machines and found out that they were presented with awards at the world fair in Paris and that their company growth was greatly impacted by wartime when materials and sew machines in general were diverted from home use to instead provide support for the war effort. Once I had finished skimming the manual and learning about the company, I then proceeded to watch a 4 hour t-shirt quilt tutorial series on YouTube by crafter and quilt magician Carol at Segovia Quilts. Her instructions were clear and easy to follow and I plan to reference her instructions throughout this process.

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That being said, the process of creating a t-shirt quilt from start to finish is much more than a 10 hour course week allows and so I have focused my efforts so far on learning how to properly set up and use a sewing machine. I spent about 3 hours of prep work to that end, between the readings and videos I mentioned above and fiddling around trying to get everything going. Next I started on the t-shirt quilt square prep. I followed Carol's instructions for measuring, cutting, preparing, and laying out the quilt pieces and now I just have to do the actual sewing.

I think this will be a fun ongoing project for me over the next few weeks and months while I have a bit more free time once classes end. I am excited to put these newfound skills to use and take a walk down memory lane as I piece together some of favorite memory filled event apparel. This process has made me feel incredibly nostalgic, thinking about the puffy paint t-shirts that my grandmother taught me how to make as a child, remembering how hard my mom worked to sew herself a dress when I was young, and thinking about all the happy memories and good times that were had while wearing my Library Restaurant and Brewpub shirt, the ChiveFest concert that I attended where I bought and wore my favorite old Billy Murray t-shirt, or the old sports uniforms that I used to wear.

This passion project falls in with Abraham Maslow's theory of self-actualization because it focuses on my ability to grow and adapt as an individual. I am working toward learning a valuable skill that is not as prevalent of a skill to grasp in today's society but it has the potential to provide a therapeutic outlet and promote synergy inside my mind and being, and it provides the potential opportunity to be creative and inventive and to mold my personal sense of style. It offers me a chance to learn something new and master a new skill, build a hobby for myself, and put to use the driving mission that I already have to fix and repair instead of throwing away or replacing my clothing and furnishings.



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From a creative leadership standpoint, I want to be inspiring to my friends and colleagues to make slight life style shifts to live more sustainably and I want to be more creative on a daily basis by working with my hands and challenging my mind to design and create more. It gives me a chance to also work in solitude more and focus on my own passions and interests without the interference or bias of others opinions affecting the direction I take my work.



I am looking forward to coming home from work and unwinding with some creation and crafting over the next few months especially before fall semester starts. I think that this process will set me up to understand the ins and outs of sewing and will streamline my materials usage to make sure that I am not wasting usable bits of fabric and am instead finding a unique purpose for these items. I can't wait to see how all the pieces come together.