

# How to Remove a Mental Block with Scissors

Is there something you know you need to do, but you just can't seem to get started? It might be something you need to stop doing or something you need to start doing. It might be a decision you need to make, but you can't seem to go over that bridge to the other side. No one else can see it, but for you it's like raging rapids that you're afraid to cross. It's a mental block.

You know there's something you should do and you might even have a strong desire for it. It's something that seems easy for others to do, but for some reason, you just can't move forward. It feels like a raging river with rising waters. The longer you procrastinate, the more reasons you establish for not moving forward. Eventually you pander to the mental block and treat it like an annoying relative.

I have a long-time habit of collecting paper in the form of files, magazines, brochures and mail. Some of it piles up because I don't want to go through it. Junk mail, catalogs, business cards, owner's manuals, warranties, and other papers multiply in my office. Other papers get added to the stack because I like the images or I think I might want to follow up with a person or check out a website. I want each piece of paper when I see it, but I don't like the chaotic piles that accumulate. I've known for quite some time I needed to get rid of a lot of paper, but I just couldn't seem to keep up with the stacks.



Mental blocks are like little devils that taunt you with fear. I named this SoulCollage® card the Tasmanian Devil. He loves to create chaos and confusion which leads to indecision.

This desire to hold onto paper and allow it to pile up in my office is a sign of indecision. If I knew precisely the purpose for saving each paper or brochure, I would have a designated spot for each type so that I could access it quickly when I needed it. I have a vague idea that I might want to use each piece, but until I decide the service of the various types, the disarray in my mind manifests as disorder in my office space.

It's a barrier to moving forward. If I had all my papers in good order, all the magazines in one place and all the post cards in one place and all the maps and travel brochures organized well, then it would be easy to locate things. But after paper piles up for a while, it feels like a burdensome task to go through it all to decide what's worth keeping. I used to think that procrastinating the organization was the block, but recently realized that this was a symptom, but not the cause. Each mental block has an ambiguous partner.

When I discovered SoulCollage® last year, I felt like I met my tribe, my people who also get fired up over magazines, picture

books and beautiful images. I finally found a group of people who share my passion for paper. After going through the Facilitator Training, I learned about this art therapy technique which is all about cutting out images and collaging them together into new pieces of art. It came at just the right time to help dissipate my mental block regarding my relationship with paper.

In the process of making SoulCollage® cards, it's easy to get into a meditative state. Not only does it access the creative part of the mind, it also helps to carve out a little order and meaning in a big world. In addition, it provides a little spot in the world, on a 5×8 card, where one focused energy comes together in a place where we can observe it and learn from it. It's there to help us remember something and, in the process, heal. A feeling once locked up on the inside, sometimes for years or even decades, is now captured on a piece of paper.

### [Should I Do SoulCollage?](#)

By combining images in a way that triggers one energy for you, it allows you to instantly access that feeling at any time. Here's a SoulCollage card I made showing my relationship with paper. I knew I had too much paper, but when SoulCollage® came along, I felt like I finally found purposeful outlet for colorful images I've been collecting for years.



This is one of the cards in my SoulCollage® deck. It's called "Fired Up."

As a writer, I've been around a lot of writers who talk about writer's block. Some writers don't believe in writer's block, while others have written blog posts and entire books about the topic.

But when it comes to mental blocks, I believe most people would agree that we all face mental blocks at some point in life.

I'm a big fan of Marie Kondo's book *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*. She recommends going through all your possessions one-by-one asking one simple question of each item. "Does this spark joy?" If it does, then she says you'll be happy to keep it, but if it doesn't, then it's time to let it go. I've been using her technique for a few years now, and I can say that it

has made it much easier to get rid of things that I might have, in the past, held onto much longer than necessary. It has become quite easy for me to apply her technique to nearly everything in my home, except for one area.

## PAPER

I love paper. I like the feel of it. I like folding it and cutting it. I love reading books and leafing through magazines. I like the silky feeling of postcards, the utility of envelopes, and the soft texture of brown paper bags that you get at the grocery store.

In her book, Kondo recommends getting rid of all paper, keeping only what's absolutely essential. Her rule of thumb is to "discard everything." Her book is written mainly for people who are trying to tidy up their homes, but her principles apply to the work setting as well.

I work from home. I have a lot of paper, not only in my home office, but I also have some file boxes full of paper, files, magazines, books, photo albums, and so on have accumulated in the attic, and into other rooms of our home. I have a growing collection of postcards, for example, that I've had for decades. Some have handwriting and stamps, while others are still awaiting their life purpose to unfold.

Who ever sends post cards anymore? I have some with written messages. It's a little piece of history dated with a time and place. Someone carved out a few moments of their life to buy a postcard, write a message and pay to mail it. Yesterday's postcards required more effort than today's texts or photos which can be sent in an instant. I've got some sort of mental block about throwing away a post card with handwriting.

I used to be a professor. I accumulated lots of lesson plans and games I created to make learning fun for my students. And over the years I accumulated a lot of books and training manuals. What if I decide to teach again one day?

There was a time when it used to be respectable to have a home full of books. It was a primary means of learning and served as a visual museum of accumulated knowledge.

I have buckets of respect for Marie Kondo, but she, like most authors, wrote her book from her perspective. She doesn't get joy from paper, so she assumes that no one else does either. This is a mental block on her part. Clearly, many artists, craftsmen, office supply manufacturers, art suppliers, and other professionals enjoy handling paper every day.

Perhaps if she wrote a book for artists and creative people, she'd come up with some specific advice on how to go through lots of paper quickly using the KonMari method. I've watched a number of people on YouTube use her technique to go through the papers in their home and in the end, then have just a few notebooks and photo albums on a shelf near a desk.

I get it. I don't need 95% of the paper in my home either, but I still want some of it. It's not even that I look at it on a regular basis, but as soon as I start going through old training manuals, photo albums, magazines, maps or travel brochures, I'm drawn to certain images, flow charts, photos or memories that I want to keep. Did I mention that I like envelopes and stamps?

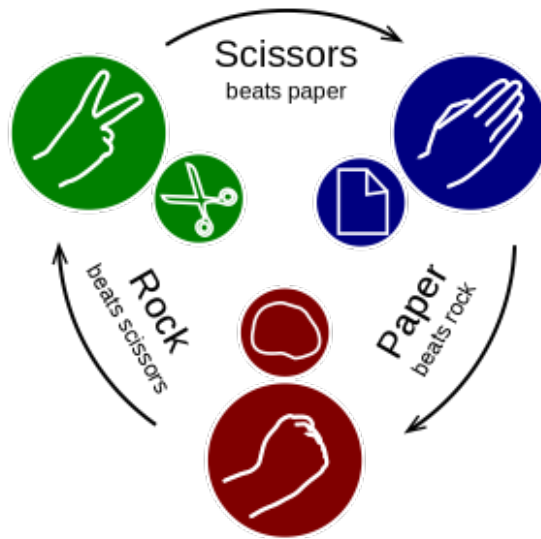




Collage Art by Carin Andersson

At the same time, I want to lighten my load. It's no fun to push around heavy file boxes full of paper. I've moved many times in my life and many of these boxes have followed me around for many years, some of the pages, I'm sure, haven't seen light for many many years.

Have you ever played the rock, paper scissors game? They each have a specific super power. The paper can smother the rock. The rock can crush the scissors. And the scissors can cut the paper.



The rock, paper, scissors game is a great illustration that each and every thing has a potential super power.

Ultimately, I need to get over this mental block and cut a lot of paper out of my life. Paper has been in control for decades. It's time for scissors to take the lead. Did I mention that I like to cut paper and I have a bunch of scissors?

At a conscious level, I know I could easily get rid of most of the paper in my house. But each time I've assembled all the boxes and stacks of paper into one place, as Kondo suggests, I've felt overwhelmed. There are literally thousands of pieces of paper to go through. As I start going through the files and the pages, hours slip by. It's just like getting lost on the internet for hours. As I open a notebook, a file, or an album and start going through pages one by one, I'm suddenly thinking about all the ways I might be able to use an idea or an image. I get sucked back into the apprehensive reason I saved it in the first place.

Someday I might need this.

On a recent Saturday my husband headed out for a business trip. I knew I had the whole week to tidy up papers, so I went



around the house and collected up file boxes, notebooks, magazines, mail, and other papers. I piled them all up on the living room floor where my husband sits in his favorite chair in front of the TV. My intent was to cut my paper load at least in half before he got home. I stepped over the boxes and piles of paper for five days knowing he would be home late the next day. I only had one day left before he'd come home and want to relax in his man cave.

Deadlines are powerful!

This deadline helped me to cut right through my mental block about Kondo's position on paper. She believes that paper cannot bring happiness. What she's really stating is that paper doesn't spark joy for her. But this doesn't mean it's true for everyone.

As soon as I realized this, I experienced a powerful aha moment. I felt free to keep as much paper and art supplies as I wanted as long as it sparks joy. I quickly started going through the paper according to the KonMari Method, putting all the paper and art supplies into their various categories:

- books
- envelopes
- filing supplies (file folders, hanging files)
- gift tags
- glues
- graph paper
- label maker (& extra tape cartridges)
- magazines
- magazine pages (sorted by categories for future collage projects)
- markers
- photo albums
- postcards
- scissors
- sticky notes

- travel brochures & maps (sorted by location)
- wrapping paper (paper bags, maps)

Marie Kondo has had global success with her books and teachings because she has addressed a universal question. “What should I hang onto?” She undoubtedly has an opportunity to come out with all sorts of sequels, including one for artists and creatives. Although I’m frequently performing the “spark joy” test on items all throughout my home and getting rid of stuff, I still have lots of scissors. I plan to use them to cut through more mental blocks.