

## Swap P%rn By Tara Spinelli for Jersey Moms Blog

I hate stuff. I hate my stuff, and I hate your stuff, too. My dream home is a teepee. Or at least one of those tiny houses ([www.facebook.com/TinyHouseBlog](http://www.facebook.com/TinyHouseBlog)) <250 square feet where our kitchen island is our dining table is our platform bed is our dog crate. When we invite friends over for movie night, we'll enjoy a glass of wine (literally, we'll pass around a single glass) and no one will mind that the pull-down projection screen/room divider/shower door is about 4 feet from our faces because this place is so minutely awesome.

I've started imagining a grand bargain where I'm told by a booming, disembodied voice that I can only keep the stuff my family of four actually uses, and poof!, 91% of our belongings disappear instantly. Unlike my son's favorite game "Would You Rather..."—would you rather drink a cup of spit or have a problem where you spit in public and can't stop yourself? (actual example)—there is not a single downside to this tradeoff. Let's call it what it is: the gift that keeps on giving (at least until our next trip to Target...unless the disembodied voice puts us on a monthly plan). George Carlin said it best: "A house is just a place to keep your stuff while you go out and get more stuff."

Given my aversion to stuff, my addiction to swap p%rn—an unexplained interest in reading descriptions and looking at pictures of stuff people want to sell or give away—is a little surprising. Possibly, it's genetic. My mother buys and sells antiques. Get in her car on any weekend morning and you're likely to be lost for a good part of the day in a 50-mile-wide dust-cloud of estate, yard, and garage sales. But while my mother loves actual stuff, I only like virtual stuff, and unlike mom, I have no-none-zero intention of ever acquiring any of it.

Another theory is that I have an Internet-induced condition\*—strongly correlated with an unnatural interest in reality TV—that hasn't yet been added to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. \*See my earlier JMB post *Power of for* for information on IIPLS or Internet-Induced Phantom Disease Syndrome.

Maybe you also have this problem? Here's a simple, at-home test you can take right now to find out if you are susceptible. Read the following, which are real postings from freecycle, reuse & recycle, and swap/shop pages and groups I know and love:

- Santa hat and can of salmon. Free. (Christmas reimaged!)
- Tandem bike. No handlebars, seats, wheels, or pedals. Never used. \$125. (Never used? Huh.)
- Two wooden mushrooms. Free. (Fungus décor: the next big thing.)
- Cat. Free. (Nice knowing you, Tiger.)
- Bag of miscellaneous cords and adapters. Free. (Because you don't have enough of your own.)
- Broken mirror glass. Free. (Is bad luck transferrable?)
- Good size pile of rocks. Free. (The perfect complement to a bag of misc cords and adapters.)
- Two 4-foot tall forks. \$10 each. (Giant cutlery décor: the other next big thing.)
- One sad rose bush. Free. (Calling all green-thumbed therapists.)
- Empty hot sauce bottles. Free. (No curbside recycling over there?)

Intrigued? Amused? Eager to share these gems with friends? You are at risk.

I swear, I'm not judging. In fact, for the last 7 years, I've been running an annual swap event (<https://www.facebook.com/YantacawFamilySwap>) at our elementary school and fully support making sure that usable stuff gets into the hands of people who need it instead of chucked into a landfill or incinerator.

I just want to share...or confess...that I get a kick out of what people think other people will buy from them or take off their hands. I also freely admit that my instincts about treasure vs. trash are totally off. This was undeniably proven when that Santa hat and can of salmon were marked "taken." Word to wise swappers: step lively.

In conclusion, thanks to everyone who tries to find a home for their stuff—as long as it's not my home—while surprising me and making me smile with some of your offerings. Keep on swappin'!