

SIMPLIFY MAGAZINE

· A QUARTERLY, DIGITAL PUBLICATION FOR FAMILIES ·



Issue 012 — Spring-Cleaning

- 1. An Introduction: The Spring-Cleaning Issue**
by The Founders of Simplify Magazine
- 2. A Brief History of the Spring-Cleaning Tradition**
by Maria Carter
- 3. Motivation to Tackle the Mess from Start to Finish**
by Melissa Maker
- 4. The Seven-Day Spring-Cleaning Plan for Your Home**
by Becky Rapinchuk
- 5. Creating a Cleaning Schedule That Works for You**
by Ruth Soukup
- 6. Discover Your Organizing Style & Optimize Your Office**
by Cassandra Aarssen
- 7. Stop the Madness of Spring-Cleaning Your Closet**
by Courtney Carver
- 8. How to Declutter Large, Overwhelming Spaces**
by Joshua Becker
- 9. Personalized Minimalism and What It Gives Back**
by Christine Platt
- 10. Finding My Peace Amid the Chaos of Other People**
by Michael Robertson
- 11. How to Raise Tidy and Self-Sufficient Children**
by Angela Brown

An Introduction: Spring-Cleaning

by The Founders of Simplify Magazine

Spring. The season is ripe with opportunity on every front, especially in the home. She's a welcome guest after a long, dark, and icy winter.

And while most people embrace spring with abandon, not everyone revels in the citrus-scented task closely associated with the season: spring cleaning. Many people feel burdened just thinking about it.

The same sunshine that calls forth daffodils also illuminates neglected corners and cobwebs, literally *and* figuratively. As a result, procrastination plagues many households. Not everyone pushes through to relish the joy of sparkling countertops and clean-slate living.

We believe peace of mind dwells in a tidy space. While it's sometimes elusive for parents raising sticky-fingered children on tight schedules, cleanliness is a noble pursuit, one that is possible for even the busiest

family. For this reason, we've dedicated an entire issue to taking the burden out of spring cleaning.

We've invited industry experts who guide millions around the world to participate in this highly specific and practical issue of *Simplify*. They've provided tips to drum up motivation, recipes for natural cleaners, advice for living with messier counterparts, and a glimpse into the origins of spring's ritual deep clean. You'll find tried-and-true methods for cleaning, decluttering, and organizing with ease. You'll find a few surprises too.

We're not usually the sort to praise instant gratification, but when it comes to tidying up, we're all for quick wins. We trust this issue inspires and gives you exactly what you need to sweep up and make room for the months to come.

Joshua Becker and Brian Gardner

A Brief History of the Spring-Cleaning Tradition

by Maria Carter



Not long ago, spring cleaning wasn't a feel-good ritual providing the opportunity to catch up on chores and purge our homes of the old clothes and things that no longer serve us. Instead, it was a necessity for well-being.

It's true the chorefest has roots in some of the world's oldest religions. Nowruz, or Persian New Year, which comes from the ancient practice of Zoroastrianism, inspires Iranians to clean their homes from top to bottom each March as they prepare for the holiday's arrival. Judaism requires its adherents to rid their homes of all *chametz* (products made with water and grain) ahead of the spring holiday Passover; observant Jews typically scour their kitchens, pantries, and dining rooms to do so. But from the beginning of industrialization until the widespread adoption of electric lighting and heat, North Americans and Europeans of all backgrounds needed spring cleaning to restore indoor air quality.

Cleaning in a Dirty Age

The American abolitionist and author Harriet Beecher Stowe, best known for her novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, captured what winter was like for New Englanders in her 1865 advice book *House and Home Papers*.

“Many families confine themselves to one room, of which every window-crack has been carefully caulked to make it air-tight, when an air-tight stove keeps the atmosphere at a temperature between 80 and 90,” Stowe wrote. “The inmates, sitting there with all their winter clothes on, become enervated both by the heat and by the poisoned air.”

The 19th century’s common fuel sources—coal, kerosene, wood, and whale oil, used to fuel lamps and stoves—left smoke in the air and soot on windows and nearly every other surface of the house. Things got especially grimy during winter.

“When you’re heating and lighting with open fires, the accumulation of grime, and the extent to which the house really got dirty from staying warm and well lit over the course of winter is beyond the comprehension of modern people,” says Susan Strasser, Richards Professor Emerita of American History at the University of Delaware and author of *Never Done: A History of American Housework*.

Come spring, homes were turned inside out as the women of the household hauled rugs, curtains, and bedding outside for a thorough cleaning—a process that took days or even weeks. Most people didn’t

have indoor plumbing, there were no washing machines, and “sending things out” to be cleaned wasn’t an option either, as those services didn’t exist, Strasser explains.

To complete this Herculean load of laundry, women hauled huge amounts of water from the nearest spring or well, heated it over a coal or wood stove, and then scrubbed and washed every domestic textile that could be submerged in water. “Carpets were literally hung on the line and beaten with a carpet beater, which is like gigantic fly swatter made out of metal,” says Strasser. “You can imagine how much beating that took.”

Interior design of the day further exacerbated the task. The Aesthetic Movement of 1872–89, taglined “art for art’s sake,” popularized intricately patterned wall and ceiling paper, heavy drapery, thick carpets, and collections of porcelain vases, bowls, and plates displayed for their beauty. Like Maximalism today, Aestheticism embraced a “more is more” philosophy. “It made spring cleaning that much more difficult than it would’ve been in a home without tchotchkes,” says Strasser.

A wealthy woman might have servants to help with the chores, but women of a lower class were on their own. Men generally made themselves scarce during spring cleaning—“to the extent that they could get away from chaos,” Strasser explains—and grew accustomed to eating sandwiches and cold meals as their wives neglected other domestic duties to focus on cleaning.

An 1893 washing powder advertisement published in *Harper's Bazaar*, which Strasser includes in her book, depicts a man sitting at an empty table with his top hat in one hand and his head in another, as a woman moves around him, scrubbing the floor, sponge-cleaning the walls, and dusting the windows. A poem—the old-timey equivalent of a commercial jingle—describes the scene:

The melancholy days have come,

The saddest of the year.

When from domestic scenes

A man will quickly disappear;

For lo! Around his humble home

Housecleaning waxeth rife,

And brooms, and mops and kindred things

Absorb his wedded wife.

It wasn't all misery, however, as presumably husbands and children delighted in the results of the work and breathed easier, according to an account by Susan Fenimore Cooper (daughter of *The Last of the Mohicans* author James Fenimore Cooper) in her account of spring cleaning in Cooperstown, New York, in April 1848. "After the great turmoil is over—when the week, or fortnight, or three weeks of scrubbing, scouring, drenching are passed, there is a moment of delightful repose in a family," she wrote in *Rural Hours*, the first book of environmental literary nonfiction by an American woman, published in 1850. "There is a refreshing consciousness that all is sweet and clean from garrett to cellar; there is a purity in the neighborhood, the same order and cleanly freshness meet you as you cross every threshold. This is very pleasant, but it is a pity that it should be purchased at the cost of...so many petty annoyances."

Spring Revival

Why, then, with such inconveniences historically associated with spring cleaning—and with modern machines and tools that help us clean daily so our environments don't fall into the disrepair seen during 18th- and 19th-century winters—hasn't this tradition been wiped from modern to-do lists entirely? We have electricity that lights and heats our homes without a trace of residue. Why is spring cleaning still a thing?

For one, exposure to sunlight affects our natural sleep-wake cycles. During winter, many of us need as much as 1.75 to 2.5 extra hours of sleep a night, according to the National Sleep Foundation. It's estimated that the change in season alters the energy levels and mood of as much as 90 percent of the population, including 20 percent who experience "mild" winter blues and another 4 to 6 percent who experience full-on seasonal affective disorder. [1] We're simply not emotionally or energetically up to the task of deep cleaning when we're deprived of sunlight.

Before modern industrialization, says Strasser, our predecessors knew they were affected by the cycles of the year and took advantage

of the natural energizers of longer days and warmer weather that accompanied spring. “We pretend that we’re not animals, that our bodies are unaffected by the change in seasons and the temperature outside because we live indoors with central air conditioning and heat, and have electric lights to turn on when it gets dark,” she says. “We can proceed with our lives as if we didn’t have bodies that were affected by natural cycles, but our bodies, sense of self, and the space we live in are all affected by the seasons.”

Contemporary life presents its own impediments to cleaning. We may not have layers of soot to contend with, but most adults work full time, leaving little energy for domestic pursuits. The frantic holiday season adds to the distraction: post-holiday fatigue sets in and, combined with bitterly cold temperatures, makes us more than willing participants in pseudo-hibernation. Only once nature begins to reanimate do we also find the energy to revive our homes.

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Maria Carter is a seasoned magazine writer who’s worked with some of the world’s most recognizable brands, including more than 40

national publications. She lives in Richmond, Virginia, where she's a regular contributor to the city's home and style magazine.

Got thoughts you'd like to share?

Send them to editor@simplifymagazine.com. You might find your words in next publication's Letters to the Editor column.

Motivation to Tackle the Mess from Start to Finish

by Melissa Maker



It's warmer, the sun is streaming in, and your local big box store is trotting out barbeque and gardening supplies. You know what that means: spring has sprung and we're here for it.

Once the weather turns, it's hardly exciting to think about staying in the house and cleaning. Yet year after year we keep doing it—or at least talk about doing it or regret not doing it the year before.

In my 13+ years of cleaning expertise, I have never met someone who says they regret the time spent spring cleaning. In fact, they value and appreciate it. The cleaning motor might have taken some time to start up, but once they got going, they were seeing results and didn't want to stop. They're proud of their accomplishments and feel good about the work they've done.

On the flip side, I've met many people who tell me that the very thought of spring cleaning ushers in negative feelings—overwhelm, frustration, dread, anxiety, and so on. I understand these feelings and the sense of being stuck, and I think I can help even the most unmotivated.

I'm what you might call an unlikely cleaning expert. I started a cleaning service back in 2006 because I had a calling to start a

business and felt that cleaning was the kind of business that would be a big success. (I was right.) But what was odd about this calling was the fact that I hated cleaning. I mean, to this day I find cleaning to be frustrating, overwhelming, time-consuming, Sisyphean, unenjoyable, and annoying. I can find more descriptors, but why waste time?

My onion unpeels a little more here, because while I hate the act of cleaning, I deeply appreciate a clean space and how calm, proud, and relaxed it makes me feel.

This is the balance I chase personally, the service I offer professionally (I have a team who clean now, having stepped back years ago), and the insight I teach as a cleaning expert and author. Bottom line is this: I've found ways to make cleaning achievable even if it feels beyond daunting.

A Doable Process

I know you want to feel happy, proud, and comfortable at home. So, how can you harness that energy, that motivation to rejuvenate your home while balancing your emotional blockages and your need for fun and enjoyment of the new season?

I've outlined a five-step plan to reduce spring-cleaning overwhelm. As with cleaning itself, start at the top and work your way to the bottom. This is a proven method that helps people take control of their cleaning and get a lot accomplished, even when it feels daunting.

Step 1: Choose your MIAs.

Many of us envision spring cleaning as a time-consuming, rafters-to-floorboards scrubdown, which hardly anyone can get excited about. The little-known secret is that it doesn't have to be that way. In fact, it can be a choose-your-own-adventure type of job. There's no rule book on spring cleaning—the spring-cleaning authority isn't coming by to inspect and leave a seal of approval on your door. This flexible concept permits you to choose the areas that matter to you, your family, and your space most and gives you some emotional breathing room too.

The way to design the spring cleaning of your dreams starts with figuring out your MIAs, or most important areas. These are the hot spots in your home that you dread looking at, the ones that make your blood boil or are cause for shame, frustration, anger, or

embarrassment. If you don't feel emotion when you look at your baseboards, you can safely leave them uncleaned and know that, when they do upset you, your bodily reaction will flag it as an MIA.

As you walk through your house, have a notepad and look around at each room slowly. See what sticks out, what gives you that visceral reaction. Write that down, no matter how small. By the time this job is over, you've got your list of MIAs. Perhaps this is the year your window screens and door tracks get some attention. Maybe your closets really need an overhaul. Perhaps it's time to thoroughly clean all of your kitchen appliances or reorganize your pantry. When you get this granular, you will also notice there are many places that don't require extra attention either because you are already on top of those areas throughout the year or you simply don't care that much about them (and yes, that's okay!).

I do recommend that you add maintenance tasks to your list, such as checking your smoke alarms and changing your furnace filter. If anything isn't working properly because it hasn't been cleaned in a while, this would be a good task for your MIA list. Once you've identified the areas that you feel important, either because they look

dirty or require immediate maintenance, create your spring-cleaning checklist.

Now, at this point, that rush of overwhelm might hit you: *It's all too much! How can I possibly get this done!?* It's okay—this reaction is normal for many of us. Remind yourself that having a plan in place will make this possible, and even if you shoot for the moon and only see the stars, you're way ahead of where you'd be otherwise.

Step 2: Get everyone involved.

Cleaning is a job that can and should be shared among everyone living in the space so long as the tasks are age and physically appropriate for each person. Once the MIAs have been established—and even that can be a family decision—bring the team together and discuss what needs to be done, timelines, and who is going to do what. If you strategize together, you'll be seen as a collaborative leader instead of a dictator, and you'll tend to have more success rallying for the cause and getting a commitment.

Offering each person the opportunity to choose their tasks as you would choose players in a team draft keeps things fair for everyone. Perhaps two people need to do one task together, or certain tasks

require professional help. This meeting of the minds will help parse through the list and divide things up fairly.

If family members are less keen about cleaning than you are, find ways to make it fun and meaningful. Extra positive encouragement, compliments, letting someone else choose the music, etc., are all ways to pass the time in an enjoyable way and get great results from everyone involved.

I can just about guarantee that you'll get help if you are a fair collaborator and make it fun.

Step 3: Time-block for success.

What gets scheduled gets done. The secret to success here is to time-block—to put chunks of time directly into your calendar with the purpose of completing one task. Boring jobs that aren't scheduled and hang out on some dusty spring-cleaning list will likely get pushed off or forgotten because we just aren't oriented toward performing unexciting tasks. We like new and fun things, and generally speaking, cleaning out a storage room doesn't fall into that category.

When you have drawn up the MIA list, look at the calendar and block time in to get this work accomplished. Task by task, throw 30-, 60- or 90-minute chunks into your calendar labeled with the task (and the tools and supplies you'll need) so that you can get right down to business, no excuses.

I suggest removing all distractions during that time block—turning off phones, TVs, and emails. In fact, when I'm on a deadline, I disengage or silence all notifications so that I can focus on my mission.

When I started my cleaning company, I time-blocked because I had multiple clients in a day and I was working against the clock. Doing that, I learned how to be more efficient, how to tune out distractions and get the job done. If I knew I had an hour to clean a kitchen, I'd drag it out. But if I knew I had 30 minutes, I really started to move and, amazingly, the kitchen sparkled just the same.

Load up an exciting podcast or audiobook or some motivating music and get to work. You might find that, once you've started the work, you want to throw an extra 30 minutes in to get the job done right

because you're on a roll. Pet that unicorn and celebrate, because it's rare that anyone wants to spend extra time cleaning.

If you ask most successful people how they accomplish so much in a day or week, they'll likely tell you it's because they have scheduled it in.

Step 4: Have your ducks in a row.

The easiest way to fall off the rails when you are planning a big clean like this is to be unprepared. If you don't have garbage bags or sponges, the cleaning just can't happen.

Instead of that, prepare: Think through your MIAs and write a list of tools and supplies you'll need for the tasks. Then, like sourcing ingredients for a recipe, look around the house and see what you already have. For anything that's missing, head out in advance and pick up the remainder at your local store.

The other thing to plan ahead for is where you'll need to dispose of certain items. If you get rid of old cleaning supplies, paint, batteries, or other toxic materials, you'll need a safe dumpsite. You may also

want to call an organization to come and pick up clothing and housewares you wish to donate.

If you plan ahead, you'll be more efficient and reduce day-of friction and the build-up of donations or disposals in your trunk for months on end. (We've all been there.)

Step 5: Celebrate!

Once things are done—no matter how small—a celebration is in order. This is hard work, and typically chores aren't what we get excited about in life. So, when a chore is done, find a way to recognize the hard work and change for the better. Even if it's just a high five, a compliment, or heartfelt thanks to the person who did the work, or a meal out in the name of spring cleaning, do it.

I've found that understanding your partner's or family member's love languages can help you best determine how to celebrate. My husband's love language is words of affirmation, so I will make sure to compliment and thank him after the work is done. For me, it's physical touch, so I like a really good hug (but I'll also take a compliment gladly). Cleaning can feel so thankless that using love

languages is a beautiful way to give back in the way that will be best received by each individual.

See Results Now

While procrastination can be rampant with spring cleaning, remember this: unlike other things we might put off, such as working out to get in shape, cleaning provides you with immediate, same-day results. It's an instant-gratification activity.

Like working out, spring cleaning is not something you regret after doing it, but getting there can undoubtedly be a struggle. If you find yourself resisting it, these five tactics will help you get there. Once they're done, you can enjoy the season with your whole heart and mind, knowing you've done your part to clean your space and welcome in the new season.

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Melissa Maker quit her commercial banking job to start a cleaning business—Clean My Space. Her Clean My Space YouTube channel now has over 1.3 million subscribers and almost 200 million video views. She has also put out a book called *Clean My Space: The Secret*

to Cleaning Better, Faster and Loving Your Home Every Day. She often appears on TV and in print, cited as a cleaning expert. She has a two-year-old daughter and a cat and lives in Toronto, Canada.

Got thoughts you'd like to share?

Send them to editor@simplifymagazine.com. You might find your words in next publication's Letters to the Editor column.

The Seven-Day Spring-Cleaning Plan for Your Home

by Becky Rapinchuk



I want to demystify spring cleaning and show you how to do it in just a week's time. We're going to turn traditional cleaning methodology into something that will get your home spiffed up in a hurry—and you might even enjoy it.

Ready?

First, let's set up some ground rules:

- Any time you can spend on spring cleaning is time well spent.
- You're never behind.
- Do what you can.
- If you spring-clean over seven consecutive days, you'll be done sooner than if you stretch it out longer, but there's no reason why you can't stretch it out.
- Ask for help. If you share your house with other family members, make it a family affair. If your budget allows, it's okay to hire someone to do tasks that you aren't able to do or find to be too

time consuming. (Washing windows and cleaning carpets could be examples of this.)

Day One: Gather supplies and do a quick declutter.

When you have the supplies you need all together in one place, it's easy to get started on your cleaning each day. So pull together a spring-cleaning kit.

Here are some of my favorite supplies:

- all-purpose cleaning spray
- glass cleaning spray
- Castile or dish soap
- scrub
- cleaning cloths
- scrub brush
- vacuum cleaner

- bucket or caddy to tote supplies
- garbage bags

Of course, you can use any cleaner that you have on hand, but if you haven't used a DIY cleaner, spring cleaning is the perfect time to try one out.

Why would you want to make your own cleaner? I'm so glad you asked!

- They are economical. Most recipes cost pennies to make, really.
- Making your own cleaners is eco-friendly. Reuse glass spray bottles and get rid of the plastic spray bottles.
- My favorite reason: you know exactly what you are cleaning with. No toxic chemicals or artificial fragrances, just safe and effective ingredients.

Here are three of my favorite DIY recipes you can use to mix up your own cleaners:

All-Purpose Soap-Based Cleaning Spray

This simple solution of soap and water is perfect for spring cleaning. Use it on pretty much any surface that needs a little or a lot of cleaning.

- 1 ½ cups water
- 1 teaspoon liquid Castile soap
- 10 drops of your favorite essential oil (optional)

Window Cleaning Spray

Up your window-cleaning game with this DIY recipe. This quick-dry recipe is perfect for all your window-cleaning needs.

- 1 ½ cups water
- 1 ½ tablespoons white vinegar
- 1 ½ tablespoons rubbing alcohol
- 3 drops peppermint essential oil (optional, but lovely)

Mix in a spray bottle, spray on cleaning cloth for mirrors and directly on windows. Wipe to a streak-free shine.

Scrubbing Powder

Sprinkle anywhere that needs a little scrub—perfect for the tub, shower, sink, and faucets. Add to a wet surface and scrub. If needed, add a little Castile soap for additional scrubbing power.

- 2 cups baking soda
- 20 drops of your favorite essential oil
- a squirt of Castile soap when cleaning

Combine the baking soda and essential oil in a mason jar to store. Add a squirt of Castile soap, scrub, and rinse thoroughly.

Once you have your supplies at the ready, do a quick declutter. Grab a garbage bag, set a timer for 10 to 15 minutes, and quickly go through your house and fill the bag with things to toss or donate. Look on surfaces, the floor, closets, anywhere bits of trash may be hiding. This quick declutter is intended to jumpstart your spring cleaning.

Day Two: Clean most-touched areas.

Part of spring cleaning is uncovering those areas that haven't been cleaned for a bit. The most-touched areas are ready for you to give them a wipe-down.

I find the most efficient way to clean those pesky most-touched areas is to batch them together. You can go in order of this list or skip around as it works for you.

- light switches and switch plates
- door knobs
- kitchen appliance fronts and handles
- telephones (landline phones and cell phones)
- staircase railings
- cupboard and drawer knob pulls
- remotes and game controllers

Use the all-purpose cleaning spray on a cleaning cloth and wipe quickly. Alternatively, you can use rubbing alcohol on a cleaning cloth for hard surfaces to kill germs and clean them. I like to use rubbing alcohol on light switches, phones, and remotes.

Day Three: Dust corners and edges.

Start at the top of your rooms (ceilings) and work your way down to the baseboards. Use an extendable handle duster or a broom with a rag over the bristles and get all the dust and cobwebs from the corners and edges in your rooms. If you have the time and want bonus points, vacuum the wall vents.

Day Four: Wash and fluff soft goods.

Spring is a great time to launder those items that haven't been washed in a bit. Quilts, duvets, pillows, rugs, and shower curtains all deserve a little cleaning. Here's a simple order to follow to get this task done as quickly as possible.

1. Throw pillows and blankets—toss in the dryer on high to fluff up, or remove the covers and wash on gentle and line-dry or air-dry in the dryer.

2. Living area rugs—vacuum thoroughly and spot-clean if necessary.
3. Bathroom rugs and shower curtains—wash in the washing machine and air-dry or dry on low in the dryer (not plastic shower curtain liners).
4. Pillows and bedding—fluff pillows in the dryer on high or launder according to directions. Launder quilts and duvet covers, and change sheets. If you use a lighter-weight bedding set, this is the perfect time to change that out.

Day Five: Vacuum floors and baseboards.

If your home is anything like mine, you might have some areas that have gone untouched this past season. Take some time to thoroughly vacuum all the floors in your home, including hard-surface floors. I like to start on the second floor and work from one end of the floor to the next, then repeat on the first floor. This is the time to go under furniture and get into those nooks and crannies.

Vacuum baseboards too—it'll make tomorrow's job a little easier.

Day Six: Wash floors and baseboards.

Cleaning baseboards is the quintessential spring-cleaning task. You thoroughly vacuumed your floors yesterday, so your floors and baseboards are ready for you. My recommendation is to mix up a small container with warm water and Castile or dish soap (just a dot of soap), use a soft cleaning cloth, and wash baseboards as you are washing floors. I like to go room by room, but you might prefer to batch all the baseboards and then the floors. Whatever your method of choice is, your floors will be pristine and spring-cleaned.

If you have carpet that needs to be deep-cleaned and you have a carpet cleaner, you might have time to do that today. I have found that having a carpet cleaner pays for itself after one time and it's super convenient for emergencies. Alternatively, you can rent a carpet cleaner or schedule a professional carpet cleaning.

Day Seven: Clean the windows.

Window washing and spring cleaning go together, but window washing can be a tedious task. This doesn't have to be all or nothing—if you only wash a couple windows versus all of your windows,

you're still making your home brighter. This is also a task you can hire out, if that seems a better use of your time.

Use the window-cleaning recipe or your favorite window cleaner and a lint-free cleaning cloth, and work top to bottom and left to right on your windows. Or, if you have a lot of windows to wash, you can use a squeegee and a bucket of warm water with a teaspoon of dishwasher powder and clean them that way. Either way, keep a large bath towel handy for any drips and wipe window sills as you go.

Whoop! Once you have completed the Seven-Day Spring-Cleaning Plan for Your Home, you're well on your way to a cleaner and more clutter-free home.

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Becky Rapinchuk (also known as Clean Mama) knows how to clean quickly and effectively and wants you to know her secrets. This former art teacher is now a three-time book author and natural cleaning + homekeeping expert. She consults brands and has been featured for her methods by Real Simple, Martha Stewart, Apartment Therapy, Kitchn, Midwest Living, Parents, InStyle, Good

Housekeeping, Better Homes & Gardens, Mother Earth Living, and more. She is a wife and mom of three kids and two dogs.

Got thoughts you'd like to share?

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Creating a Cleaning Schedule That Works for You

by Ruth Soukup



Ah, cleaning...

The one life task that we need to do but never really want to do. Over at Living Well Spending Less, the question people ask most is this: “How can I clean, organize, and declutter my house without feeling overwhelmed?” We all desire a clean and tidy home, but the struggle is how to get there within the time constraints of daily responsibilities and everything that life throws at us.

Life is busy, and no one wants to spend most of their time cleaning.

The good news is, you don't have to! I've personally been working on these areas in my own home for some time now, and I have come to realize the benefits of having, not just a cleaning schedule, but a cleaning schedule that *works for you*. There are many ways to approach cleaning and keeping a house, but there is truly magic in figuring out and finding the one that's tailored to match your lifestyle and needs.

Now, before you get overwhelmed at the thought of creating a cleaning schedule, try not to worry—I promise it's not as bad as it sounds. You can do this in just three easy steps!

Let's get started.

First off, a cleaning schedule is a daily, weekly, or monthly plan for how you will clean your house. It can be as simple as doing one main task per day, or if to-do lists are your thing, it can be as complex as creating a spreadsheet that accounts for every single housekeeping task that needs to be done over the course of the year. It's entirely up to you.

Know that the point of any cleaning schedule is not to make you feel guilty or overwhelm you, but instead it's to *relieve* guilt and create a routine that gives you more freedom and less stress. You'll soon discover that having a manageable plan to tackle those dusty curtains and sticky refrigerator shelves makes the idea of cleaning your home seem less overwhelming in the long run.

We can do this. I promise.

Step 1: Create a Master Task List

You need to know what to clean before you can decide when to clean and how often. Before creating a cleaning schedule that works for

your life and an already busy schedule, assess your home and its cleaning needs.

A cleaning schedule for a couple living in a one-bedroom apartment with no children will look very different from one of a homeschooling mom of five living in a four-bedroom house!

I've prepared a kit of printable resources to help take the guessing out. It includes everything you need to execute a made-to-measure cleaning schedule. [You can access the kit through this link.](#)

Step 2: Pick the Best Plan for You (Only Choose One)

The next thing you need to do is figure out what sort of cleaning plan will work best for your life and schedule. For instance, are you the kind of person who wants to do a little bit every day, or would you rather tackle all of the cleaning at once so you don't have to think about it for the rest of the week? Do you work full time or part time, or are you home during the day? Do you have young children at home, and are your kids old enough to take on some of the cleaning responsibilities?

There is no one “right way” to keep house, and there is no universal cleaning schedule that works for every single household. You have to first take the time and determine what kind of cleaning schedule is doable as well as realistic to your own needs and demands. As you look over the following plans, please know *you do not need to do all of them*. On the contrary, you are only going to pick one plan that seems like a fit and try it out for a while. If you hate it, you can tweak it or always try a different plan!

Option A: Daily Speed Cleaning

If you're anything like me and have a hard time functioning or thinking when your house is messy, this might be the best option for you. Personally, I've found that running through my speed cleaning routine every day keeps things relatively neat and tidy all the time, so that I don't have to do “deep” cleans as often.

I will typically spend about 60 to 75 minutes on this schedule each day, which also includes one or two weekly tasks as well.

The kit includes the printable daily and weekly checklist that helps me stay on track with this plan.

Option B: Timed Sessions

This type of cleaning plan follows a master list of weekly tasks. Here, you set aside a certain amount of time each day—ideally 45 to 90 minutes set on a timer—to work your way down the list. When the timer sounds, you stop and you're done for the day. Then the next day, you set the timer again and pick up where you left off the previous day.

Again, the kit includes the printable daily and weekly checklist that helps me stay on track with this plan.

Option C: One Room or Major Task Each Day

This type of cleaning plan sets aside certain tasks to do on each day of the week. For example, Monday is for cleaning the bathrooms, laundry is done on Tuesday, vacuuming on Wednesday, etc. The time you spend cleaning each day will vary based on the task set aside for that day.

(Yep! The kit's got a worksheet for this plan too.)

Option D: Everything in One Day

This type of plan saves all of the tasks for one big cleaning day each week. This may be a good option if you work during the week and would rather clean on the weekends, or if the kids are old enough to pitch in and help get all the chores done fast. Here you pick two or three monthly, quarterly, and annual tasks to tackle each cleaning day.

A fun idea for families with older kids is to take a deck of cards and write down one task on each card. On a cleaning day, the cards are shuffled and dealt to each family member. That family member is then responsible for completing the tasks on their cards, or they can trade to get different tasks they would rather do. You can also use the printable set of cards included in the kit.

Step 3: Fill In Your Schedule

This is an easy step!

Once you have determined which cleaning plan will work best for your household's needs, it's time to create your cleaning schedule.

Choose the printable that corresponds to your chosen plan above, use the calendar printout below to fill in and schedule your cleaning days, and keep track of the monthly, quarterly, and annual tasks you need to remember. Or, if you prefer digital schedules, you can use other options such as Google Calendar, iCalendar for Mac, or even an online cleaning scheduler such as chorebuster.net.

Implementing Your New Cleaning Schedule Plan

Although it may seem daunting at first, creating a cleaning schedule that works for your own home and family life can be incredibly liberating once you get going.

So, when and how should you start using your plan? My advice is to pick a day to start when there isn't too much going on. When you'll have the little extra time to focus on the task at hand and begin your new cleaning schedule routine. If the kids are involved, perhaps make it a fun new thing you're doing by playing music, a fun podcast, or treating everyone to a bowl of ice cream when you're all done.

Suddenly, you'll find that you are no longer stressed out about a big mess in front of you, because there is an actionable plan to take care of it.

I'm rooting for you!

Xoxo, Ruth

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Ruth Soukup is a *New York Times* bestselling author, speaker, and entrepreneur. Through her *Do It Scared* podcast and her *Ruth Soukup Weekly* newsletter, which reaches more than a million weekly subscribers, she provides easy-to-follow guidance for following your dreams. Her practical advice has been featured in *Women's Day*, *Entrepreneur*, TODAY, Martha Stewart Living, *Family Circle*, and Fox News. She lives in Florida with her husband, Chuck, and two daughters, Maggie and Annie.

Got thoughts you'd like to share?

Send them to editor@simplifymagazine.com. You might find your words in next publication's Letters to the Editor column.

Discover Your Organizing Style & Optimize Your Office

by Cassandra Aarssen



Organization is *not* one-size-fits-all. What works for some people certainly doesn't always work for others. This is because there are four distinct organizing styles and only one of these styles would be considered traditional organization. Unfortunately, this means that if you don't naturally organize in the traditional way, it can be difficult to design a space that stays tidy long term.

Almost all organizing products and systems are designed with the traditional organizing style in mind, and if your brain doesn't work that way, then the system is never going to work for you! This is especially true when attempting to organize and maintain paperwork, which is why so many people struggle to organize a home office effectively.

The Four Styles

Before we jump into how you can tackle your paper and home office organization, let's do a quick breakdown of the four different organizing styles, so that you can identify the style you most relate to.

Visual and Hidden

There are generally two types of organizers—visual and hidden.

Visual organizers love to see their important and everyday used items, and they often suffer from “out of sight, out of mind.” Visual organizers crave visual abundance and tend to want their home to be filled with lots of color and objects they love and use often.

Hidden organizers, on the other hand, crave visual simplicity. These organizers prefer to store their everyday items out of sight, such as in closets or cabinets. Hidden organizers like a more minimal feel to their home, with muted or fewer colors and fewer visual distractions.

Note: Hidden organizers are *not* necessarily minimalists, and many visual organizers *are* minimalists. This is about how you prefer to organize and store your everyday used items, not about how much stuff you own.

Do you lean toward being a visual or a hidden organizer?

Micro and Macro

The second part of your organizing style has to do with how your brain naturally processes information.

Some people are “micro” organizers. Micro organizers tend to be detail-oriented people who crave order and are natural planners. They prefer lots of categories, and it’s important to them to be able to find their items quickly, so they don’t mind taking a few extra seconds to put things away properly. Micro organizers can sometimes be perfectionists who tend to procrastinate and pile their items until they can put things away “properly.”

The opposite are people who are more “macro” organizers. Macro organizers tend to be big-picture thinkers who like to focus on the end results and are natural dreamers. It’s important for a macro organizer to be able to put things away quickly, so they don’t mind taking a few extra seconds to find items when they need them. Because macro organizers rarely stop to think about where and how an item should be put away, they often hide, spread, or drop their items all over the place.

Do you have more of a micro or a macro type brain?

If you are a *hidden* and *micro* organizer, I call your organizing style a Cricket.

If you are a *visual* and *micro* organizer, I call your organizing style a Bee.

If you are a *hidden* and *macro* organizer, I call your organizing style a Ladybug.

If you are a *visual* and *macro* organizer, I call your organizing style a Butterfly.

Once you understand your natural organizing tendencies, you can set up organizing systems in your home that complement your style and finally get organized for good.

Your Paper Organizing Must-Haves

The issue that so many people have with organizing paper is that almost all paper organizing systems are designed with Crickets in mind. Traditional paper filing systems with lots of categories just don't work for macro thinking Ladybugs and Butterflies. A macro organizer is rarely going to take the time to stop and file paper into

different folders, and instead the paper gets piled on the desk or shoved and hidden away. Filing systems are also stored out of sight, which isn't going to work well for visual organizers like Butterflies or Bees. Visual organizers need to see their paper, so filing cabinets and file folders rarely work for these organizing styles.

The right organizing system for your unique style is the secret to having an organized and tidy home office. And we'll be getting to the organizing system options very shortly. But first we need to note that there are three must-have paper organizing systems that every organizing style needs, even though each organizing style requires that its systems look and function a little differently.

- First, you need an *action file*. An action file is where you store the papers you need to deal with immediately. This could be paper you need to read, bills that need to be paid, or items that need to be filed.
- Second, you need a *short-term filing system*. Your short-term system is where you store paperwork that you need to keep, but only temporarily. This could be papers that you will need at tax time, newsletters, schedules, monthly statements, or paid monthly bills.

- Last, you need a *long-term filing system*. Your long-term filing system is where you store paper that you need to keep for a long time, such as your filed tax returns, contracts, policies, or other important documents.

Office Organization That Works for You

Now let's break down some office organizing solutions that work for each different style:

For Crickets

You are a traditional organizer, so luckily most paper filing systems work perfectly for you. You'll need an action file, but this could be as simple as a portable accordion file folder or even a tray system on your desk. When it comes to your short-term and long-term paper filing systems, you have many great options. Filing cabinets, file folders, binder systems—all of these work great for your style, but all of these take time and effort to set up and they also take time to maintain.

A Cricket's natural tendency is to get really detailed when creating categories, but I would encourage you to embrace "good enough"

organization and scale back on the number of subcategories you use for your paperwork. Instead of separating each household bill by category, such as gas, electric, water, and phone, it's perfectly fine to have just one folder just for "utilities." If you are currently trying to sort your paperwork by specific investment, bank, or credit card, it's okay to opt for just one folder for "financial" and move on with your day. Fewer categories will mean less work for you, and that will help the task of organizing your paper seem less daunting.

When it comes to office supplies, you prefer your everyday used items out of sight, so opt for office furniture with lots of drawers or cabinets to hide away your things. If you do have open shelving, get some solid colored containers to organize your supplies so that you still have the feeling of visual simplicity in your space.

For Butterflies

You are the opposite of a traditional organizer in every way. You are a visual organizer, so you like to see your items. And you need fast and simple macro organization, so no filing cabinets for you.

You probably have some paper piles or documents and bills stashed here, there, and everywhere. You may have thought of yourself as

messy, but let me assure you: you are not messy—you just organize differently! Traditional systems aren't going to work for you, so let's talk about what will.

For your action file, you'll need visual paper-organizing solutions that can be hung on your wall. Magazine-rack-style organizers are perfect because they allow you to “pile” your papers in a visual way. Bulletin boards, chalkboards, white boards—anything visual and at eye level will help you remember your to-do's and keep you focused on the tasks at hand.

When you are done with the paper in your action file, your short-term filing system can be as simple as a labeled basket where you can pile your paid bills and monthly statements. By placing paper into a basket, you are naturally filing items in chronological order (January on bottom, then February piled on top of that, then March, etc.). No details or categories required. You can take the time to sort this basket during tax time and shred anything you don't need then.

Last, your long-term filing system can be a traditional filing cabinet, file box, or binder system because these are the papers that you will

rarely, if ever, need to access. You can use detailed systems, just not on a daily basis; you have better things to do with your time!

When it comes to office supplies, you prefer the items you use most often to be out and visual. Opt for open shelving for your office supplies, and if you do need containers, make sure they are clear or have large labels so that everything is really visual. No need to sort your office supplies into lots of categories either; one large labeled basket for all your supplies is good enough!

For Ladybugs

You are a natural hider. You don't want to look at paper clutter, but you also don't want to take a lot of time to sort and file each individual piece of paper either. This is why Ladybugs often have paper shoved and hidden all over the place!

For your action file, you simply need a basket or folder for your desk to collect your incoming paperwork, but be sure to make time to go through and empty your basket once a week.

For your short-term papers, a simple basket where you can stack your paid bills and monthly statements will work perfectly. These will

naturally be in chronological order, so if you do need to access something, it won't take long to find. For you, it's all about speed of putting away. You can simply sort and shred your short-term basket during tax time.

For your long-term paperwork, such as contracts or tax returns, a small filing cabinet or file box will work as you will rarely need to access or maintain this system on a regular basis.

When it comes to your office supplies, you prefer a really clutter-free feel to your office, so opt for drawers, cabinets, or pretty baskets to store your things. No need to have a lot of different categories; large macro-sorted containers are all you need. Ladybugs are motivated to keep spaces tidy when they find them beautiful, so treat yourself to containers you really love the look of. If you do have drawers, be sure to use drawer dividers so that you can still quickly toss your items away, but keep them separated and organized at the same time.

For Bees

You are a visual organizer who craves detailed, micro organization. The biggest issue you have with paper is that it's out of sight, out of mind, so you tend to have piles everywhere. Visual paper organizers

like magazine racks that hang on the wall are perfect for your action file. Opt for ones with at least three or four different sections so you can sort your papers as soon as you enter the house.

Once a week, when you empty and tackle your action file, it's time to move your paper into your short- or long-term filing system or shred what you don't need. Binders and accordion file folders work well for a short-term filing system because you can store these on your desk or on open shelving so they are visual, but it gives you the ability to micro sort your paperwork. Just be sure to clearly label whatever system you choose.

You will rarely need to access your long-term system, so a traditional filing cabinet or file box will be fine for the papers you need to keep for a long time.

For your office supplies, practical and functional is your top priority, so opt for open shelving for easy access to your items. Desk organizers, clear bins, bulletin boards, and other visual organizing systems are must-haves in your home office.

Time to Make the Change

No matter what organizing style you have, I hope spring 2020 is the season when you make organizing your home office a priority. You deserve a beautifully organized and productive space.

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Cassandra Aarssen is the creator of Clutterbug, a home organizing business that provides education, inspiration, and support to over 500,000 families worldwide through her YouTube channel, podcast, and other social media platforms. Cassandra is also the author of three best-selling organizing books, *Real Life Organizing*, *Cluttered Mess to Organized Success*, and *The Clutter Connection*. Cassandra has been featured on The OWN Network, CTV, NBC, CBC, *The Huffington Post*, *The Marilyn Denis Show*, *Popular Science*, and *Women's World Magazine*, and she has been interviewed by countless other news organizations and podcasts.

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Stop the Madness of Spring-Cleaning Your Closet

by Courtney Carver



Why do we do this to ourselves?

Every spring, or even every season, we go through the motions of cleaning out our closets. We go through our clothes, move seasonal items closer to our line of vision, put a few items in a pile to donate, and justify new purchases with a new season. There's always an underlying sense that what we have isn't enough, or our stuff isn't good enough. It's as if a new season alone indicates the need for new clothes.

When you factor in the alluring prices of fast fashion, combined with marketing across traditional media and social media, seasonal shopping is practically a foregone conclusion. I fell for it too.

If it wasn't a new season, I used a new event or frustrating emotion as a reason to upgrade my wardrobe. "Upgrading my wardrobe" sounded so much better than "buying more things I wouldn't wear." This is the approach I took to upgrading my wardrobe without feeling like a complete clothing hoarder. (P.S. For me, it wasn't just clothing, but accessories like jewelry and shoes too.) I'd go through my things a few times a year, especially during spring. This is what my process looked like. (Maybe some of it sounds familiar to you.)

Step one: Go shopping for new seasonal items. Brighter colors, trendier picks, and other bits and pieces that I *really* needed (insert winky face here)! Of course I didn't need them, but I really wanted them. New clothes and new things like belts and purses and shoes promised a better version of myself. With these new things, I was sure I'd be more successful and admired.

Step two: Make room for the new stuff. I'd go through my closet, ignoring anything that I had taken out seasons before and put in containers. With the containers out of sight in other closets and the garage, I didn't give them a second thought. From my closet, I'd remove some of the bright, trendy items with tags still hanging from past seasonal shopping sprees, remove a few items that felt worn out, and ignore other pieces that I never wore but would scoot toward the back of the closet. I thought I'd wear them again someday, so I kept them just in case.

Step three: Feel really good. I'd feel great about myself and how I got my life together "spring-cleaning" my closet, and I'd be excited about my new purchases. Spoiler alert: It was only a matter of days before the shine and sparkle of my freshly spring-cleaned closet and new

clothes wore out, and a matter of weeks before the credit card statement arrived.

Maybe you do spring cleaning better than I did, but if you don't, or if you are just tired of doing the same thing over and over again, I'd like to suggest another way.

What if you only had to clean out your closet one more time?

What if you could feel lighter and better about your wardrobe all year long?

And what if I told you that this suggestion I'm about to make would impact your entire life (not just your closet) in a positive way?

The Ultimate Closet Cleanout

Have fun with this step-by-step guide to cleaning out your closet. This could be the last time you ever have to do it.

Prep

Schedule your ultimate closet cleanout. Put it on your calendar. Depending on the state of your closet, you may need two to five

hours, or even more. Clear the day, hire a sitter, unplug, and make it important.

Make two playlists: one with your favorite happy, uplifting, “everything is going to be okay” music, and one filled with songs that calm you down. You’re going to need good music.

Fill a water bottle. This is a marathon. You will need water (and snacks).

Let’s go!

Empty your closet. Yes, the whole thing. Completely empty. Don’t worry about sorting yet— just move everything onto your bed. If you put everything on your bed, you’ll be motivated to complete the project before bedtime.

If you have clothes in bureaus, storage containers, or other areas of your home, get those, too. Dump them on the bed. While you’re at it, add your shoes, accessories, and jewelry. All the things.

Wash your closet. Make it really clean in there. Air it out.

Take a break. This is a great time to take a walk. Get away from your closet, clothes, and guilt, frustration, or any other emotions that are coming up. Walk and breathe.

Let's go again!

Drink some water and turn up the music.

Move the clothes on your bed into three piles on the floor in a ruthless first-pass sort. Don't give it too much thought—just go with your first reaction. Sort items into the following piles:

Love: “I love these items. They fit me well, and I wear them frequently.”

Maybe: “I want to keep this, but I don't know why.” (You know you have those items.)

Toss: “These items don't fit my body or my life,” or “These items are in poor condition” (repurpose if possible). Your toss pile will include items for donations and the dump.

Keep going until your bed is clear and you have three piles on the floor.

Roll around on your bed, kick your feet up in the air, and scream,
“Almost there!”

Take another break. Drink some water and eat some snacks.

Last pass!

Bag or box up your items to donate and bring them to your car or garage. Get them out of sight immediately.

Throw out anything you’ve deemed trash.

Take a last pass at your two remaining piles. Try on clothing you aren’t sure about, and ask the following questions: “Would I go to the store and buy this today?” “Will I wear this in the next three to six months—or ever?” If the answer is no, start a new toss pile, then immediately add those items to your donation box. Out of sight. Put the remaining items back in your closet or into storage containers if you won’t be wearing them this season.

Now that you’ve gone through all of your items, take a moment to enjoy the space you created and make a decision on how to move forward. If you feel good about where things stand, congratulations. If

this big cleanout has you concerned about the time, money, and energy you've spent on your wardrobe and you are curious about moving forward in a better way, consider trying minimalist fashion challenge Project 333.

Project 333

The rules are simple. Choose 33 items, including clothing, jewelry, accessories, and shoes, as your Project 333 capsule wardrobe. You'll wear only these items for the next three months, with a few exceptions. You don't have to count underwear, sleepwear, or workout clothes. Make sure your workout clothes are working out, though. If your yoga pants spend more time running errands than they go to yoga, count them toward your 33 items.

As you consider what items to include, think about what it would be like to wear your favorite things every day. Eliminate the stuff that you've been holding on to "just in case" and the things that don't fit or feel good on your skin. Work with what you have, and if you do need to add something, consider the versatility, how it works with other items in your wardrobe, and if it will last.

Ask these questions before you buy something new:

- Will I really wear this, or do I merely wish I was the kind of person who would wear this?
- Does this fit and feel good on my body?
- Will it work well with other items in my wardrobe?
- Can I wear it in many different areas of my life?

Not only will these questions help you avoid impulse purchases, but they will help you slowly create a wardrobe that really fits you and your lifestyle. Even if you feel like overhauling the whole closet, an as-needed piece-by-piece approach will be more sustainable. It will give you time to discover what you really want and need in your closet.

Once your challenge is over, decide if you want to try it for another season or simply add and subtract items to account for weather, lifestyle, or body changes. Depending on the space you have available, you may want to put your non-seasonal items out of sight until you need them to free up more physical space in your closet and more mental space in your life.

Even though Project 333 officially lasts for only three months, consider this closet cleanout the beginning of a permanent change, the beginning of finding comfort even in the empty spaces, the beginning of finding better ways to soothe your pain. Yes, you may have to clean things up again, but plan to have less to let go of next time. Say good-bye to spring cleaning, stressful seasonal wardrobe rotations, and the thought of lugging around hundreds of heavy hangers the next time you move.

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Courtney Carver is the author of *Soulful Simplicity* and she has been sharing her journey back to health, her experiences in dressing with less, and other simplicity adventures on her blog, [Be More with Less](#), since 2010. Her new book, *Project 333: The Minimalist Fashion Challenge That Proves Less Really Is So Much More*, will simplify your closet and your life. Portions of this article are reprinted from *Project 333* by arrangement with TarcherPerigee, an imprint of Penguin Publishing Group, a division of Penguin Random House LLC. Copyright © 2020, Courtney Carver.

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How to Declutter Large, Overwhelming Spaces

by Joshua Becker



My journey to owning less began in the garage during my family's annual spring cleaning. It was a Saturday morning. While my wife was going from room to room cleaning the inside of our home, I was working on the garage.

My son was five, and in my perfect dream of a day, he would work side by side with me, cleaning and organizing the garage after the long Vermont winter. In reality, he worked for about three minutes before being distracted by his toys, which he promptly took into the backyard to play with.

It didn't take long for him to begin asking me to play catch with him (as any five-year-old boy would do). But I couldn't play catch because I had to clean out the large garage, full of junk, to prepare for spring and summer.

After hours of working on my project, and during a brief complaint session with my neighbor, she responded by introducing me to minimalism—a lifestyle that her daughter was trying to live out.

I remember looking at the pile of possessions in my driveway—dusty old things I'd spent all day cleaning and organizing. Then, out of the corner of my eye, I caught a glimpse of my son swinging alone on the

swing set in the backyard. And suddenly I realized something: my possessions were not making me happy. Even worse, they were distracting me from the very thing that did bring me happiness (and purpose and meaning).

I had wasted my time and my energy on things that didn't matter. As a result, I missed spending time and energy on the things that did. It was one of the most consequential realizations I've ever made in life—and it occurred while decluttering a large, overwhelming space on an otherwise routine day of spring cleaning.

Over the years since that life-changing day, I have helped literally hundreds of thousands of people own fewer possessions. Often this occurs through my blog, *Becoming Minimalist*, where I post articles two or three times a week that inspire others to own less. Other times, the help comes from other resources, such as my book *The Minimalist Home*; my course, *Uncluttered*; or our soon-to-be-released app, *Clutterfree*, which creates a personalized plan to declutter your unique home and challenges.

And I have found, over the years, that decluttering large, overwhelming spaces is one of the most difficult projects in a home,

but also one of the most satisfying. As I usually explain, “I have never met a single person who is glad they can’t park their car in their garage, or enjoys making their monthly storage unit payment, or doesn’t think often about the mess in their basement or attic that they eventually need to go through.”

Those are the spaces I want to help you with today.

A Step-by-Step Process to Conquer Clutter

How do we declutter those large, overwhelming spaces? These spaces look different from home to home, but the process is often the same because the types of items that end up there are usually the same.

Before I go further, let me say this. Don’t start here. Don’t start your decluttering journey in your largest, most difficult space.

I know that a lot of people, when the idea of decluttering comes along, think immediately of their garage, their attic, or that other really troublesome spot in their home. But these are not the best places to start your journey.

I first heard about minimalism while cleaning out the garage, but my first step toward owning less began inside the house.

Start in easier places where you can get wins, like a living room or even your car or your bedroom. Begin there. Work your way up, strengthen your decluttering muscle, and save some of these overwhelming spaces for the end.

But when you get there, here's a step-by-step process that you can go through:

- 1. Remove the trash first.*

It will be very surprising, when you enter some of these spaces, to see how much rubbish can be removed. Let's face it, many things are just garbage that could've been thrown away years ago. Some overwhelming spaces contain more of these items than others (lots of things that can be thrown get stored in the garage—old paint cans, for example), but almost every large space contains something that can be thrown away immediately before making any hard decisions.

I should mention, at this point, that you should remove all items responsibly. Even if it's trash to you, it may be recyclable. And if you're

talking about chemicals such as old paint or automotive fluids, always ask Google what is the proper way to dispose of them.

2. Continue scanning the area for quick wins.

One of the most important steps we can take is to simply grab a bag or box and fill it quickly with items that can be easily removed from the space. Scan the entire area and fill several bags/boxes of items you can get rid of quickly and easily. No difficult decisions at this point—just grab the low-hanging fruit. You don't even need to open drawers or boxes yet.

Don't get caught up in the minutia of difficult decisions. For this step, you're looking for quick, easy wins. Grab the things already in plain view that you know you don't want anymore—as much as you can.

3. Discard larger items next.

Look for big items that take up lots of physical space, and remove them next. These are things such as cardboard boxes, furniture, large tools, and anything that stores awkwardly.

I realize that sometimes these larger items can be more difficult to dispose of, but starting here is important. By removing the largest items early in the process, you will see quick progress in decluttering the space. You can start to see how you're freeing up space. You can see the difference, the fruit of your labor, which will motivate you as you continue on through the room which just might take more than one day.

A word about donating vs. selling. If you don't desperately need the money, you should always donate to a local charity whose mission you believe in. The only exceptions are valuable items or large items you are unable to transport yourself. Following this rule is particularly important in large spaces that are going to be time-consuming. Trying to sell everything you are getting rid of often adds time, energy, and frustration to an already difficult process. And if you keep records of your donations, you may be able to take a tax deduction.

4. Break your large space into smaller bite-size challenges.

After you've removed the largest items first, what you're going to have left is still a large project. But every large project can be broken into smaller pieces, so begin looking for those opportunities.

Begin the process of working methodically through your space. Use natural physical boundaries to break your project into bite-size pieces: one shelf, one drawer, one side of the room, or even one box at a time. Don't think about the whole project at once. Just start with one small area.

5. Physically touch each item and sort into keep, remove, or relocate.

It's important to touch each item in a space when decluttering because the action forces a decision. Work hard to put as many things as possible into the "remove" pile. You need much less than you think you need. If an item has sat untouched for years in your attic or garage, there is very little chance you will need it in the future.

6. Work until your bite-size piece is completed.

Almost certainly you will not complete this large space in one day, especially if you have years' worth of collected items. But you can still feel a sense of accomplishment by completing a smaller-sized

challenge each time (a shelf, a drawer, etc.) as outlined in the previous step. See each smaller chunk all the way to completion before taking a break or quitting for the day. There is joy to be found in completing these smaller goals. And be sure to drink some water during the process—this is definitely hard work.

7. Organize what's left.

Don't stop decluttering until your space looks spacious and manageable. When you're done, neatly organize the remaining things so the space stays clean, peaceful, and useful.

Before and After

Maybe you'll want some help along the way, someone to come alongside you. I think that is a great idea, especially if it is someone close whom you love and trust and who wants what's best for you. But remember, if you invite someone over to help you, trust their advice.

Also, taking pictures can be helpful. Snap a picture before you start. Then, if you start to get frustrated or feel like you're getting nowhere,

you can look at the original photo and see the progress you have already made.

Large, cluttered spaces take focused effort and time. But you can do it. And trust me, you'll be glad you did.

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Joshua Becker is the founder and editor of *Becoming Minimalist*, a website that inspires 1 million readers each month to own less and live more. He is also the best-selling author of *The More of Less*. His new book, *The Minimalist Home*, was released on December 18.

Got thoughts you'd like to share?

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Personalized Minimalism and What It Gives Back

by Christine Platt



“Local Children’s Author Christine Platt Chats About Having 13 Books Publishing in 2020.” That was the newspaper headline published in *Washington City Paper* on November 14, 2019.

It was shocking for me to read the feature. Even though I’d been interviewed for it. Even though the front page accurately depicted my demanding literary reality. Because, for creatives, there’s something about doing the work and seeing how much you’ve actually accomplished. Somehow the recognition often makes it seem real. I was equally shocked and proud of myself. And humbled.

The *Washington City Paper* feature went live one week after my first TED Talk at TEDxCharlottesville. I’d entitled my conversation, “You Can Become a Minimalist, Yes You!” and encouraged attendees to focus less on the aesthetics of mainstream minimalism and more on the practice of intentional living. Because I sincerely believe that everyone has the ability to live with less, that even people who define themselves as hoarders can change the quality of their lives by making the choice to *try* to live with less.

There’s a reason why I am so passionate about encouraging others to adopt minimalist lifestyles, especially unconventional approaches.

You see, I know firsthand the benefits of intentional living. And these are joys I want everyone to experience.

I share many of these benefits via my online persona, The Afrominimalist. Instagram is my preferred social media platform, the space where I am best known as the Black woman eschewing the barren aesthetic often associated with mainstream minimalism in favor of bright colors, African prints, and playful textures.

I am a part of a growing community of eclectic individuals and families who have embarked on non-traditional journeys to minimalism. Some folk live in airstreams and trailers; others have made their homes in converted school buses or tiny dwellings. We're all living intentionally and we're doing it our own unique ways—and sharing the highs, lows, and hilarious moments. In those little Instagram squares, we represent many different ways that minimalism can look. We are proof that's there's no right or wrong approach to experiencing the joys that come with choosing the best minimalist lifestyle for you.

Because, after all, that *is* the ultimate goal—joy.

Joy is the reason I was so humbled when I read the *Washington City Paper* headline that morning. It was actually divinely fortuitous, a tangible representation of what had occurred since I'd transitioned to minimalism. Yes, writing over a dozen children's books in one year and intentional living are related—there is no way I could have done the former without the latter. For if I can pinpoint one benefit I learned on my journey to minimalism over the past two years, it's that choosing to live an intentional life is much more than letting go of things.

Sure, it starts out that way. With an intense determination and commitment to live in less square footage, to pare down one's wardrobe, and to buy fewer things.

Soon your living space is comfortably smaller. Your closet contains only the clothing, shoes, and accessories you need and love. You boldly walk by sale events with confidence because you know that discounted things aren't a deal if you don't need them. You've become a minimalist!

That's when you discover how intentional living quickly moves beyond the boundaries of your living space and beautifully impacts every area of your life for the better.

Joy in the Journey

I didn't expect to find joy in my journey to minimalism, especially because it began during one of the least joyous times in my life. I was in the midst of a divorce, which required me to move from a spacious home in a rural community to a 630-square-foot condo in the city. And I wasn't alone. I was with my teenage daughter, who had just started high school. She needed me more than ever, and it seemed I had so little to give. I was starting over, physically, emotionally, and financially. To say joy was rare would be an understatement.

Nevertheless, slowly but surely, joy revealed itself. In repainting each room (I had to do it myself because I couldn't afford to hire a contractor). In being intentional with the furniture I purchased (hello, IKEA!). In choosing to keep only the clothing I loved, because there was no room for excess in my small closet. There was joy with each task crossed off the to-do list, with each inexpensive piece of furniture that fit and felt just right. There was joy in curating my

home and doing it with intention, whether the decision was out of necessity or optional.

Our home became a place a respite, a haven that was constantly filled with surprises. I was surprised at how little I needed. I was surprised at how easy it was to conform to my new lifestyle. I was surprised at how changing my space and perspective to only have what I need allowed more room for clarity.

There was so much unexpected joy in the journey. And I was indeed grateful, because I surely needed each win.

I don't want to give the impression that joy was immediate, that there was an instantaneous magical conjuring of happiness. Let me clear—joy came in spurts, in surviving and figuring it all. But joyous moments *did* come. And that's how I learned the true power in living with intention.

Joy in Intention

Once my house and wardrobe were simplified, I had room for more of what mattered. Not for more things, but in terms of how I wanted to spend my time. Hours that were previously devoted to cleaning were

now available to be filled...or not. Moments that were once dedicated to shopping for things to fill my home or closet were now free to be rescheduled...or not. I had time to choose, time to be intentional.

Freedom—this is one of the core benefits of minimalism. What was I going to do with all this newly available free time? How was I going to spend my most precious resource?

Let me tell you, after being intentional with what you own, it's impossible not to be purposeful with one of the most valuable assets you have. It's how I found myself spending more time on what brought me joy—creating.

I filled those hours with creating stories for the world and for myself, for online communities and traditional publishing houses. I found myself being able to say yes to writing projects that might have otherwise been impossible, because now there was more time. And each yes brought more joy.

Naturally, this joy also found its way into my work. It influenced the stories I agreed to write and how I wrote them. Soon I looked up and discovered that I was the headline—I was chatting with a reporter

about writing more than a dozen books. All because I chose to live an intentional life that allowed me that freedom.

Joy in It All

Without a doubt, sharing my journey to minimalism and the unexpected joys is among my favorite things to do. It ranks right up there with showing people my minimalist space and hearing them say, “Wow, there’s so much color!” Sharing my journey is another opportunity for me to remind people that the benefits of minimalism are less in the aesthetics and more in the practice of intentional living.

When the pressures of conforming to the traditional aesthetics of minimalism are removed from the equation, living with intention seems an easier formula for most people to achieve. Forget about conforming to an all-white, barren aesthetic and instead commit to keeping only those things you need. And let go of those things you don’t. Discover those areas of your lifestyle that consume your time and energy with little to no reward.

And once you eliminate the things and practices in your life that no longer serve you, commit to being intentional with how you fill those

spaces. Because that is where joy can be found. And I promise, ultimately you'll discover that on your journey to minimalism there is joy in it all.

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Finding My Peace Amid the Chaos of Other People

by Michael Robertson



For millennia, humans have been looking for a way to bring order to nature's chaos. We taught wild animals to sit still. We made plants grow in neat rows. And we've upgraded from caves to homes that we divide into sleeping spaces, eating spaces, and bathing spaces.

And yet a portion of the world still feel that the world is too busy, too cluttered. And that's the world that Marie Kondo took by storm. With her system for living a clutter-free existence, households across the continent and around the world were held up to the light and were poked, prodded, and sniffed at to see if they contained any joy.

In those same households, for every person who breathed a deep sigh of satisfaction, there was a loved one who said, "What on earth are you doing?" and "Hey! Don't throw that out!"

What is it that drives us to bring order into our lives (everything from categorizing animal species to tidying the cutlery drawer)? And what do you do when the people you live with don't see the world through the same lens?

The Pursuit of Clarity

Despite being the “creative” one in my family (most of my siblings and siblings-in-law work in finance, business, or tech), I’m not one of those creative types who thrives in chaos. I’m the opposite. I crave order and rules. My personal mantra is “Planning is freedom.” And trust me, I understand that this isn’t the most endearing of mantras. No one reading this is thinking, *This guy sounds fun!*

So, why do I and (if I may be so bold to presume) a lot of you, endeavor to create order in a universe of chaos? Why is it so important to have a place for everything and everything in its place?

For me, it’s about mental clarity. When I walk through my house, which is also where I work, my mind is already full of a laundry list of things to do: articles to write, meals to prepare, and a literal list of laundry. If, as I walk through my house, objects are out of place, it can feel almost like a house of horrors where discarded sweaters, abandoned magazines, and opened mail jump out and scream at me, “Fold me,” “Pick me up,” and “Read me thoroughly to ascertain whether I should be recycled, shredded, or filed in the appropriate folder until tax season.”

Despite all these inanimate objects shouting at me, my house is not a pristine sanctuary of order, a shrine to the deity of good housekeeping. From where I'm sitting now, I can see a stack of books on the floor, an unfolded blanket on the couch, and breakfast dishes left on the dining table. And the reason that I tolerate this clutter? Partly, it's because my practicality still has the power to trump my pedantry. It is not a museum, after all. It's a bustling, vibrant, fun-filled, love-filled home. The other reason is that I know that, as soon as I stand up, I'll have this place whipped into shape in a jiffy.

Another great weapon in my arsenal is being able to defer the full-fledged tidying by getting things “out of sight, out of mind.” (They're not really out of my mind, but their screams are muffled when they're in another room.) One of the ways I do this is that I have a basket near the bottom of the stairs, so that anything left in the living room, dining room, or kitchen by my wife or daughter (mostly my daughter) can simply be dropped into the basket. Hey, presto: the living room is tidy, I'm happy, and if my daughter is looking for anything, chances are it's in the basket. This lets me have a clear space (both physically and mentally) to get on with the task at hand.

I also have a more severe version of the basket that I call “two-phase junk removal.” Some quasi-abandoned items or repeat offenders get reassigned to a blue tote in the bottom of my cupboard. If no one has missed them in one year, out they go—I used to hold on to these items for six months, but I realized that while my skis, in summer, are just another annoyance to be constantly moved around the back of the closet, in winter they are much more enjoyable.

Leavers and Putters

My family has a great propensity for leaving things lying around. They don't see the disorder I see. When they tidy up a room, I still have half an hour's worth of tidying to do before I can sit down too.

British comedian Jon Richards, who, like me, is often inaccurately called OCD, suggests there are only two types of people in this world: *Leavers* and *Putters*. If you live with loved ones who don't know how to stack a dishwasher, who put cartons in the recycling without flattening them, and who think throw blankets is an instruction, not a description, then you, my friend, are the Putter in the relationship. A Putter always ends up with a Leaver. Mainly because, as Richards puts it, “You can never have two Putters together because they will

kill each other over which way the beans should face in the cupboard...and you can never have two Leavers together because they will die of dysentery.”

Historically, the Putter have often been women, required by society’s constraints to be unpaid servants, picking up after children and husbands. But “putting” and “leaving” (like most things) are not gendered traits. Both my wife and daughter are Leavers and, like most Leavers, they tend to leave their car keys, toys, or glasses in whatever convenient, unmemorable location is at hand.

We Putters, on the other hand, put things where they belong because (a) we’re not animals, and (b) it keeps the house orderly and make things easier to find later on. As a result, we are often called on to find lost items for lackadaisical Leavers.

When you’re a Putter, finding things is like doing a spot-the-difference puzzle or conducting a Robocop scan. When I glance around the room, all the items that are out of place appear highlighted in red outlines on my scanner. It has reached a point now where my seven-year-old daughter will simply ask her mom to find me so that I can take a “daddy look” to find whatever it is she is

looking for. (When I was young, we'd ask my mom if she could have a "mother look.") My daughter has to pay for this service by saying that I am "the best looking" in the house.

For those of us who are constantly aware of disorder, we are far more likely to do something about it before anyone else. This often results in defensive cries from the Leavers, "I was about to do that." And we Putters feeling like we do *everything*.

I accept that neither my role nor my wife's will change. She's not going to wake up one morning and magically have become a Putter, because maintaining the same level of order that I desire just isn't as important for her. But, for some reason, she loves me and my idiosyncrasies, so she's willing to meet me halfway. (It's probably closer to a third of the way, but let's not burst any bubbles.)

Covert Cleaning Operations

Although I like a place for everything so that everything can be put back in its place, I realize there's no point in creating a fantastic organizational system if I'm the only one who understands how it works. Chances are, I'll be the only one who'll end up following it. Which is why, if you ever visit my house, you'll find labels placed on

some of the shelves and drawers, and all over the jars and containers in the pantry.

My wife even bought me a label maker. She may have been mocking me, but I interpreted it as loving and supportive enabling, a sign that she'd like me to provide her with more guidance on where to put things. So now, when someone opens the cupboard, there is a nice little reminder that, hey, there's a system in place.

I try hard not to be militant. I recognize that this complex system for filing tea towels is not *de rigueur* for everyone. I also recognize that it's how my mind works and that it's my responsibility to do what I need for me to have peace of mind, as do my wife and daughter.

That's why we have a rule in our house that, just because one of us is working, tidying, washing up, it doesn't oblige the other people to get up and help. We all have our own pet things we "have" to do before we can relax. And I'm okay with the fact that the issues that push my buttons may not necessarily be shared by the people who make me happy. I'm just happy to be one of the people who makes them happy.

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Michael Robertson is a Vancouver-based writer and content strategist. He has worked in New Zealand as a high school teacher and in Monaco as a private chef. He is continuing to work on himself. He is the founder of Reasonable Words—a content strategy and copywriting company—the main benefit of which is that it allows him to stay at home to be a loving husband and father.

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How to Raise Tidy and Self-Sufficient Children

by Angela Brown



I'm the fourth oldest of nineteen children. (Same mom and dad, no twins, just one kid about every year.) Early on, Mom and Dad realized they had a choice: train the children to clean, or drown in housework trying to do it all themselves.

They decided to train the kids.

They started by dividing us into three groups: the six Big Kids, the six Middle Kids, and the six Little Kids. (The baby wasn't born yet.) We had a rotating buddy system where each week a Big Kid would take care of a Little Kid 24/7. And Dad and Mom would take care of all the Middle Kids.

Using this arrangement, they taught us to clean in pairs every single day. And their plan worked—the proof was all over the house. When visitors came to our home, they were almost always astonished at how clean and tidy the house was. “Are there really 20 people living here?”

A household doesn't have accommodate 18 or 19 kids before the little people are called to pitch in. If you have one or more kids, you don't need to clean up after them 24/7 and run yourself to the brink of insanity before taking action. You have the same choice my parents

faced: train your kids to clean starting now, or drown in housework alone. Tackling housecleaning as a family works for daily housework as well as major clean-ups, such as spring cleaning.

Before I get to teaching how you can enlist your kids to help out with housework, let me describe some more what cleaning looked like in the house where I grew up, because it illustrates many of the principles I urge for all families.

It Started with the Bell

In our house, there was no “Go clean your room!” yelling from Mom. A bell rang twice a day, and it meant you dropped what you were doing, grabbed your buddy, and ran to the family room. It was job time.

When we had all gathered in the family room, Mom would say, “Sound off.” This was a cue for roll call. In chronological order, we called out our names.

If you or your buddy were absent, you got a “gig” (same as having a strike against you). If you got three gigs, you had to roll a die. There were five unpleasant consequences associated with numbers on the

die. Six was lucky. If you rolled a six, you got off scot-free with no punishment at all.

We knew why our parents took this all so seriously. Mom and Dad believed that since we all lived in the same house, we were all to be contributing members of the household. And they believed we were all capable of doing our part.

Mom and Dad made a list of the cleaning jobs in the house. Then they broke the jobs down room by room and assigned everybody work to do. Dad had a master job chart with an inspection list on a clipboard.

Once Mom confirmed we were all there in the family room, she'd announce "job time" with a deadline. "It's job time for 30 minutes, then dinner. If you don't pass inspections, you don't eat. Go!"

The clock started and there was a mad dash around the house, with each Little Kid helping a Big Kid like me with chores. The Little Kids picked up the toys and put laundry in the hamper. They put pillows back on the sofas and tucked shoes away. The Big Kids vacuumed and swept floors, scrubbed toilets, and washed out sinks. The Middle Kids wiped down furniture, tables, doorways, and doorknobs. Everybody did age-appropriate tasks to help get the work done.

Because we had the same job all week, it made sense to keep our space clean throughout the day so we weren't rushed at inspection time. This was a lesson in responsibility to your buddy who was counting on you to pass inspection.

Cleaning the house with our little buddies taught us leadership and management too. And when the Little Kids refused to help, we learned negotiation skills.

Once the house was clean, we headed back to our own bedrooms, where we made the beds. We folded laundry and put all the socks, underwear, and pajamas away.

If somebody finished early, they'd check in with a sibling to see how they were doing. And if that sibling needed a hand, the speedy cleaner would jump in and help. Teamwork at its finest.

Five minutes to inspections, we all raced into the bathrooms and cleaned up for dinner. We knew there would be a people inspection too. Each Big Kid was responsible for themselves and their little buddy. Then the bell would ring again. Showtime.

Back to the family room to sound off once again, only this time, we'd all lined up with our buddies for inspection. Dad checked our hair, teeth, faces, necks, ears, elbows, hands, and knees to make sure we were clean.

Those lovely words "You pass round one" would ring with delight in our ears. Once we passed the people inspection, we headed for round two: job inspection.

There were high fives for the little buddies as we ran to the room we just cleaned to wait for Dad to inspect the room. He'd check the tops of the picture frames and door frames for dust. He'd look for cobwebs and smudges.

"You pass again!" he'd say. Hooray! More high fives. On to round three.

We'd run to the bedrooms to wait for Dad, cleaning a bit more and listening for his footsteps. He'd walk into the room and look around, lift toy box lids, and open closet doors and drawers.

"You pass again! You may go to dinner."

We'd clap and squeal with joy before dancing to the dinner table, where we'd all enjoy a meal after a job well done.

Hooray for systems that work! Hooray for parents willing to work the systems!

I think I know what you're wondering: *How do I get my kids to clean like this?* Of course, you don't have to do it just as my parents did. I'm going to give you the starting points for designing your own effective approach.

Before you can implement any sort of effective system, though, you must first train your kids to clean on their own. This takes hard work and dedication, but the payoff is completely worth it.

Buying In Before Cleaning Up

In my experience, one necessity for training kids to clean is to enroll them in the process. Expectations vary based on each child's age and ability, but the premise is the same. They need to feel—and actually be—a part of managing the house cleaning.

Teach to your kids' learning styles.

First, realize that every kid is different. They each have their own learning style, and you'll get through to them faster if you take into account these styles.

- *Auditory*—Some kids listen and they understand what you say because they heard it.
- *Visual*—Other kids need you to show them what to do. By watching and observing, they understand and can repeat the motions they saw.
- *Tactile*—Then there are kids that “feel” the clean. They have to touch the insides the sinks and run their hands over the tabletops to know that an item is clean.

In teaching children how to clean, it's wise to combine all three approaches so you ensure that they understand.

Let the kids decide what to clean.

When you, as the parent, pick the room or area to clean, that's *your data*. When the kids pick the room, that's *their data*. Kids like to argue with other people's data and will often refuse to take part. But they

will never argue with their own data. They will undertake their responsibilities and be invested in the outcome.

Consistent with getting the results you need, give your kids as much freedom as you can to make decisions about what to clean and perhaps when and how to clean it.

Let the kids feel smart.

When teaching kids how to clean an area they have chosen, avoid lecturing. As much as possible, use questions to help them come up with insights and solutions on their own.

After all, we all want to believe our ideas make sense and we are smart. When kids give you the answers, it makes them feel smart. Your praise reinforces their pride and self-confidence.

Consider this example.

“What do you think we can find hiding under the cushions of the sofa?”

“Let’s look.”

“Yes! Let’s Look. And see how easy this cushion lifts up. Hey, what’s under here?”

“Pennies, Legos, and a butter knife.”

“Yes! And I see dust and crumbs too. How can we get this gunk out of here?”

“With a vacuum.”

“Yes! And did I ever show you how a crevice tool works? It fits right here on the end of the vacuum hose. Awesome, right? Who wants to give it a try?”

“Me, me!”

“How will we know when the couch is clean?”

“Because all the gunk will be gone.”

“Yes, again!” More high fives. “And who knows how to put pillows back on the sofa?”

“Me, me.”

Do you see how this works? Now that they've helped and it was their data, they can do it again by themselves because they feel like they were the ones who came up with the solutions. And when you go to inspect, they will expect you to be looking under the cushions because you've set them up for success.

This is the kind of training that gets results from start to finish.

Maintaining Cleanliness with Systems

Cleaning is an ongoing requirement in any home. You don't want to have to keep reinventing your approach to housework. You need habits and routines. You need systems.

The beauty of creating a system and sticking with it is that eventually everyone knows the drill. Expectations are clear. Consequences are a given. There are fewer arguments and hiccups because the system keeps the house in motion.

My parents were geniuses at systems. So you may want to consider their choices as you work out systems that are suitable for your own home.

Get your little workers lined up and ready to go.

In the house where I grew up, when we heard the bell, we'd drop whatever we were doing and go to the family room. The bell did the hard work. Mom didn't have to scream over the sound of 18 kids.

The roll call was a system that verified everyone was present. We got so used to hearing the order of the names that, if someone was missing, everyone knew it right away. The system exposed or promoted you.

You probably don't have quite as many kids as my parents did. But still, you need a way to gather the troops, make sure they know their responsibilities and how to go about them, and then send them on their way.

Check their work.

In our house, instead of a weary mom and dad trying to do all the chores, they held inspections. The inspections took less time to perform than the chores themselves, so it was a win-win for everyone.

The inspections taught us accountability to Dad, who inspected our work. When he gave us his approval, we felt the pride of a job well done. And we proceeded to enjoy the reward—dinner.

You can teach your kids to pursue excellence by inspecting their work and holding them to a standard. Have reasonable consequences and rewards. (In your house, something besides dinner might be the reward. For example, it might be screen time.) Give kids a chance to try again if they have fallen short. Recognize honest effort and give liberal praise where it's deserved.

Insist on teamwork.

At each inspection in our house, if we finished early, we helped a sibling out. Why did we care? Because we knew that one day we would be in a bind and the others would come to help us. It was teamwork karma.

If you have more than one kid, use house chores to help them develop their own systems or habits of working together. Maybe you can have them negotiate with each other how they're going to split up the labor, or make trades, or check each other's work.

You're not just getting a house cleaned. You're raising children to be successful adults.

Training Is a Blessing

As a professional house cleaner, I've had the privilege of working in some of the finest homes on the planet. And in those homes are some of the most entitled kids. Little is required of them, and they rarely lift a finger to help out with chores. As a result, those children are growing up without learning lessons about responsibility and teamwork. They're missing out on experiencing the satisfaction that comes with accomplishing something through hard work.

I worry about kids like those, because without a solid framework of training and systems, kids go out into the world missing the skills they need to thrive.

Parents can teach important skills at home with simple, everyday things like housework. When everyone participates in doing chores, it's cooperation in action. Consequences and rewards teach kids responsibility and accountability. They learn that nothing is free, including a clean home to enjoy.

The job of teaching kids to be tidy and self-sufficient starts with effective training and keeps momentum going through maintaining effective systems. I suppose you could also say it starts by ringing a bell.

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Angela Brown has been working as a professional cleaner for more than 25 years. She is the founder of Savvy Cleaner Training and the author of *How to Start Your Own Cleaning Company*. Her popular YouTube channel, “Ask a House Cleaner,” offers advice for other professionals looking to take their cleaning business to the next level.

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From our Co-Founder, Joshua Becker

The Minimalist Home: A Room-by-Room Guide
to a Decluttered, Refocused Life

Colophon

Becoming Minimalist — becomingminimalist.com

Becoming Minimalist is designed to inspire others to journey towards minimalism in life... discovering the joy of intentionally living with less... and realizing what that means for your unique lifestyle.

No Sidebar — nosidebar.com

No Sidebar is a collaborative blog about minimalism, simple living, and happiness. We want to help you turn down the noise that disrupts the quiet of your heart and mind and soul.