

Less is More: 3 Tips to Spring Clean Your Life



LIVE WELL UTAH



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3 TIPS TO
SPRING CLEAN
YOUR LIFE

Do you find yourself surrounded with clutter? Try these three tips to spring clean your life and clear away some of the clutter.

Ahhh...Spring! A time of re-birth, baby animals, green grass, flowers and budding trees; basically a season for renewal all around. Historically, spring was the time homemakers cleaned the winter coal soot off the wall coverings and fixtures of their homes. A deep clean on the inside of the home, no doubt, reflected the freshness of the season outside. Here's my deep thought for you today: What kind of "coal soot" is covering your "insides?" Don't worry—this isn't about colon cleanses or detoxifying your diet. It's bigger than that. I'm talking about clutter.

Clutter is all around us; our lives are cluttered with words, images, data, sounds and STUFF. Big stuff, little stuff, stuff we don't even remember we have because it is buried under other stuff or stuffed into boxes of stuff. Clutter is our generation's "coal soot." We bring it into our lives to fill a need, be it emotional or physical. But for some reason we let it stay long after the need has been filled. My challenge to you is to clear the clutter and spring clean your life.

Here's how:

1. Create a baseline. Just like in budgeting or weight loss or any habit change, it's difficult to make changes unless you have a good idea of what's happening to begin with. For example, assess your clutter. Is it mostly clothes, toys, papers, tools or books? Start by bringing all of the same type of item together in one place. Start small, say, with shirts. Get all your shirts in one pile.
2. Assess the value. Now that you have all your shirts (or whatever item you've chosen to start with) go through

the pile one by one. Evaluate whether each item brings you joy.

3. Keep, trash, donate, or sell. Your number one goal is to only keep the items that are bringing you the most joy and the rest you can send on its way. And it's okay! There will be lots of items that have good use left in them. But if you're not using them, do what you can to get the items into the hands of someone who will.

Less truly is more. The tiny house movement really might be onto something! When we own less, we have less to clean and less to trip over in the dark – just think of the health benefits! Not to mention the potential to lift moods and bring harmony into a home; can you imagine a weekend without nagging your kids to clean their bedrooms? Fewer items to put away paired with habits of giving every item a “home” creates an opportunity for neatness.

Now, I'll share a few cautions:

1. Beware of the temptation of storage bins. While the storage industry has made leaps and bounds in developing items that are fashionable and attractive, that doesn't necessarily mean you need them. After you've decreased the number of belongings, you might just realize you don't need so many bins and pockets and cubbies to hide things in so your home has the appearance of tidiness. Tidiness is a natural result of owning less.
2. Evaluate your buying habits and motivations. As you are letting go of things you no longer need, think about why you purchased/acquired the items to begin with. If there are habits you need to change, apply those habits to future purchases and learn from the experience.
3. Be kind to yourself. You'll no doubt have some misgivings about the items you're letting go of. The money spent on those items is gone, and guilt over making a purchase you didn't necessarily use responsibly

or no longer need isn't worth it.

The feeling of a lifted burden is invigorating and refreshing. Kind of like spring... and cleaning the coal soot out.

This article was written by Rebecca Mills, Extension assistant professor in family consumer sciences and 4-H youth development

Source:

Kondo, M. (2014). *The life-changing magic of tidying up: The Japanese art of decluttering and organizing*. New York: Ten Speed Press.

Tips for Tackling Summer Cleaning



TIPS FOR TACKLING SUMMER CLEANING

LIVE WELL UTAH

Summer is a great family time and also a great time to teach kids cleaning skills. These tips will help jobs move along smoothly. After cleaning, plan a fun activity as a reward for participation. Your family will love it!

- Always clean top to bottom. When you dust, start at the top and work your way down.
 - Take all your cleaning tools with you into each room to avoid unnecessary trips back and forth.
 - Turn off the phones and TV.
 - Eliminate clutter. An uncluttered home looks better than one that is dust-free, but strewn with odds and ends.
 - Clean as you go! It takes a lot less time to remove new dirt than old and to put things away as you use them than it does to clean and store the piles that accumulate.
 - A house that smells fresh will give the impression of cleanliness. Leave baking soda on carpeting for the night to absorb musty odors and vacuum in the morning.
 - Keep a doormat or big astro-turf mat on the porch to cut down on tracked in dirt.
 - Keep a basket in the kitchen for mail, newspapers, car keys, etc. to help reduce clutter.
 - Keep a laundry hamper in every bathroom.
 - Put family members in charge of making their own beds and picking up after themselves.
 - Always pick up the TV room before bedtime, and start the dishwasher.
 - Prioritize and decide what is most important.
 - Delegate by getting the entire family involved.
 - Make a checklist, and when a job is completed, check it off so you can see how much you've accomplished.
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This article was written by Carolyn Washburn, Utah State University Extension associate professor, carolyn.washburn@usu.edu.

Spring Into Action – Tidy Up!

Author – Ellen Serfustini



“Spring is beautiful and smells sweet. Spring is when you shake the curtains and pound the rugs, and take off your long

underwear, and wash in all the corners.” As noted in this quote by Virginia Cary Hudson, when winter has said it’s last goodbye, it’s time to open the windows, shoo away the doldrums and tackle the annual spring cleaning! Along with Spring comes thoughts of crisp fresh air, newly budding flowers, singing birds and a sense of renewal. Getting organized and doing a bit of spring cleaning, helps to bring that wonderful fresh feeling into your home.

History tells us that spring cleaning was born thanks to old wood burning stoves or oil furnaces. The arrival of spring meant warmer temperatures and home heating was no longer required. However, the need to clean the ash and soot left behind on all household surfaces, including draperies and exposed surfaces was clearly evident. Today, modern heating systems eliminate such mess.

Spring cleaning is more than just attacking areas of your home not normally cleaned. It’s combining thorough cleaning and organization of your entire home. If we are honest with ourselves, we’ll admit our normal routine can be lax and infrequent. Spring cleaning will ensure you make up for those hurried days of sliding a dust rag carelessly across the book case.

To get started –

1: Make a detailed list of what needs to be done in each room. Be sure jobs that you only do once or twice a year are also listed. Perhaps you might take your large comforters to the laundromat, or your drapes and winter coats to the dry cleaners, store your winter clothes and bring your warm weather clothes out of hiding or check the smoke detectors. If all these odd jobs are on a list, you won’t forget to do them.

2: Gather together all the cleaning supplies needed for the tasks. Nothing is worse than getting ready to do your task and then finding out that you are missing the one component needed

to complete your task. A large bucket or caddy is ideal for holding cleansers, rags, sponges, and other essentials. They can be toted easily from one room to the next.

3: Decide if you'll have help. If so, assign tasks or rooms. Be sure to leave potentially dangerous tasks to the adults. Don't assign cleaning ceiling fan blades or disposing of chemicals or pesticides to a young child. If you'll be tackling the cleaning alone, you might want to do it in short periods over several days to avoid burnout.

4: Make your cleaning fun. Be positive. Think of it as a 'feel good' exercise—one that will really help you to feel good about yourself and your clean, organized environment. Turn on some lively, fun music and move to the beat. Open the drapes and let the sunshine and fresh air in.

5: Concentrate your efforts. Do one room at a time.

- Before getting down to the nitty-gritty, first remove the messy clutter.
- Make a box for trash and a box for charitable donations. Get rid of items you no longer need or use.
- Take time to organize as you complete each task.
- Don't take smaller stacks of items and create larger ones. That's not cleaning, that's reorganizing existing clutter.
- Empty wastebaskets and clean furniture tops, then proceed to dust, wash or shampoo.
- A good rule is to start at the top. Clean chandeliers, light fixtures and pictures first, then work your way down to tables, chairs, window sills and finally the floor. Rather than shuffling furniture from one room to another in an effort to shampoo the carpet, save time and back-breaking effort by covering each furniture leg with a small plastic bag. Then simply move the furniture aside to clean the area and then return to its original spot.
- As you clean each room, make a list of items to be repaired. If you need to replace a light bulb or caulk the bathroom shower, make a note. It's not necessary to repair it right

away, but you'll want to be sure you complete the repair in a timely manner.

When all the tasks are finished, stand back and admire a job well done.



Ellen Serfustini is a Family and Consumer Sciences agent in Carbon County. She has worked for USU Extension for 17 years. Her specialties include food safety, nutrition, and finance.