

Home health really boils down to a few good *habits*, a few simple goals, and a good plan.

Why It Matters

To begin, you should understand that your home—clean or dirty—doesn't change your value as a human being. Your self-worth doesn't come from that. And while shame can spur us on to make some good changes, don't do it because you think it will make you more lovable. You're already valuable simply because... you're you.

Do it because there are good reasons for having a plan to keep your home clean and organized.

First, when you are keeping your home clean, you will be healthier and happier.¹ Research has shown that people with clean homes are healthier than people with messy ones because they tend to be more active and less stressed or depressed.^{3,4}

Second, when you keep your home clean you will be setting a great example for your kids. Your habits become theirs.

Third, a clean home will actually make your life better. You will avoid a ton of frustration just by having what you need and knowing where your things are.

Making a Plan and Scheduling it

There are two steps to having a clean home. The first of these is making a *plan*, and, when you make a plan, you need to write it down. This may seem silly, but research has proven that you are way more likely to be successful when you write your goals down.^{5,6}

Start by taking a few minutes to jot down some basic goals. They can look anything like:

- Cleaning home every week.
- Getting laundry done every week.
- Cleaning out refrigerator end of each week.
- Deep cleaning once a month
- Organizing books.
- Organizing closet.
- Getting rid of things that are no longer used or wanted.

Next, break your goals into small *tasks* that you perform weekly, monthly, or yearly. A dirty house can look overwhelming, but if you break it down into smaller jobs it will seem more doable in the day you have it scheduled. To be even more successful, put a *reminder* on your phone.

Your plan should fit into your family's lifestyle. So, either pick a day to get it all done or do what I do and spread your tasks throughout the week. That way you're only doing a little each day. There is no right or wrong way to do it. Just pick and stick with what works for you.

The second part of keeping a clean and healthy home is developing good habits. Research has shown that it takes a little over *two* months, 66 days on average, before a behavior starts to become automatic. It may take even longer if it's something you don't enjoy doing.⁷

Getting your family in the habit of picking up after themselves will reduce the amount of work that has to be done. The best way to do this is by setting the expectation and then giving them an extra job to help them remember in the future. It is easy to get frustrated when they don't listen because they are literally making your job harder. Choosing to calmly let them know you love them but need them to learn how to clean up, even if that means cleaning up extra right now, will help them learn faster and make your home more peaceful.

What if I Have NO Motivation?

In some cases, there is just no desire to do anything, especially house work. If that is what you are feeling, there are things that may help.

First, know that the things you don't want to do often give the best feeling when they are done. Another way of saying this; the things we want to do least are the things that are best for us to do. If you are lacking desire or are depressed or unmotivated, you can help all of that by doing the things you don't want to do. It sounds strange to say that doing the things you don't want to do will help you do the things you don't want to do, but it is true!

Second, if you follow the advice of setting goals, making a plan, and getting into good habits, you may find cleaning to be much less terrible than you thought. There is no promise you will love it, but it can become something you are happy about when you are done.

Finally, and unfortunately, sometimes in life we do need to do things we don't feel like doing. Cleaning may just be one of those. Adding music, audio books, or company while you clean may make it a little more tolerable, but it may be something you just push through so that you have a healthy home for you and your family.

Resources include:

1. Web MD. Speed-cleaning to Kill Household Germs. Found at <https://www.webmd.com/parenting/speed-cleaning-germs#1>, accessed 11/11/2019.
2. United States Environmental Protection Agency. Office of Air and Radiation. Clear Your Home of Asthma Triggers: Your Children Will Breathe Easier. Found at https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2013-08/documents/asthma_eng.trifold.pdf, accessed 11/11/2019.
3. Ryback, R., MD. The Powerful Psychology Behind Cleanliness. Psychology Today. Found at <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-truisms-wellness/201607/the-powerful-psychology-behind-cleanliness?amp>, accessed 11/11/2019.
4. Indiana University. Tidy House, Fitter Body. ScienceDaily. ScienceDaily, 3 June 2010. Found at www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2010/06/100602121059.htm, accessed 11/11/2019.
5. Gardner, S. and Albee, D. "Study focuses on strategies for achieving goals, resolutions" (2015). News. 266. Found at <https://scholar.dominican.edu/news-releases/266>, accessed 11/11/2019.
6. Milne, S., Orbell, S., & Sheeran, P. (2002). Combining motivational and volitional interventions to promote exercise participation: Protection motivation theory and implementation intentions. *British journal of health psychology*, 7(2), 163-184.
7. Dean, J. (2013). *Making Habits, Breaking Habits: Why We Do Things, why We Don't, and how to Make Any Change Stick*. Da Capo Lifelong Books.
8. United States Environmental protection Agency. Safer Choice. Found at <https://www.epa.gov/saferchoice>, accessed 11/11/2019.
9. Andersen, B. M., Rasch, M., Kvist, J., Tollefsen, T., Lukkassen, R., Sandvik, L., & Welo, A. (2009). Floor cleaning: effect on bacteria and organic materials in hospital rooms. *Journal of Hospital Infection*, 71(1), 57-65.