

organize your spring cleaning

enjoy
glistening
results and
family fun



By Adriane M. Weinberg



FISH's attention to detail leaves homes looking sparkling clean.

Ahhh. The clean, fresh smell of a home after spring cleaning. Some people look forward to this annual ritual. Others simply ignore it. Those who do it love the smell, look and feel of a thoroughly clean house after it's been closed during the seemingly endless cold-weather months. Spring, or Vernal Equinox, begins on March 20. It is one of two days a year when day and night are the same length. A time of renewal, it prepares for life to return. Spring cleaning replaces negative energy from the dark winter months with positive energy and steadily increasing light helps life to grow.

Stand in your kitchen, bedroom or any other room, inhale deeply to notice the smell and then exhale. Do you let out an “ahhh” or “ughh?” Look out the windows. Can you see the view clearly, without squinting? Inspect items such as hanging light fixtures, furniture and carpeting. Do you like what you see or smell? If so, you can skip to the next article. If not, following are some organizing ideas to maximize your spring cleaning results and some tips to make it doable and fun. Yes, fun!

The north-to-south approach works best. Start cleaning the northernmost parts of the rooms in

your house (ceilings) and continue heading southward until you reach floor level. Otherwise you will unwittingly sabotage your hard work. There is little point in dusting furniture and then vacuuming the floors if you then clean the ceiling fan blades and that dust settles on the furniture and floors you just cleaned.

Using a duster with a telescopic handle, remove any cobwebs from ceilings and high parts of walls. Look to see what's directly below ceiling level. Vacuum window-treatment valances and the mounting hardware, then continue with the window treatments, front

and back. You'd be amazed at the stuff that gets on the back. The upper part of windows should be washed before the lower part. Wipe the tops of tall furniture, the refrigerator and cabinets before their remaining parts. Clean framed artwork and tchotchkes (knickknacks) displayed on wall shelves. Keep moving south until you get to floor level. On this level, first clean under things. For example, clean under the refrigerator before cleaning the kitchen floor. You get the idea.

The same principle applies to areas outside the living areas in your house, such as the garage and unfinished basement. Just look up and that's where you start. Look down a bit at a time to see what's next and continue cleaning in the north-to-south direction.

Some practical tips to organize your spring cleaning:

- Batch tasks to save time.
- Schedule blocks of time and honor the appointments as if they were with someone else or they won't happen.
- Don't do too much at one time or you likely will burn out.
- If the scope of the project feels overwhelming, break it down into manageable pieces until it's comfortable.

If your house is cluttered, you won't be able to clean it. So first it'll be necessary to de-clutter. Clutter is everything that's either not useful or enjoyable. Donate, sell or toss all clutter. Complete this part before spring cleaning. The amount of your excess stuff will determine how long it will take. Most people severely underestimate how long this process takes. For any future large project, allowing

three to four times longer than you think it will take should give you a more realistic time frame.

The National Soap and Detergent Association reported that getting rid of excess clutter would eliminate 40 percent of housework. Whether you do it yourself or pay someone else, wouldn't you like to reduce it by almost half?

OK, here's the fun part. Get the family involved and delegate tasks to each member. Each person who lives in your house can be responsible for some amount of its upkeep. Pick the areas you want to clean. Decide if you want everyone to work together or separately. Assign age-appropriate tasks to the kids. Even the little ones can contribute something and they will learn valuable lessons throughout the process.

Turn on lively music. Make a game out of it by creating a challenge with special privileges or rewards for the winner(s). For example, whoever finishes his/her task or area first gets to stay up 1 hour later (or, if it's your over-tired spouse, 1 hour earlier), or go out for ice cream or another special treat. Be creative; think about what would work best for your family. Repeat the game until your house sparkles. Hint: If everyone wins something at the end of the challenge, you likely will get future offers of help!

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