

Story URL: <http://news.medill.northwestern.edu/chicago/news.aspx?id=33359>

Story Retrieval Date: 4/15/2007 10:21:58 PM CST

Spring cleaning: 'suck it up and stop whining'

by MELISSE P. HINKLE

Apr 10, 2007



Courtesy of Laura Dellutri

Spring cleaning is a breeze for Laura Dellutri, "The Healthy Housekeeper."

10 spring cleaning tips from The Healthy Housekeeper

1. Get organized. Use tools that will save you time. There are many new innovative products that are designed to make the job easier.
2. Start at the top and work your way down. Dust and dirt falls, so it's best to dust ceilings, light fixtures blinds and curtains first.
3. Get motivated. Use a systematic approach. Turn on some great music, enlist helpers and make a chore list. Stay focused on one room at a time. Clean the floor last.
4. Dust the right way. Use extension dusters for the high surfaces. I like the Swiffer Duster.
5. Vacuum differently. Conventional vacuums with cloth or paper bags only pick up about 30 percent of the dust from your carpets and blow up to 70 percent back into the room. Invest in a High Efficiency Particulate Air Vacuum to capture up to 99 percent of dust and dirt.
6. Update your window-washing. Don't do windows the old-fashioned way. The best bet is microfiber cleaning cloths for small areas and a professional window squeegee for windows.
7. Take care of your floors. For hard floor surfaces use a mop that will not spread around bacteria. I like the Swiffer Wet Jet. For dull floors that have lost their shine buy Quick Shine.
8. Give moisture back to wood surfaces. Use lemon oil on all those porous wood surfaces that have suffered through the winter's dry heat. For scratches try new Trade Secret Furniture Restoration System.
9. Wash your walls. Use a mop handle with a large towel wrapped around it and pinned to the base. Dip the towel into an all-purpose cleaning solution and wring it out. For black scuff use a Mr. Clean Magic Eraser.
10. Protect carpets. Eighty-five percent of the dirt that comes into your home comes from the bottom of shoes! Call an ICCRC certified cleaner to come and thoroughly clean your carpets. Be sure to reapply carpet protector on the all carpeting. Scotchgard Carpet Protector from 3M is a good one.

In Laura Dellutri's eyes, spring cleaning started with the cavemen.

"It's just an age-old ritual and it's been practiced since prehistoric times when the cavemen came out of their

caves for the winter and used tree branches to sweep [them] out," Dellutri said. "That's my philosophy."

A Kansas-based mother of five, home-cleaning expert and author of the new book "White Couch, With Kids!?", Dellutri is affectionately known as the "The Healthy Housekeeper."

She said three factors motivate people to spring clean: warm weather, company coming over and her "caveman" philosophy. But even this bubbly housekeeper admits spring cleaning has met with procrastination in the Midwest this year.

"It's going to be pushed to the end of April when the weather's nice," she said. "Boy, when that sun starts shining, you say 'OK, I have no excuse anymore.'"

It doesn't feel like spring has sprung in the Windy City. And some Chicagoans said dropping temperatures have kept them from dropping their clutter.

Nolan Schiff, 32, of Glen Ellyn plans to clean his basement and the side of his house, but the weather has been holding him back.

"It hasn't provided many days when we can do it," he said.

A father of two, Schiff said he definitely cleans more during the springtime than other times of the year and frequently donates clothes and toys to charity.

Lauren Lullo, 22, of Melrose Park cleans her closet every year and also donates unwanted items.

"I'd feel bad throwing clothes away," Lullo said.

Mindsets like Lullo's have caused consignment shops to multiply, said Bryan Glaza, general manager of the Southwest Management Co.

This Chicago-based business works with charities to solicit donations of used clothing and other household items on behalf of the Vietnam Veterans of America and the Military Order of the Purple Heart.

"The whole notion of donating instead of discarding has really grown over the years and it continues to grow," Glaza said. "The whole environmental and recycling movement have -- I think it has stuck in everyone's consciousness to the point where they're thinking 'how can someone else reuse something I had' instead of just throwing it away. And that's why you're seeing the proliferation of thrift shops, not just in Chicagoland but throughout the country."

Spring cleaning typically means heavy traffic for consignment shops and cleaning services. Even though many Chicagoans said the weather is setting them back, donation organizations and cleaning services haven't seen any significant drops.

Glaza said the weather hasn't had a significant effect on his company, which contracts with phone solicitors who then schedule donation pickups. Trucks are sent out to collect the items, which are then resold at thrift shops. The charities receive money on a per-pickup basis.

"In terms of cycles, the spring time is one of our strongest times of the year," Glaza said.

For the Southwest Management Co., pickups are scheduled in advance, so barring bad weather on pickup day, donators typically follow through, he said.

But Lullo, who said she donates to Southwest, hasn't gotten around to gathering her items together yet.

"It was spring and now it's winter again and now it's just piling up even more," she said.

Dellutri offered three tips for spring cleaners who are having a hard time picking up their brooms: get a cleaning service, teach your children how to clean or just do it.

"You've gotta be organized, have everything you need, drink a little bit of caffeine, put your iPod on and just go for it," Dellutri said. "Basically, suck it up and quit whining and you'll be fine when you're done."

Those who can't make friends with their vacuum will pay a price for cleaning services like Merry Maids that

sweep the city year-round.

A one-time cleaning of a two-bedroom apartment can cost between \$150 and \$400, said Sarah Smock, director of marketing for Merry Maids.

"[Business] actually does increase during spring cleaning," Smock said. "Most of our business comes from people who have the service every week or two. This time of year it comes from people who are getting a one-time cleaning."

Compared to the beginning of the year, one-time cleanings are up by about 15 percent, she said.

"I really think that it is something more psychological than physical," Smock added. "I think people look at spring as a time of renewal and they want to throw up the windows. And I think it's a time when people feel like they want a fresh start and I think cleaning is part of that."

The healthy housekeeper agrees.

"It's just that there's a good feeling associated with clean," Dellutri said.



NORTHWESTERN
UNIVERSITY

Northwestern Home | Calendar: Plan-It Purple | Search
Medill School - 1845 Sheridan Rd. Evanston, IL 60208
Last updated 4/12/2007

World Wide Web Disclaimer and University Policy Statements
© 2006 Northwestern University

Medill