

HOW TO KEEP HOUSE WHILE DROWNING *Client Handouts*



KC DAVIS struggle
care

licensing

How to Keep House While Drowning
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These client resources are intended to accompany the book "How to Keep House While Drowning" and assist providers in helping their clients engage with the material and apply it to their lives.

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SECTION ONE

CLIENT handouts

CONTAINS:

- What are care tasks?
- Six pillars
- Care tasks are cyclical
- 5 things tidying method

WHAT ARE CARE TASKS?



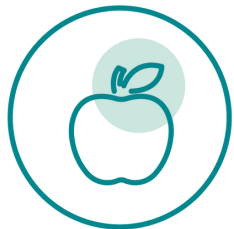
Home Care

Cleaning, Tidying, Laundry,
Dishes, Organizing, Maintenance



Hygiene

Showering, Brushing teeth,,
putting on deodorant



Feeding

Planning meals, eating,
grocery shopping,
food storage & management



Medication & Health

Taking medication, making &
attending appointments, resting



Caregiving

Performing care tasks on behalf
of those under your care



Movement

Getting out of bed, exercise,
joyful movement

THE SIX PILLARS

The book *How to Keep House While Drowning* is based on six foundational principles:



Notes

THE SIX PILLARS

CARE TASKS ARE MORALLY NEUTRAL

Care tasks are morally neutral. Being good or bad at them has nothing to do with being a good person, parent, man, woman, spouse, friend. Literally nothing. You are not a failure because you can't keep up with laundry. Laundry is morally neutral.

YOU DESERVE KINDNESS REGARDLESS OF YOUR LEVEL OF FUNCTIONING

So much of our distress comes not from the unfolded laundry but from the messages we give ourselves. Lazy. Failure. Unlovable. You do not need to be good at care tasks to learn how to develop a compassionate inner dialogue. You deserve kindness and love regardless of how good you are at care tasks. Challenging these critical message you give yourself will go a long way in relieving your distress.

REST IS A RIGHT NOT A REWARD

You do not have to earn the right to rest, connect, or recreate. Unlearn the idea that "chores" (aka care tasks) must be totally complete before you can sit down. Care tasks are a never-ending list and if you wait until everything is done to rest you will never rest.

Notes

THE SIX PILLARS

SHAME IS THE ENEMY OF FUNCTIONING

Shame is a horrible long-term motivator. Most of the time it is paralyzing, compounding the barriers one already has to completing care tasks. This sets up a cycle where the uncompleted task creates shame, which in turn saps motivation and energy, pushing one only to avoid the task altogether. Even if we do manage to shame ourselves into action, we find that those who work in shame also rest in shame. Instead of relief, taking a break only brings feelings of guilt. Instead of doing care tasks out of a motivation of distress you can learn to do them out of a motivation of self-care. With compassionate inner dialogue and gentle skill building you can begin to create and enjoy a worthwhile life.

YOU CAN'T SAVE THE RAINFOREST IF YOU'RE DEPRESSED

You are not responsible for saving the world if you are struggling to save yourself. If you must use paper plates for meals or throw away recycling in order to gain better functioning you should do so. When you are healthy and happy you will gain the capacity to do real good for the world. In the meantime, your job is to survive.

GOOD ENOUGH IS PERFECT

Throw away what you think care tasks "should" look like and work towards a way of doing them that works for YOU. The goal is not to do them to Martha Stewart's standards. You should be aiming for good enough. The extra energy to move from good enough to hastaginstagramgoals could be better spent on something that really matters. That is why we don't say "good enough is good enough" but instead "good enough is perfect."

CARE TASKS ARE CYCLICAL

We tend to think of care tasks as existing only in the two static states of "done" and "undone," assigning a morally good value to the state of doneness. In reality, there are several states to a care task, each one as morally neutral as the next. When we stop chasing the "done" state as morally superior to the other states, we become more comfortable with the normal cycles of care tasks and learn how to make each one function best for us. Take a moment to visualize the different stages of the care tasks in your home.

LANGUAGE SHIFT

"This room has reached the end of its functional cycle. It's time to reset the space."



5 THINGS TIDYING METHOD



Grab a trash bag and pick up all the trash you can find. When you are finished move all empty boxes and large trash items along with your trash bag and set them by your front door. Do not take the trash out.



Walk around and find all the dishes and place your dishes either in the sink or next to the sink. Do not do the dishes.



With a laundry basket, pick up all of the laundry and shoes you can find. Put the laundry in the laundry room (or by the front door if you do not have a washer) and move on to the next step.



Take your laundry basket and, room by room (or space by space), put away all of the items that have a place in that room, place items that belong in other rooms into your laundry basket, and make a pile of things that do not have a place. When you are done, take your laundry basket of items to the correct rooms



You should now have only a pile of things that do not have a place. Put on a fun show or podcast and find permanent homes for as many things as you can. You may also choose to get rid of things you no longer use that have no space in your home.

NOTES / BRAINSTORMING



feelings



pain



anger



lonely



shame



guilt



joy



fear

SECTION TWO

DISCUSSION *guide*

CONTAINS:

- Care tasks
- Motivation
- Rest
- Perfectionism

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

care tasks

WHAT MESSAGES DO YOU GIVE YOURSELF WHEN YOU STRUGGLE TO COMPLETE CARE TASKS? WHERE DID THOSE MESSAGES COME FROM?

HOW WOULD YOUR LIFE BE DIFFERENT IF YOU WERE COMFORTABLE WITH EVERY STAGE OF THE CARE CYCLE?

WHAT FEELINGS OR THOUGHTS ARISE WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT DOING CARE TASKS AS A KINDNESS TO FUTURE-YOU?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

motivation

WHAT FEELINGS OR BELIEFS ABOUT CARE TASKS PREVENT YOU FROM STARTING?

HAVE YOU EVER FELT A BURST OF MOTIVATION TO CHANGE EVERYTHING AT ONCE? WHAT USUALLY HAPPENS?

HAVE YOU EVER FELT A BURST OF MOTIVATION TO CHANGE EVERYTHING AT ONCE? WHAT USUALLY HAPPENS?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

rest

WHAT UNWRITTEN "RULES" DO YOU HAVE ABOUT REST? WHERE DID THESE RULES COME FROM?

HOW DO YOU FEEL WHEN YOU TRY TO REST BEFORE EVERYTHING IS DONE?

WHAT UNWRITTEN "RULES" DO YOU HAVE ABOUT REST? WHERE DID THESE RULES COME FROM?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

perfectionism

WHAT MESSAGES DID YOU RECEIVE ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF DOING CARE TASKS "CORRECTLY" OR "COMPLETELY"?

HOW OFTEN DOES ENVIRONMENTAL PERFECTIONISM GET IN THE WAY OF COMPLETING CARE TASKS? HOW DOES ECO-GUILT PREVENT YOU FROM ADOPTING ADAPTIVE ROUTINES?

WHAT ARE YOUR GLASS BALLS? WHAT ARE YOUR PLASTIC BALLS? WHAT THINGS DO YOU NEED TO DE-PRIORITIZE RIGHT NOW FOR BETTER FUNCTIONING?

NOTES / BRAINSTORMING



feelings



pain



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SECTION THREE

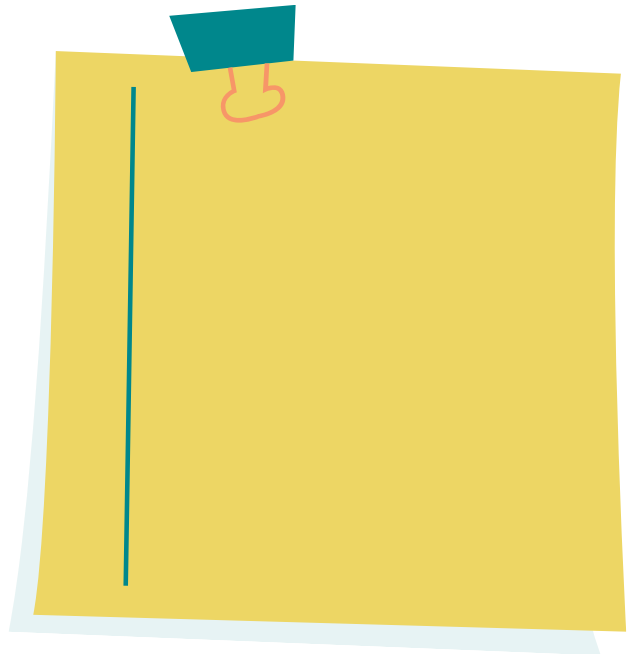
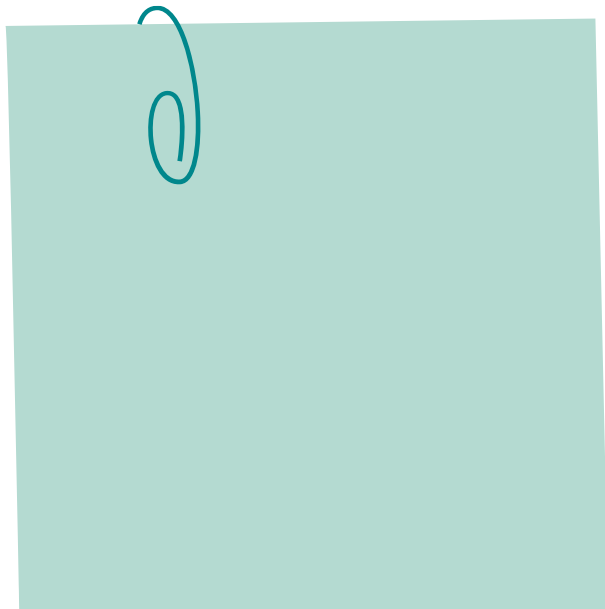
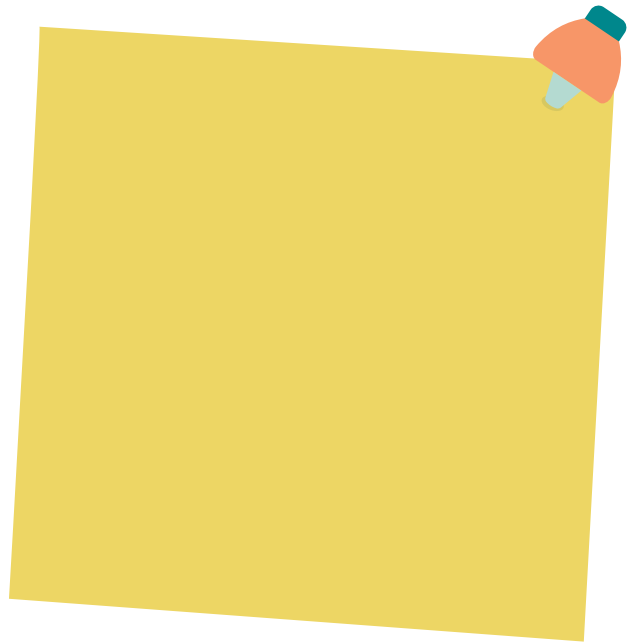
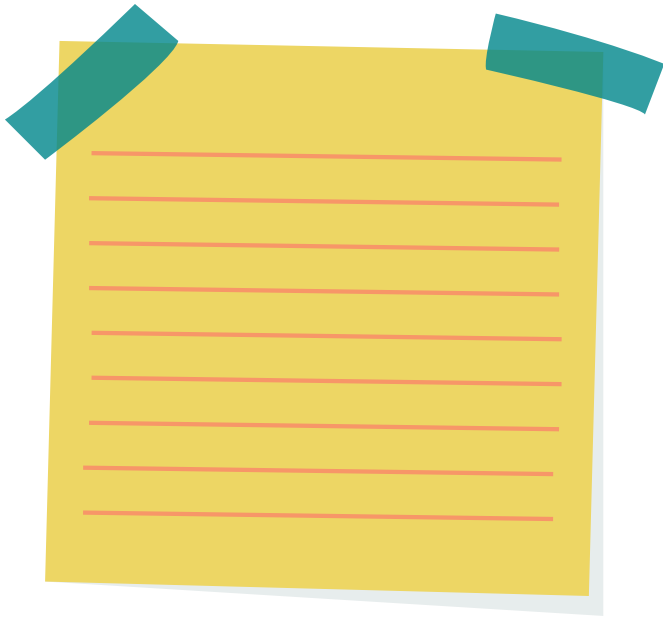
CLIENT
worksheets

CONTAINS

- Care task messages
- Care task motives
- Determining the function
- Overcoming overwhelm
- Finding systems that serve you

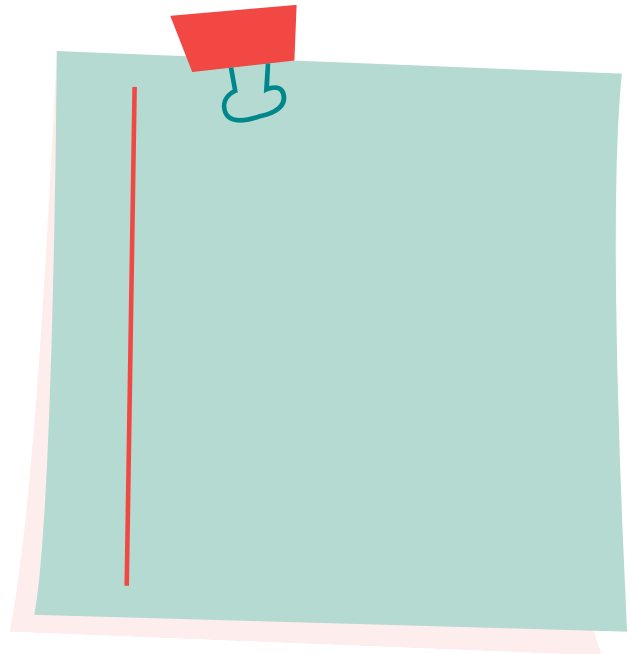
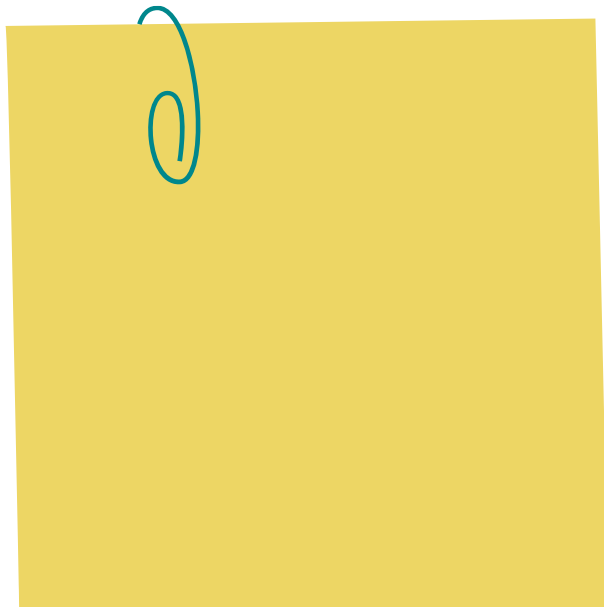
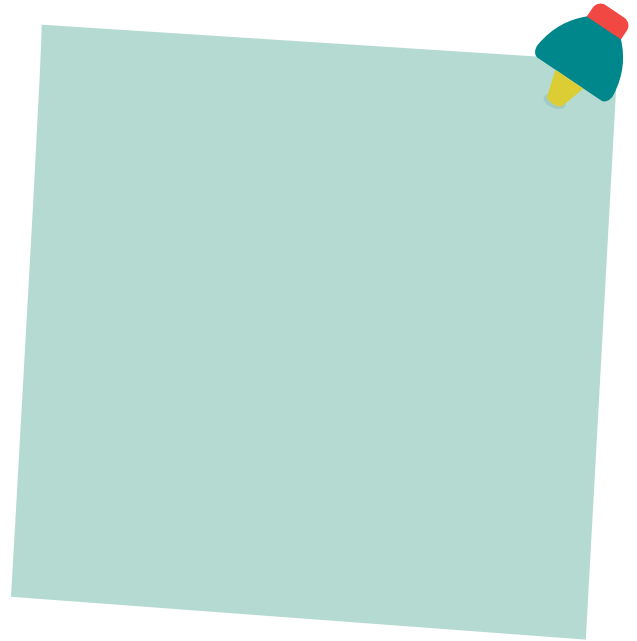
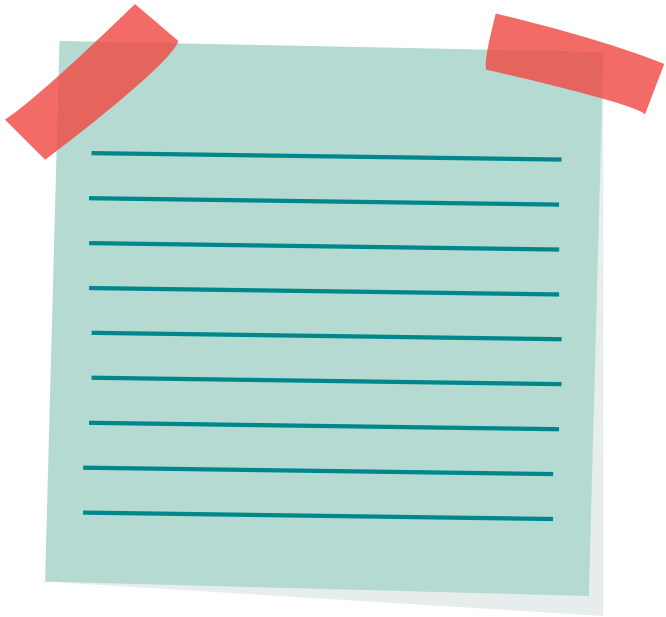
FILL OUT THE STICKIES WITH

MESSAGES YOU RECEIVED ABOUT CARE TASKS



FILL OUT THE STICKIES WITH

MESSAGES YOU CHOOSE FOR YOUR LIFE



CARE TASK MOTIVES

RIGHT NOW I DO CARE TASKS BECAUSE

- ☐ I have to
- ☐ It's expected of me
- ☐ I feel shame if I don't
- ☐ I feel pressure from others
- ☐ I feel like a failure when it's undone
- ☐ I feel anxious when it's undone
- ☐ I feel like I don't deserve care unless it's all done
- ☐
- ☐

I WOULD LIKE TO DO CARE TASKS BECAUSE

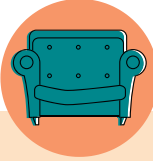
- ☐ It's a way of caring for myself
- ☐ It makes my life better
- ☐ I feel good when it's done
- ☐ I feel motivated to care for myself
- ☐ I deserve a functional space
- ☐ I can do just as much as I can handle today
- ☐ I know it's not a moral obligation but will help me function
- ☐
- ☐

DETERMINING THE FUNCTION



Health & Safety

In what way does this task protect your health and keep your environment safe?



Comfort

In what ways does this task increase your feelings of comfort in your home?



Happiness

How can this task be done in a way that the results make you feel happy?

Directions: next to each care task, write down what the different layers of functioning. Remember the comfort and happiness layers are usually different for everyone.

CARE TASK

Cleaning floors

HAPPINESS

I like the way the room looks when the floors are clean and mopped.
It feels peaceful

COMFORT

Room for my kids to play, I don't like bits of dirt sticking to my feet when I walk barefoot

HEALTH & SAFETY

To remove tripping hazards, prevent bugs, mold, or bacteria

DETERMINING THE FUNCTION

CARE TASK

HAPPINESS

COMFORT

HEALTH & SAFETY

CARE TASK

HAPPINESS

COMFORT

HEALTH & SAFETY

DETERMINING THE FUNCTION

CARE TASK

HAPPINESS

COMFORT

HEALTH & SAFETY

CARE TASK

HAPPINESS

COMFORT

HEALTH & SAFETY

DETERMINING THE FUNCTION

CARE TASK

HAPPINESS

COMFORT

HEALTH & SAFETY

CARE TASK

HAPPINESS

COMFORT

HEALTH & SAFETY

OVERCOMING OVERWHELM

Below is a list of common techniques to overcome feeling overwhelmed and stuck when it comes to starting a care task. Try each one and write how it worked. Play with different combinations and see what works best for you!

TECHNIQUE

HOW DID IT GO?



Motivation Playlist: make a playlist you only use for care tasks with tunes that make you feel like moving!



Category Cleaning: break the task down into categories. ie: pick up all the clothes.



Timer Tasks: set a timer for 5 or 10 minutes and give yourself permission to stop when it's done.



Bundling: choose something to you can enjoy during the task: a Netflix show, a podcast, an audiobook, etc.



Body Doubling: Ask a friend to hang out with you. They don't have to help-- just be there!



Functional Reward: Plan to do something fun with the space when the task is done. Ex: take a bubble bath after cleaning the bathroom



MY MORALLY NEUTRAL

Plan for the Day

today's capacity

☐ big energy ☐ feeling good ☐ low-key ☐ survival mode

to-attempt

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. <input type="checkbox"/> | 5. <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. <input type="checkbox"/> | 6. <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. <input type="checkbox"/> | 7. <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. <input type="checkbox"/> | 8. <input type="checkbox"/> |

rest plan

reasons to celebrate today:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I listened to my body | <input type="checkbox"/> I accomplished something |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I cared for someone | <input type="checkbox"/> I survived |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I laughed or saw something beautiful | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I was flexible and aware enough to make adjustments based on me & my family's evolving needs | |

now break it down into steps

to-do

to-do

to-do

to-do

to-do

to-do

to-do

to-do

FINDING SYSTEMS THAT SERVE YOU

The key to finding a system that works for you is (1) understanding the function of the care task, (2) realizing there is no "right" way, only the right way for your family, (3) creating a system around your habits (not habits around your system). For those reasons, the only person that can tell you what system is right for you is you. Below I'll share with you some ideas and questions to get you thinking. Remember, it takes time to find what works!



Let's
try
it!

Not
for
me

Family Closet

Many families with small children elect to put everyone's clothes in the same big closet (or room). This makes dressing everyone in the morning easier, putting away laundry faster (since it all goes into one location), and usually centralizes where the dirty laundry ends up. Bonus points if you can place this location near the washer and dryer.

Basket System

How much of your laundry really needs to be folded? Certainly not underwear, pajamas, or athletic shorts. How much stress and time could you save if you instead sorted unfolded laundry into baskets? If you do other people's laundry. Can you sort into personalized baskets and allow them to fend for themselves for folding?

Hang it All

Some people find that hanging everything straight from the dryer is a more manageable system. Hanging makes it easier to see everything and arguably takes less time than folding.

Category Washing

If you washed loads by person or by type of clothing you wouldn't have to spend time sorting. Taking that time or hassle off the task can make all the difference for some people

Change the Timing

For some people washing a small load everyday is more manageable. For others, having a designated wash day is preferable since they don't have to think about laundry but once a week.

Purge & Pair Down

Having less clothes might be the answer for your laundry woes. If you had fewer clothes on hand laundry loads would smaller. However, if you missed a day you might end up with no clean underwear!

Outsource It

Can you afford a wash and fold? If laundry is really your bug bear why not outsource it completely and move on with your awesome life?



IDEAS FOR SYSTEMS

Let's
try
it!

Not
for
me

Closing Duties

Making daily dishes a part of your closing duties allows you to do a manageable load every day without having to try to "keep up" all day long.

Lighter Dishes

If you have energy or mobility limitations, switching heavy glass dishes out for light plastic dishes can make the task of doing dishes less draining. Even mentally, lighter dishes can make the task feel less burdensome.

One Dish Per Person

Some families have luck assigning each person one cup, plate, and bowl (sometimes color-coded). Those old enough are responsible for their own dishes and the limited amount means you never end up with an overwhelming sink full of dishes.

Right into the Dishwasher

If you have a dishwasher, consider taking the time to unload your dishwasher first thing in the morning (perhaps even getting up a little earlier to do so). That way, every dish that is dirtied can be placed straight into the dishwasher.

Paper Plates

If you have barriers that make doing your dishes a serious impediment to your quality of life, consider switching to paper plates, even if just for a season. Postpartum, bereavement, depressive episodes, or health problems are seasons that require all of your energy and attention.

Dishtub

Some families find that purchasing a dish tub really increases the functionality of their space. This way, dirty dishes can be placed into the tub, keeping the sink clear for other needs.

Category Washing

If your stage of life is such that dishes just seem to pile up, taking the time to place your dishes into categories before washing can help with overwhelm.

Remember:

Even if you never find the right system, care tasks are morally neutral and you deserve kindness, rest, food, and fun even if the dishes aren't done.

Storage and Organization

Let's
try
it!

Not
for
me

Baskets

Often the difference between messy and organized is a well-placed basket. The key is to put the basket where you are already making messes. Shoe pile by the front door? Basket. Laundry on the stairs? Basket. Trash on your nightstand? (trash)basket.

Hanging Junk Drawer

If you have junk drawers or bins, a clear hanging shoe rack on the wall or back of a door can ensure you always have a place for small items and that you can see them all easily.

Visual Storage

Some people love to see clear surfaces and open rooms. But not everyone cares for that aesthetic nor needs that type of function. If you wish to have your items visible you can design your own storage systems around that. Clear bins, 3M hooks on walls, trays, extra open shelves are all ways to give each item a place and keep it out for ease of use and memory.

Trays for Tables

There are currently 40 items sitting on my kitchen island. Yet it looks tidy because those items are compiled onto a large decorative lazy susan, a glass fruit bowl, a cloth basket of baby snacks, and four "to-do" trays. Even with the containers there is plenty of open space giving function for all things cooking, hobby-ing, and working.

Closets do not have Rules

I once realize my hallway closet was a bit of a one-way street. I was always putting (and eventually cramming) things in, including coats, but almost never taking anything out. I had a hard time remembering what was in it and so mounted a bar of hooks on the outside to hold one jacket and one raincoat per family member. After realizing the one downstairs closet was a silly place to hold items almost never accessed, I re-located all the inside items to an upstairs closet, installed shelves, and used it instead for storing items previously cluttering up the kitchen and living room. Closets have no rules, you see. Do you have a closet that could better serve you?

Labels

As beautiful as custom printed labels and bins are, often the pursuit of aesthetic perfection holds back real functional improvements. Post it notes or masking tape do just fine and putting a label even on a piece of shelf denoting an items permanent "home" can be helpful when tidying.

Papers and Mail

Important papers are often easiest to store in an accordion file. If you struggle with mail upkeep, a visual system may be helpful. Writing the due date and hanging a bill from the fridge or a cork board. Some like to scan and save sentimental items then throw away the physical copy.

NOTES / BRAINSTORMING



feelings



pain



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lonely



shame



guilt



joy



fear

SECTION THREE

CARE TASK templates

CONTAINS:

- Closing duties
- Weekly tasks
- Monthly maintenance

CLOSING DUTIES

What are closing duties?

Closing duties is a way of being kind to future-you. It's a short list of care tasks are done every night before you clock out for the night and rest. Typically closing duties take anywhere from 15 minutes to an hour. Try to keep them short! If you are just starting I recommend just choosing one closing duty until it feels right to add more.

How do you chose closing duties?

The best closing duties are those that set morning-you up for success. Think about 1-2 tasks that set up what you need for the first few hours of the morning. You can also choose a task that you typically dislike, but would be better if it were done daily. For example, if doing dishes is something you dislike, and therefore put off for days, you may want to unload and reload your dishwasher as a part of closing duties. It will be less overwhelming to do daily and prevents it from becoming a huge task that overwhelms you. Lastly, think of 1-2 things that just make you happy. This could be setting your coffee machine to automatically brew a fresh pot every morning before you wake. Or perhaps you like your slippers by your bed so your feet aren't cold when you wake.

What is a survival day?

A survival day is any day where you are stressed, exhausted, or having a tough time. On these days, a shortened list of closing duties allows you to care for yourself while still getting to rest and recharge.

What does it mean to clock out?

It means you are done with care tasks for the day! You rest, recharge, and do something you like--even if there are things left undone.

example closing duties

- Unload/reload dishwasher
- Fill up formula water
- Take meds
- Throw away diapers
- Sweep kitchen

example survival day closing duties

- Place bottles in clean dishwasher and run again
- Pick up any large chunks of food off kitchen floor
- Take meds

CLOSING DUTIES

	TASK	CLOCK OUT TIME
SURVIVAL DAY		
		AFFIRMATION:
		I care for my space so my space can care for me.

"You can add a motivational quote here. Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut."

- *Quote Source*

MAINTAINING A SPACE

A simple system to get you started

Daily maintenance of your space is something with which a lot of people struggle. Trying to keep everything "just so" is usually an exhausting and unpleasant way to spend the day and when it becomes overwhelming, most of us just give up entirely. It's for this reason that a simple plan to keep a space livable is better than an overwhelming plan to keep a space perfect. One of the easiest ways to do this is to look at a space in your home you would like to keep livable. Perhaps this is your bedroom or the kitchen. If you are a parent you might pick a child's room or playroom. Think of 4-6 tasks that, if they were done every week, would make that space very livable. For example, let's say I look around my bedroom and decide that (1) if the cups and dishes were taken out, (2) if the sheets were changed, (3) if the laundry was thrown into the washer and started, and (4) if trash was thrown away and taken out, it would be a very livable space. You might decide to repeat some twice a week. Then, decide which part of your day is most routine and add doing that one thing to your routine. Perhaps most days you get ready for work or every day at noon you put kiddos down for a nap. Hang the list in the room so you can see it and complete your task. Voila! You're on the road to maintaining your space.

M

Take out diapers

T

change sheets

W

Throw trash away

TH

start laundry

F

Take out diapers

S

Throw trash away

MAINTAINING A SPACE

The previous example is a great starting point for maintenance. Some people like the idea of a weekly cleaning schedule and have the lifestyle that allows for that sort of thing each day. This is neither necessary nor superior to cleaning at hoc or waiting until you have a large chunk of time to knock out several things--but some might prefer it. Because I am a stay at home parent, I played around with the idea of a cleaning schedule--trying to do one cleaning task each day so things didn't become overwhelming. I used one chart for the upstairs and one for the downstairs. To set myself up for success I wrote down my rules & reminders for the list:

Reminders & Rules

This list is here to help me. I do not serve this list.

This schedule is here to make my life easier not to make it harder. The schedule isn't for telling me what I must do everyday. The way it serves me is that each day is by taking the burden of decision making away. I don't have to feel as though I have to clean everything and I don't have to waste time analyzing which task should be prioritized. I get to do the thing for today and then focus on other things knowing I'll get to the rest of it.

Missing days is morally neutral

I can miss days or decide to do something different anytime I want or need to. This week I skipped the dusting day.

I do not have to complete the whole task

There are four bathrooms in my house. I don't ever clean all four in one day. I simply pick the one I think needs cleaning, or the most convenient one, or even the one I did last week because I don't want to spend very much time on it. I'll get to them all eventually and even if they are dirty some of the time if I'm always doing something it will always look better than it was. Most days that read "clean kitchen" I just pick a few things to clean in the kitchen. Perhaps I wipe down the counters and clean the microwave one week, the next week I'll do the stove. This approach means I always feel good that I am caring for my space and avoid the anxiety that makes me feel as though I am a servant to the list.

WEEKLY TASKS

MON	
TUE	
WED	
THU	
FRI	
SAT	
SUN	

REMINDERS:

**This is not a
scorecard.**

**This is not a
judgment on
days that you
miss.**

**Missing days
is morally
neutral.**

**This chart
exists to
serve you.
You don't
exist to serve
this chart.**

MONTHLY TASKS

Decide what will keep your house functional

Choose between 6-12 tasks (you may want some tasks to be done twice a year). Below are some suggestions. Assign each task a month. Remember, while there are a lot of suggestions out there on how often to do these things, there is no universal right way. The right way for you is anything that keeps your space functional without overwhelming you. You may be tempted to add several things to each month. If you are already in the habit of doing several things each month then go for it. However, if you are just starting out it may be best to stick with one and see how it goes. Some items on this list may simply not matter to you and that's ok. Some may seem like too much for you and it's ok to skip those items. It's better to have a low-key home care plan that you feel empowered to do than a perfect one that is left undone or adds stress to your life. Don't forget you can always ask or pay for help with these items. Having a plan allows you to predict and prepare.

- Change air filter
- De-salinate coffee pot
- Deep clean carpets
- Vacuum & flip mattresses
- Clean oven
- Vacuum couches
- Wash curtains
- Wash windows
- Deep clean fridge/freezer
- Clean under furniture
- Clean out & organize pantry
- Clean inside cabinets/drawers
- Purge & donate items
- Clean gutters
- Purge & clean closets
- Clean walls

MONTHLY TASKS

JANUARY

FEBRUARY

MARCH

APRIL

MAY

JUNE

JULY

AUGUST

SEPTEMBER

OCTOBER

NOVEMBER

DECEMBER

NOTES / BRAINSTORMING



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