



treading water

A COMPANION WORKBOOK FOR THE BOOK
HOW TO KEEP HOUSE WHILE DROWNING

KC DAVIS, LPC

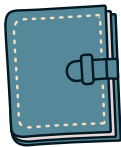


Introduction

HOW TO USE THIS NOTEBOOK

This is a companion notebook for the book *How to Keep House While Drowning*. If you have not read the book, it is strongly recommended that you do so before working through this notebook as it is building upon concepts that are introduced in the book. As stated in the book, it's important to have a foundation of self-compassion and moral neutrality before attempting to increase your functioning with care tasks.

There is no right or wrong way to use this notebook. There is no timeframe and no order. You cannot fail. It is designed to serve you and you should feel free to respond to the material in the way that suits you best. The notebook contains several parts:



JOURNAL PROMPTS: These are foundational concepts intended to get you thinking. Each prompt includes dot pages for those that which to respond by journaling or drawing. There are also check-in pages for those that cannot write or prefer checklists. There is no requirement for how to respond to the material.



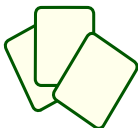
FEELINGS CHECK: A quick bubble meter to help you tune in and see how you are feeling as you work through. Check those which apply.



WORKSHEETS: These interactive guides are intended to help you think through your relationship with care tasks and develop systems that work for you. There are dotted pages included if you wish to respond with journaling or drawing.



MINI POSTER: This sign is for you to post to remind you the steps of the 5 things tidying method.



AFFIRMATION CARDS: These cards are for you to cut out and carry or post wherever it will be helpful to see them.



VIDEO LINK: There is a QR code that links to an extended video on closing duties.



TEMPLATES: Customizable templates and instructions are included for closing duties, weekly tasks, monthly maintenance, to-attempt lists, survival lists, and lists of your own making. There is also a QR code to download and print digital copies

How change happens

Here is my experience with habit change: anytime I have decided with this explosive motivation that I am going to start doing ALL THE THINGS--walking everyday, eating well, making my bed everyday, meditating every morning etc--two things usually happen. Number one, none of those changes ever stick long-term and two, it's usually coming from a motivation of shame. I get to a point where I am disgusted with myself. When I feel fed up and decide it's time for a big change, often it's my dislike of right-now me that is running the show.

In my experience, the only habit changes that have ever lasted long term where the ones made slowly, quietly, and organically from a place of self-compassion and gentleness. Total habit makeover is an instagram myth.

As you embark on this journey I invite you to remember these words: slow, quiet, gentle. You are already worthy of love and belonging. This is not a journey of worthiness but a journey of care. How can you rehab your relationship to care tasks in order to better care for future-you?

Notes

✓
feelings



pain



anger



lonely



shame



guilt



joy



fear

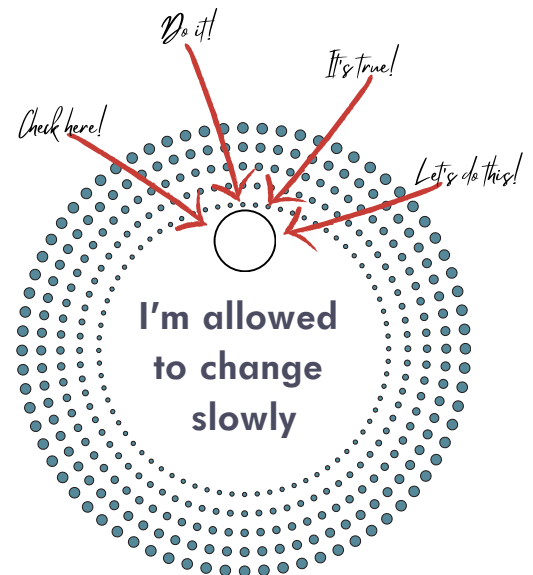
✓ Check-in

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



Slow. Quiet. Gentle

Zone of Optimal Functioning

ASSESSING YOUR DISTRESS

In *How to Keep House While Drowning*, we discussed how care tasks are not moral but functional. You have to start thinking of the functionality of your space as a spectrum. Except the spectrum doesn't just go from 1-10 with one being unusable and 10 being perfectly functional. The spectrum actually ranges from -5 to +5, where zero is basic or bare minimum functioning. -5 would represent the most severe under-functioning space (this is where we might rate a hoarding situation or a neglected environment that has become unsanitary) and +5 represents a space that has gone beyond function and is aesthetically perfect with every item in its place (think the ultimate show home and the types of spaces you see on magazine covers). Remember there is no moral value to either end of this spectrum. It only shows how well a space is serving or not serving you.

-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4 +5

However, when considering your home care life, a complete picture only emerges when you add another axis--a measurement that matters just as much, if not more, than the x axis describing your space. The y axis represents your relationship to care tasks. Moving up the axis represents higher energy or motivation with +5 being so much nervous system activation that you have anxiety and -5 being a low motivation and energy so severe it presents as depressive.

When you think of someone who is not functioning in their space, the stereotypical picture is someone who has low energy or motivation to deal with their space and therefore has a space that doesn't function. This is the case with many people who have a depressive disorder. However, a person with an over functioning space that can only maintain that space via high anxiety behaviors and stress can't really be considered functioning in a wholistic sense. Certainly, they are in as much distress as the depressive person.

Thinking of the other quadrants: you can be anxious with a non-functioning space, as is the case with those that feel so overwhelmed they become paralyzed. And of course, having low motivation yet going through the motions to keep house despite feeling a bit numb and unfulfilled has a whole "50's housewife" vibe to it we know can't be pleasant to experience.

The goal of Struggle Care is to help you come into what we call the "zone of functioning." This box represents an area where your space is functional enough to serve you and where your motivation and energy level is at a comfortable level to maintain it without distress. Some people are naturally more messy or organized and have a personality more energetic or motivated (for example, -2 space may be messy, but still functions pretty well for many people). While having the goal to make our spaces more functional is a huge part of Struggle Care, learning to rest and let go of seeing care tasks as a moral imperative is just as important. We do not exist to serve our space, our space exists to serve us. This happens when we can exist in the zone of functioning. Where do you see yourself?

Notes



pain



anger



lonely



shame



guilt



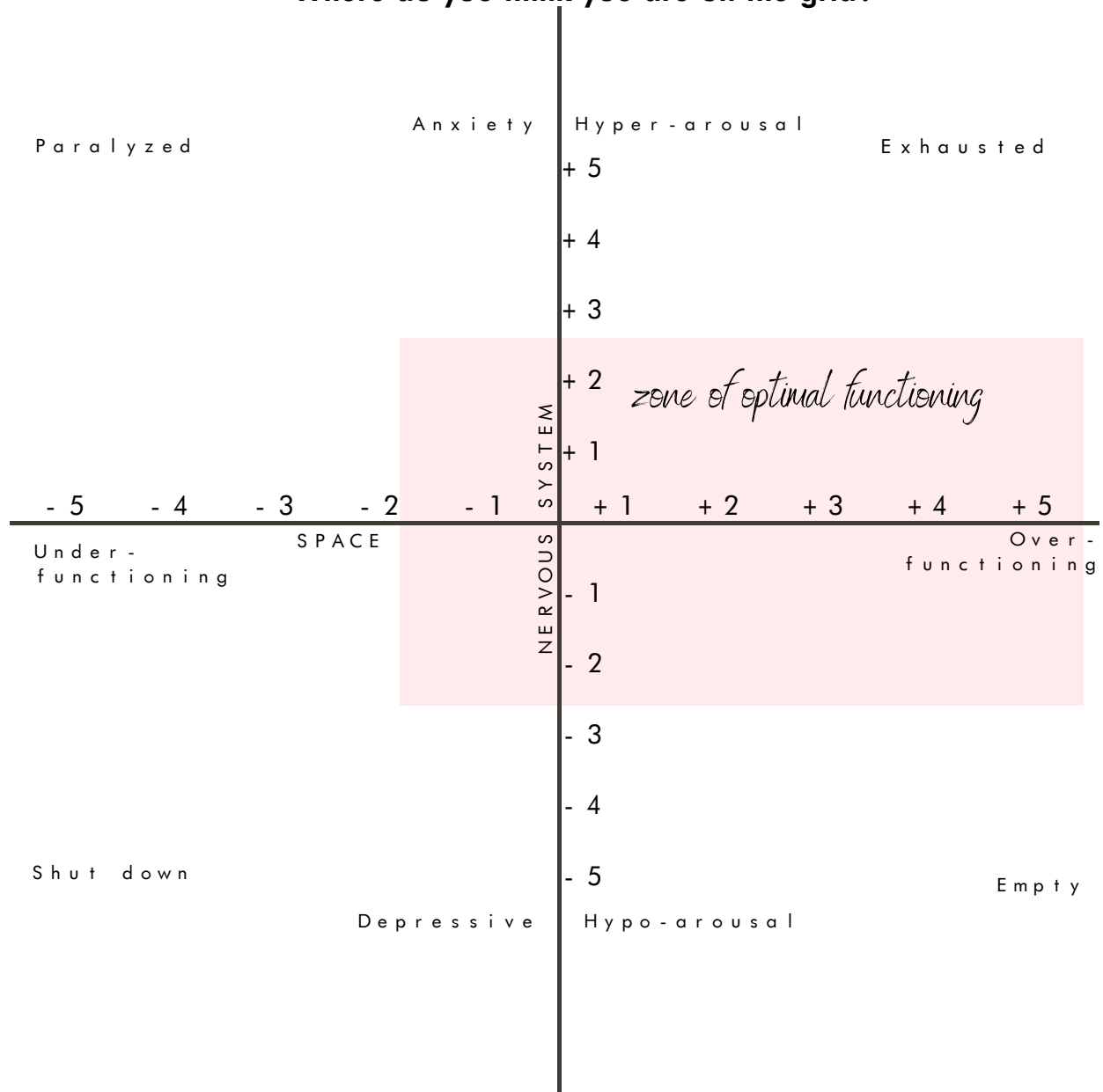
joy



fear



Where do you think you are on the grid?



To get to the zone of optimal functioning I think I need:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Systems for a more functional space | <input type="radio"/> To be okay with good enough |
| <input type="radio"/> Techniques for dealing with paralysis | <input type="radio"/> More motivation |
| <input type="radio"/> To rest more | <input type="radio"/> To get support for a MH issue (ADHD/anxiety/depression etc.) |

Care Task messages

WHAT IS MINE AND WHAT IS NOT

Why do we think of care tasks as moral? Who told us that the messiness of our house is a reflection of our worthiness as an adult, or a parent, or a partner? We know that mess has no inherent meaning. So where did you get your narrative? Think back on your life and write down the ways you were told explicitly or implicitly that your value was tied to how well you performed care tasks.

It's time to change your narrative. You are the meaning maker now. What messages do you choose for your life?

*Messages I was given
about care tasks*



*Messages I choose
for my life*

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feelings



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fear

Levels of priorities

BREAKING DOWN WHAT MATTERS TO YOU

Viewing care tasks are morally neutral can alleviate a lot of the distress we feel when it comes to care tasks. Much of the overwhelm we feel is eased when we start embrace the idea that our space exists to serve us and there is no need to bring your space up to perfection and keep it there. But regardless of how neutral and functional you view care tasks, the reality is there are seasons of life where there are more care tasks to do than there is time in the day (or energy in the body). Work, relationships, activism, care tasks, hobbies, and for some, parenting, all compete for that same time and energy. Doing everything perfectly is impossible, a concept we may understand and even agree with, but most of us still have a hard time shaking the constant guilt that constantly reminds us of the things we aren't doing but **should** be. It can be a struggle deciding exactly what to prioritize when time and energy are short.

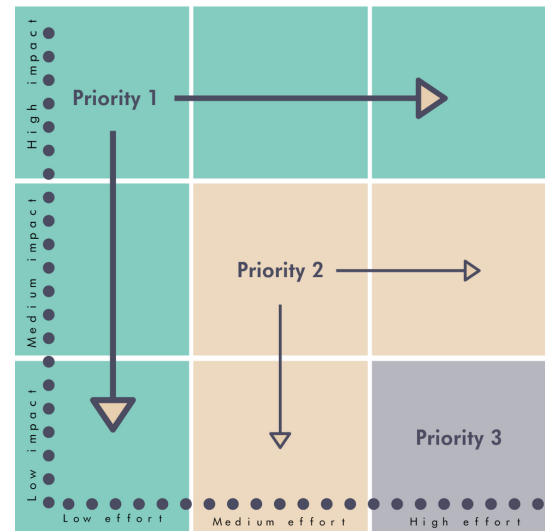
One tool that can be very helpful when deciding how to prioritize and de-prioritize items is the 9 square. Pick an area of your life. School, activism, parenting, etc. For our example, we will use self-care. Write a list of thing you think are important for your self-care. First, think of the self-care items that have the highest impact on your mental health. Let's say taking your medication, showering, and having clean dishes.



Next list those item which have a medium impact--rest, socializing, and exercise--and those that have a lower impact--laying out tomorrow's outfit, folding clothes, and cleaning your floors. You can choose as many items as you'd like. Next, divide them into those things that take low effort, medium effort, or a high amount of effort. Place your items in the corresponding square in the chart.

Once the chart is filled out, you can use it to determine what to focus on. When things in your life are ideal, you may strive to do all of the squares. Come under some stress, and the purple square is de-prioritized without guilt. Come under a bit more stress or for a prolonged period and the beige squares are de-prioritized in order to focus on the green squares.

It may seem odd that laying out an outfit for tomorrow is prioritized over exercise. But this way of thinking of priorities allows you to do the most good with the least amount of energy.



This tool isn't meant to tell you what to do as much as give you permission to not feel guilty about what you don't do. If you find it helpful, a good friend or a therapist can help you fill it out and act as validation when deciding what priority level you are on. It's helpful when seeing your dirty floor to replace "I just can't keep up" with "I've de-prioritized floors for a more important task right now."



Take this parenting example. When I've got a lot going on, I don't fret whether our food is organic, since that is level 3 priority. During especially difficult times (like say, being quarantined with two small children for months on end) I de-prioritize limiting screen time, getting daily outside play, and keeping toys non electronic. I'm not saying they aren't important, just acknowledging that if I only have limited capacity, not yelling, helping my kids understand their feelings, physical affection, reading, and telling my kids I'm proud of them is going to have a greater impact on my kids than the other items.



LEVELS OF PRIORITIES

BREAKING DOWN WHAT MATTERS TO YOU

Life area: _____

High impact			
Medium impact			
Low impact			
Low effort	Medium effort	High effort	



The diagram is a 3x3 matrix with the following structure:

- Vertical Axis (Impact):** Labeled 'Low impact', 'Medium impact', and 'High impact' from bottom to top.
- Horizontal Axis (Effort):** Labeled 'Low effort', 'Medium effort', and 'High effort' from left to right.
- Cell Colors:**
 - Teal cells: (Low, Low), (Low, Medium), (Medium, Low), (Medium, Medium).
 - Orange cells: (Medium, High), (High, Low), (High, Medium).
 - Grey cell: (High, High).
- Dark Blue Dots:**
 - One dot at the intersection of each pair of axes (e.g., Low effort/Low impact, High effort/High impact).
 - One dot in the center of each cell.



LEVELS OF PRIORITIES

BREAKING DOWN WHAT MATTERS TO YOU

Life area: _____

High impact			
Medium impact			
Low impact			
Low effort	Medium effort	High effort	

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✓
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Do it like you

We know that two people can go through the same thing and be affected by it very differently. We know that the same disorder or barrier does not present the same way in everyone. For every person with cancer making Marvel movies, there is someone at home that can't do anything but survive the day and attempt to eat. It's rarely about who is trying harder or a better person but instead about individual capacity.

Individual capacity is shaped by biology, psychology, and environment. Just because Susie with six kids and depression can keep an immaculate house does not mean you are morally inferior if you cannot. If Susie worked hard for that house and it made her happy she gets to be proud of it. And if you worked hard to eat a meal today you get to feel proud of that too without any guilt about the state of your home. If you cannot do it like Susie your only two options are to try to be like Susie and be miserable and burnt out or to try and do things within your capacity and be whole and happy. Neither of these choices affect Susie's life in the slightest.

And remember, while you compare yourself to others, convinced that if you could be like them you'd be happy and worthy, there is probably someone comparing themselves to you, thinking the same. We are all somebody's Susie.

Notes

✓
feelings



pain



anger



lonely



shame



guilt



joy



fear

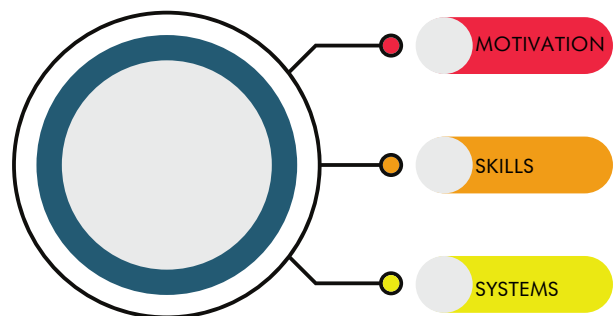
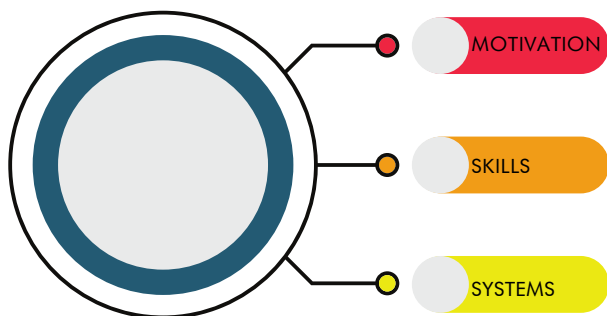
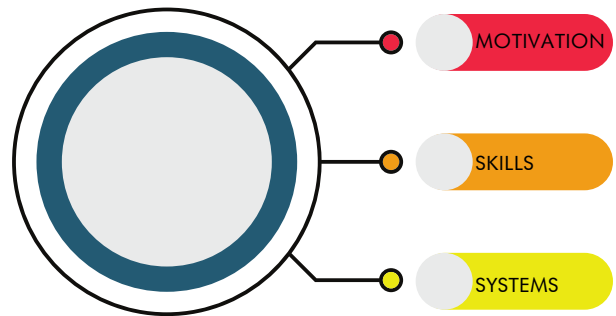
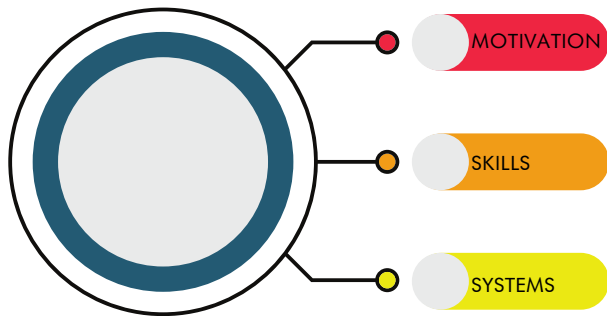
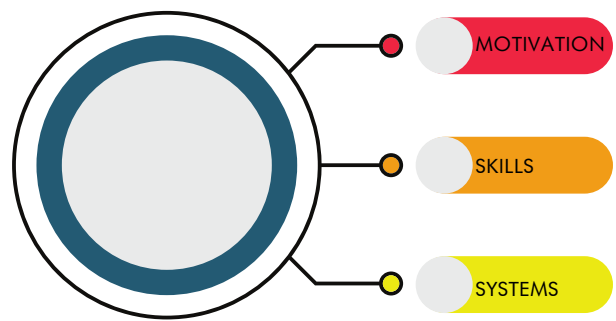
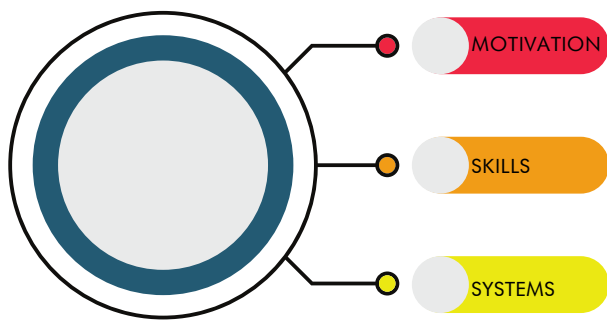
Check-in

Finding out exactly what is behind our barriers to care tasks is key to creating an environment that works for YOU. Fill in the circles with the care tasks you struggle with. Then, take some time to think about why and check which box applies.

MOTIVATION: I struggle to want to do the task or see the benefit.

SKILLS: I don't know how to do the task.

SYSTEMS: I don't have a way of organizing this task so that it gets done consistently.



Levels of priorities

BREAKING DOWN WHAT MATTERS TO YOU

Identifying the function of a care task can help you prioritize the best way to approach your care tasks. You can break down care tasks into three layers of functioning. At it's foundation, care tasks have the basic function of keeping your body or space safe and healthy. This is represented by the bottom layer of the cupcake. The icing on the cake, so to say, are things that increase your comfort. The cherry on top are just things that make you happy. When we understand what really matters to us in terms of safety, comfort, and happiness we can begin to let go of others judgments of how our spaces must look. One person may be perfectly comfortable and happy in a space that is significantly messier and less organized than another person.



H a p p i n e s s

C o m f o r t

H e a l t h y & S a f e t y

The health and safety aspects of care tasks are pretty universal, but the comfort and happiness layers are unique to each individual. For example, let's take the care task of your bed. The health and safety reason for changing your sheets to remove dust, sweat, and dead skin cells from your bed. That's true for everyone. Perhaps may people would agree on the comfort layer of not having little bits of stuff tracked into the bed from feet or pets. But only some people really identify that making their bed makes them happy. For lots of people they could care less if the bed is made.

Another benefit of understanding the layers of function is to better prioritize on hard days. While, it make be nice to take my floors all the way up to the cherry on top by tidying all the items from the floor, sweeping the entire space, and mopping every inch, if I understand the different layers of functions cleaning my floors provide, I can better care for myself and my family on hard days. Suddenly, sweeping up food from the kitchen floor and clearing a path to walk from the kitchen to the living room without tripping is a perfectly adequate way to care for the space before clocking out and getting some much needed rest or connection time with my family.

On the next page are some examples of how I categorize care tasks, followed by blank pages for you to do your own. Remember, everyone is likely to have different comfort and happiness layers.

CARE TASK: *Cleaning Floors*

How important is this care task to me?

Rank

2

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



CARE TASK: *Laundry*

Rank

1

Happiness

Having an aesthetically pleasing close, to have a laundry system that doesn't take long.

Comfort

For my clothes to look nice. To be able to find what I'm looking for easily

Health & Safety

To have clean clothes to wear



CARE TASK: Tidying a room

How important is this care task to me?

Rank

3

Happiness

I like to be able to decorate for holidays in the main room and it looks nicer if things are tidy. I like to create an inviting environment for guests.

Comfort

To be able to find things I need, To have room for my hobbies, so my kids can better focus when they play,

Health & Safety

To remove tripping hazards,



CARE TASK: Cleaning bathrooms

How important is this care task to me?

Rank

4

Happiness

I like to have a calming place to take a bath, I like to have a clear spot to do my makeup

Comfort

To be able to find things, to see clearly in the mirror, for things to smell good

Health & Safety

To prevent mold and bacteria from growing



CARE TASK: Dishes

How important is this care task to me?

Rank

2

Happiness

I don't have a happiness layer for dishes.

Comfort

To have a clear sink to bathe the baby, to have more counter space clear

Health & Safety

To have clean dishes to eat and cook with, to have clean baby bottles



CARE TASK: Bathing

How important is this care task to me?

Rank

2

Happiness

To relax, to focus on myself, to read a book in the tub

Comfort

To have clean hair so I can look nice and not feel greasy. To smell nice and feel confident in public.

Health & Safety

To remove dirt and dead skin cells from my body



CARE TASK: Dusting

How important is this care task to me?

Rank

4

Happiness

I like feeling like I have created a warm and inviting space for guests.

Comfort

To be able to set things down without them getting dusty, to remove pet fur so it doesn't get on my clothes.

Health & Safety

To prevent allergies, to not breathe in too much dust



CARE TASK: Cleaning my kitchen

How important is this care task to me?

Rank

3

Happiness

I like the way the kitchen looks when the counters are clear

Comfort

To have plenty of space to cook and do my hobbies on the kitchen island.
It's easy to sit down for family dinner when the table is clear.

Health & Safety

To prevent bugs, bacteria, or mold from growing



CARE TASK:

Rank



H a p p i n e s s

C o m f o r t

H e a l t h & S a f e t y

CARE TASK:

Rank



H a p p i n e s s

C o m f o r t

H e a l t h & S a f e t y

CARE TASK:

Rank



H a p p i n e s s

C o m f o r t

H e a l t h & S a f e t y

CARE TASK:

Rank



H a p p i n e s s

C o m f o r t

H e a l t h & S a f e t y

CARE TASK:

Rank



H a p p i n e s s

C o m f o r t

H e a l t h & S a f e t y

CARE TASK:

Rank



H a p p i n e s s

C o m f o r t

H e a l t h & S a f e t y

CARE TASK:

Rank



H a p p i n e s s

C o m f o r t

H e a l t h & S a f e t y

CARE TASK:

Rank



H a p p i n e s s

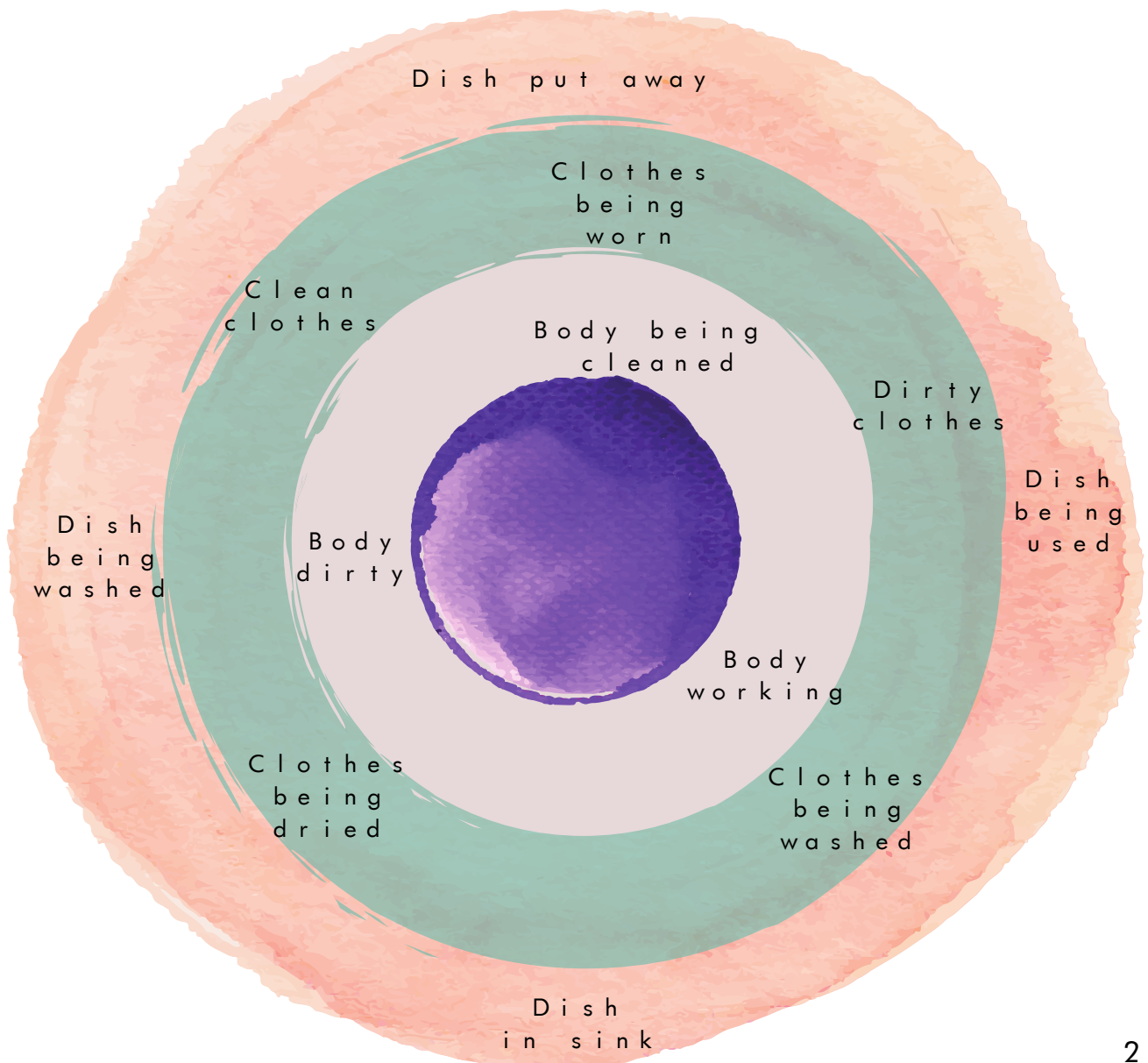
C o m f o r t

H e a l t h & S a f e t y

Care tasks are cyclical

GETTING COMFORTABLE WITH THE CARE CYCLE

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. What would it be like to embrace them all and welcome them?



Notes

✓
feelings



pain



anger



lonely



shame



guilt



joy









fear

Overcoming overwhelm

FINDING WHAT WORKS FOR YOU

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?
 <p>Motivation Playlist: make a playlist you only use for care tasks with tunes that make you feel like moving!</p>	
 <p>Category Cleaning: break the task down into categories. ie: pick up all the clothes.</p>	
 <p>Timer Tasks: set a timer for 5 or 10 minutes and give yourself permission to stop when it's done.</p>	
 <p>Bundling: choose something to you can enjoy during the task: a Netflix show, a podcast, an audiobook, etc.</p>	
 <p>Body Doubling: Ask a friend to hang out with you. They don't have to help-- just be there!</p>	
 <p>Functional Reward: Plan to do something fun with the space when the task is done. Ex: take a bubble bath after cleaning the bathroom</p>	

Notes

✓
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joy



fear

Systems that work for you

WORK SMARTER NOT HARDER

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!

Laundry



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?





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?

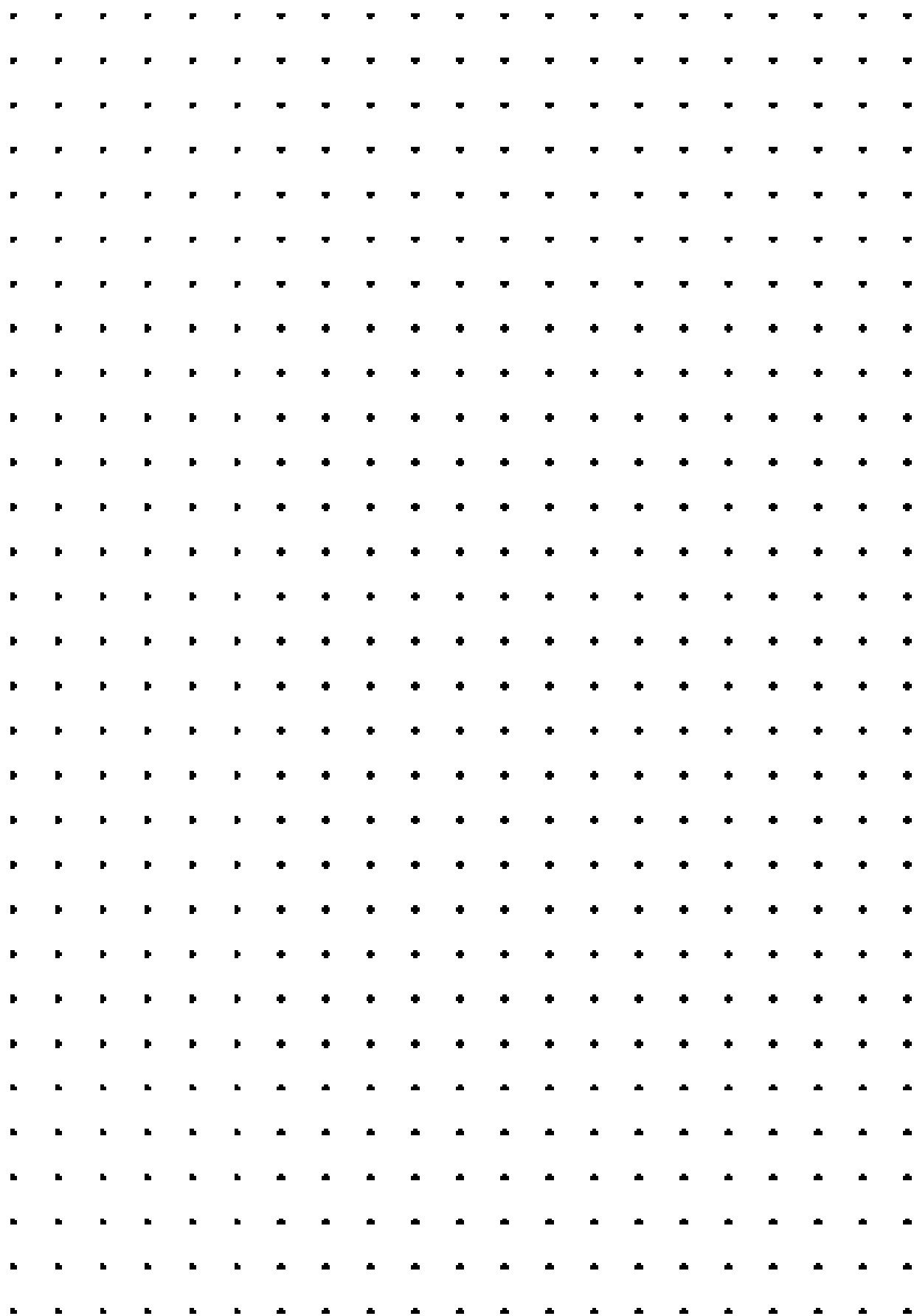
Labels

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.

This image shows a full page of dot grid paper. At the top center, there is a header area with a decorative, cursive-style word that appears to be "Notes". Below this header, the rest of the page is covered by a uniform grid of small black dots. The dots are arranged in straight horizontal and vertical rows, creating a guide for writing or drawing.



✓
feelings



pain



anger



lonely



shame



guilt



joy



fear

THERE ARE ONLY FIVE THINGS

IN THIS ROOM

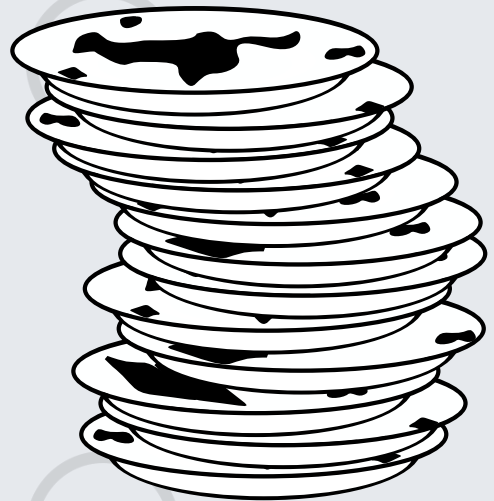
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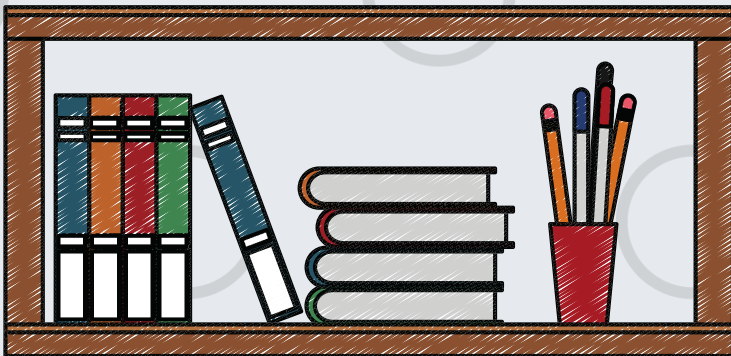
l a u n d r y



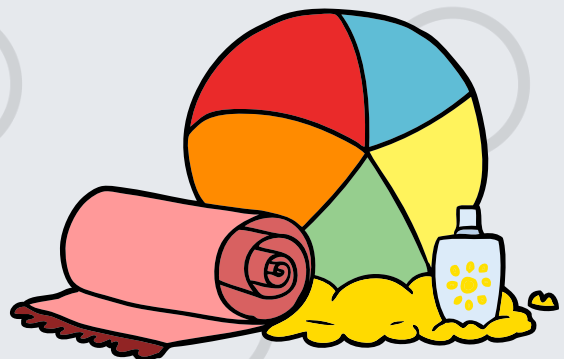
d i s h e s



t h i n g s t h a t h a v e a p l a c e



t h i n g s t h a t d o n o t
h a v e a p l a c e



AFFIRMATION CARDS

“

You still deserve to be taken care of. Even if it's only by you.

STRUGGLE CARE

“

Quit beating yourself for having a skill deficit when what you really have is a support deficit. Support deficit is not always someone's fault. There are just some seasons of life we have to limp through.

STRUGGLE CARE

“

Entire civilizations existed and thrived before showers existed. Showering is morally neutral. Wipe your pits and do something that makes you happy.

STRUGGLE CARE

“

Please do not bully yourself. Shame is a horrible long-term motivator. Most of the time it is paralyzing, compounding the barriers you already have. This sets up a cycle where the uncompleted task creates shame, which in turn saps motivation and energy and makes you want to avoid the task. Choose kindness

STRUGGLE CARE

“

You are allowed to do half the dishes, fold part of the laundry, and wash your hair in the sink. You don't have to make yourself complete tasks. You can just give yourself permission to start.

STRUGGLE CARE

“

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 to capacity to do real good for the world. In the meantime, your job is to survive. We need you.

STRUGGLE CARE

AFFIRMATION CARDS

“

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.

STRUGGLE CARE

“

So much of our distress comes not
from the dirty dishes 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.

STRUGGLE CARE

“

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.

STRUGGLE CARE

“

Mess has no meaning.

STRUGGLE CARE

“

You do not exist to serve your
space, your space exists to serve
you. Throw away what you think
care tasks "should" look like and
work towards a way of doing
them that works for YOU. Good
enough is perfect.

STRUGGLE CARE

“

Your only nutritional requirement
is to feed yourself. All calories
are good calories when you're
struggling.

STRUGGLE CARE



CLOSING DUTIES

I CARE FOR MY SPACE SO IT CAN CARE FOR ME

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.

MY CLOSING DUTIES

- Unload/reload dishwasher
- Fill up formula water
- Make cold brew
- Throw away diapers
- Sweep kitchen

MY SURVIVAL DAY CLOSING DUTIES

- Place bottles in clean dishwasher and run again
- Fill up formula water
- Pick up any large chunks of food off kitchen floor

Exclusive video:
Closing duties



s c a n m e



CLOSING DUTIES

CARE TASKS ARE NOT MORAL

CLOSING DUTIES

1.

4.

2.

5.

3.

6.

SURVIVAL DAY CLOSING DUTIES

AFFIRMATIONS



CLOCK OUT TIME:



LIVABLE SPACES

MAINTAINING A SPACE THAT CARES FOR YOU

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.

WEEKLY TASKS

M

take out diapers

T

change sheets

W

throw trash away

TH

start laundry

F

take out diapers

S

throw trash away

WEEKLY CLEANING SCHEDULE

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.

Downstairs

M Laundry	T Bathroom	W Dusting
TH Kitchen	F Mop Floors	S Order Groceries

Upstairs

M Laundry	T Bathrooms	W Dusting
TH Sheets & Towels	F Vacuum Floors	S

My Reminders & Rules

✓
feelings



pain



anger



lonely



shame



guilt



joy



fear



WEEKLY TASKS

MAINTAINING A SPACE THAT CARES FOR YOU

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.

ROOM:

M

T

W

TH

F

S



WEEKLY TASKS

MAINTAINING A SPACE THAT CARES FOR YOU

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.

ROOM:

M

T

W

TH

F

S



MONTHLY MAINTENANCE

I CARE FOR MY SPACE SO IT CAN CARE FOR ME

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.

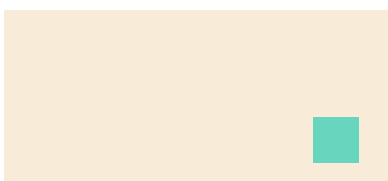
- **Change air filter**
- **De-salinate coffee pot**
- **Deep clean carpets**
- **Vacuum & flip mattresses**
- **Clean oven**
- **Vacuum couches**
- **Wash curtains**
- **Wash windows**
- **Deep clean fridge/freezer**
- **Clean under furniture**
- **Clean out & organize pantry**
- **Clean inside cabinets/drawers**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



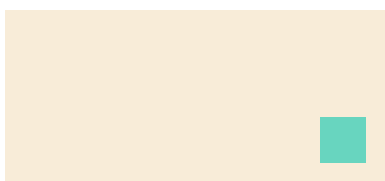
MONTHLY MAINTENANCE

I CARE FOR MY SPACE SO IT CAN CARE FOR ME

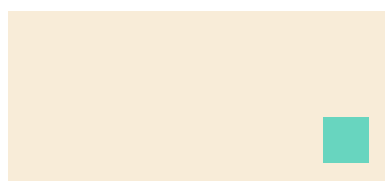
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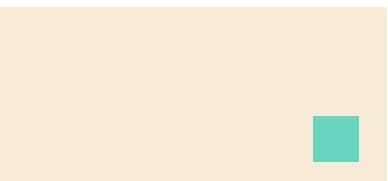
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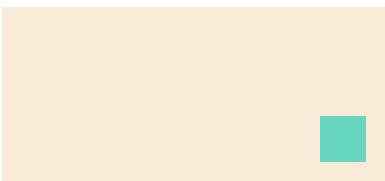
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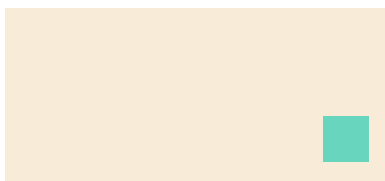
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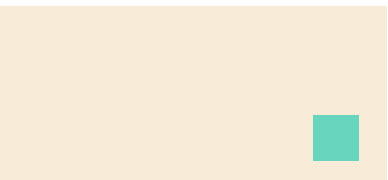
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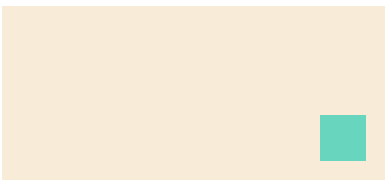
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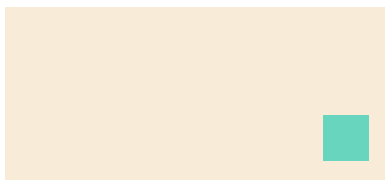
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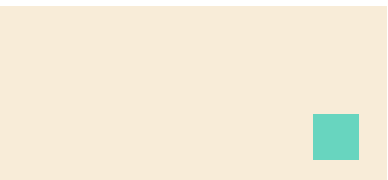
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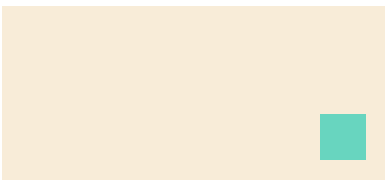
SEPTEMBER



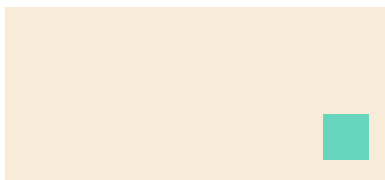
OCTOBER



NOVEMBER



DECEMBER



If you did something joyful this year then you did enough. What is life for anyways if not joy?



TO-ATTEMPT LIST

CARE TASKS ARE NOT MORAL

ENERGY LEVEL

☐ 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 | |



TODAY I AM SURVIVING

YOU DON'T HAVE TO CARE ABOUT YOURSELF
TO CARE FOR YOURSELF

SUPPLIES

- | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Hygiene kit | <input type="radio"/> Granola bars |
| <input type="radio"/> Trash bags | <input type="radio"/> Meds |
| <input type="radio"/> Water bottle | <input type="radio"/> |

OPENING DUTIES (PICK TWO)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Brush teeth | <input type="radio"/> Go outside 5 mins |
| <input type="radio"/> Clear path | <input type="radio"/> Text 1 person |
| <input type="radio"/> Fill water bottle | <input type="radio"/> Take meds |

CLOSING DUTIES (PICK TWO)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Throw away 5 pieces of trash | <input type="radio"/> Change clothes |
| <input type="radio"/> Wash 2 dishes | <input type="radio"/> Tidy 5 mins |
| <input type="radio"/> Brush hair | <input type="radio"/> Put work clothes in dryer |

CRISIS LINE: 1-800-273-8255

Your job today is to stay alive



TODAY I AM SURVIVING

YOU DON'T HAVE TO CARE ABOUT YOURSELF
TO CARE FOR YOURSELF

SUPPLIES

<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>	
<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>	
<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>	

OPENING DUTIES (PICK TWO)

<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>	
<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>	
<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>	

CLOSING DUTIES (PICK TWO)

<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>	
<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>	
<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>	

CRISIS LINE: 1-800-273-8255

Your job today is to stay alive

This List is Morally Neutral

REMINDERS, TASKS, & GRATITUDE LISTS

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