

## **First Things First!**

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Have you ever got all determined to declutter? Perhaps the mess in one particular room had really been bugging you, so you decided THIS was the day you were going to roll up your sleeves and deal with it. And you did. Just as soon as the kids were fed and suitably occupied you got stuck in. And you worked SO hard! You cleaned out drawers or sorted clothes or emptied boxes. And it felt SO good.....until you looked around the rest of the house.....

Dirty dishes are all over the counter and piled in the sink, the living room is a mess, clean laundry is piled on your bed and you don't even want to talk about what the bathroom looks like! And now, at the end of a long, busy day, you're faced with cooking dinner, a whole days worth of dishes, getting the kids to bed and then somehow finding your own under all that laundry. And all you really want to do is collapse exhausted on the sofa while someone brings you a nice hot drink, then maybe soak in a bubble bath - if the bathroom wasn't so gross! Then your husband arrives home, and wonders what you do all day.....may this decluttering thing is just too hard.

But wait - it doesn't have to be like that! Decluttering IS worthwhile - it's essential to finding peace and getting rid of chaos in your home and life. BUT, we must remember to put "first things first!" If we jump into decluttering or working on one part of our homes, the rest of it will fall apart - unless we've first taken care of some basic chores before we turn our attention to decluttering.

What are "first things"? Those are the simple chores you know need to be taken care of every day to keep your home and family functioning smoothly, and to prevent complete chaos taking over. What you need to do is figure out what those basic items are, and make a list of them, then each day tackle those things before you work on decluttering (or other things). Your list should be no more than about 6-7 items long (10 at the MOST). Here's my list, and the approximate times they take:

- Make my bed (5 mins)
- Do the dishes (15 mins)
- Know what is for lunch/dinner and start it (5-30 mins, depending on whether I just need to pull meat out and start bread, or are preparing soup and crockpot meals)
- Process some laundry (15 mins)
- Pick up and vacuum living room, dining room, hall and entry (small areas, all adjacent, together forming the core of my home) (15-20 mins)
- Quick clean of bathroom and toilet (5-10 mins)
- Make sure children have fed all animals (2 mins)

As you can see, these things take me approximately one hour a day, though I don't necessarily do them all at once. However, I know that if I want things to go smoothly, and my decluttering or deep cleaning to result in an overall improvement in my home, then I need to take care of these items first. Occasionally I might choose to skip the laundry or the vacuuming, but never more than twice in a week.

And if you're thinking "An hour?? I can't spare an hour to do these things before I do any actual decluttering!" then just remember this:

Keeping house takes TIME! If you're not willing to spend some time on the house, then you're never going to get to where your home is beautiful and peaceful. And this is also why it is recommended that you declutter a little at a time each day - because you still need to keep up the basics.

So, what's on YOUR list? And where are you going to write it down? You could post it on the wall, write each item on index cards and refer to them each day or similar. But DO make the list, and DO use it! You'll be so glad you did.

Love

*Cynthia*