

“It doesn’t have to be perfect”

...and more lessons from the FlyLady

It all started with a pile of dirty dishes. Six years ago, Marla Cilley—who’s now known as the FlyLady and has a popular cleaning and organizing Web site—looked around her Brevard, North Carolina, home and saw a mess everywhere. Rather than trying to tackle it all, she took on just one small task: scrubbing her stainless steel kitchen sink. “When I saw my sink shining back at me, it really put a smile on my face,” she says.



“It’s about getting rid of perfectionism (I don’t have the time to deep clean, so why bother?) and procrastination.”

ROUTINES THAT REDUCE STRESS

● **Get dressed, fix your hair, and put on makeup first thing**

in the morning. “Putting on real clothes, especially shoes, tells you it’s time to do something, even if you don’t feel like it,” says Cilley. Bunny slippers and pajamas don’t.

● **You can accomplish a lot in 15 minutes.** Set the timer and focus on one task: dusting or going through a pile of papers on the coffee table. “You’ll feel a sense of accomplishment—and when the timer rings, you have permission to stop,” says Cilley.

● **Grab a giant garbage bag and do the “27 fling boogie”**—gather up 27 items from any room or hot spot (like a table or countertop) where piles accumulate. Throw out or give away what you’ve collected. “The best filing cabinet is a trash can,” says Cilley.

● **Do a before-bed checklist.** For a calm morning, take a few minutes the night before to lay out your clothes, put everything you need for the next day (umbrella, tote bag, etc.) by the front door, and get to bed on time. When that alarm clock rings, you’ll feel less anxious. —*Marcy Lovitch*

Inspired, Cilley found herself committing to a series of mini routines—spending five minutes wiping around her bathroom or tossing out catalogs and junk mail. These simple habits saved time: Her house remained tidy without marathon cleaning sessions.

Today, this 49-year-old grandmother shares all these organizational epiphanies on her site, www.flylady.net (the name originated from her love of fly-fishing), which has more than 260,000 subscribers. Every day, she e-mails them with reminders to finish simple tasks, like doing a load of laundry. “What I call flying—which is my shorthand for finally loving yourself—is about more than just cleaning,” says Cilley.

THE GREAT CLEANING DEBATES

Is there a right way to...

replace toilet paper:

67%
Hang so the paper falls over the roll

33%
Hang so the paper falls under the roll

store socks:

63%
Roll them

37%
Fold them

hang towels:

68%
Fold in thirds

32%
Fold in half

vacuum and dust:

69%
Dust first

31%
Vacuum first

clean mirrors:

74%
Use paper towels

26%
Use newspapers

Percentages based on a poll of the GH staff

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE FLYLADY