

Buried Under Mt. Laundry!

(Household Helps and Hopes)

I trudge wearily from the dryer to the bedroom with another armload of laundry. Bad plan. I realize that in order to go to sleep, I can't have laundry all over my bed. Slowly I gather the clean loads and take them to the couch. I'm too tired to deal with it tonight. Drat! I have company coming first thing in the morning. Return to the couch. Take as much as possible the first trip then go back for the remaining. Yes, I stuffed them all back into the dryer. Well, at least I can go to sleep now. I'm sure glad I got the extra large capacity dryer.

You laugh, I'm sure. But, it isn't far from the truth sometimes! Although it is far from being fair, the state of the household is one vantage point from which people judge the competency of the Mom of the household. That's a lot of pressure for us Mom's, particularly those of us who are schooling their children at home. Everyone in the house contributes to household clutter. Yet truly, who cares as much as Mom whether or not the house is clean. (Yes, I am totally generalizing here.) So...what can be done?

Having a large family and people at home regularly, it is impossible to keep an immaculate residence. My kids will say I am a clean freak. I'm not. I just like basic cleanliness. That's not too much to ask for, is it? Yet, I frequently find myself commenting to visitors, "Pardon the mess". Why am I confessing this to you? I guess I want you to know that I am completely human. I often have people say to me, "I don't know how you do it all." What these people fail to see is that I really don't do it all!

Back to the question "what can be done?" Definitely don't use me for your role model if you want that immaculate residence. I try, but I fall far short of perfection. I have learned a few tricks from people smarter than I am. I like to admire other people's clean homes and see what I can glean from their superior knowledge. I share these things I have learned with you fellow home schoolers because a teaching mom wears many hats. Keeping some sense of cleanliness and order in the house are important for sanity. It is very difficult to teach the children if you yourself have reached the brink of insanity. Hopefully you will find something of value here.

- ✓ If you can't get to anything else in the day, try to make at least one small section of the house clean so you can at least have something nice to look at for a few moments before bedtime. ☺
- ✓ Do at least one 5 minute task each day. 5 minute tasks are things like cleaning out one kitchen drawer, washing the splash board behind the sink, clean one window, dusting one blind thoroughly, reorganizing one bookshelf, straightening one side of the desk, emptying out the pencil bucket and throwing away dried out markers and such, etc. Make yourself a list of your own personalized 5 minute chores and tape them up in a convenient location.
- ✓ Keep wet wipes in a bathroom cupboard. Use them to do a quick wipe down of the sinks and counters daily.
- ✓ Make laundry a cooperative effort when laundry day comes around so all can pitch in with sorting, folding, scrubbing stains, etc. Even the small children can be pretty good at folding washcloths.
- ✓ Obviously teaching kids to clean up after themselves is a great idea. Often it is easier said than done. Kids can certainly help do dishes after meals, have Saturday chores, clean their rooms etc. Probably the biggest trick is trying to figure out how to get it done in less kid-like fashion!
- ✓ One lady I know with a very clean home and great fashion sense told me this tip. When you are done in the shower, take your damp towel and use your two feet to scoot the towel back and forth all over the floor. Then just toss your towel in the laundry basket. Voila! A freshly mopped floor! (Crazy, but it does work.)

- ✓ I was also surprised to learn a trade secret from a friend who kept a very tidy house. She had a drawer or cupboard in each room specifically for quickly stashing things!
- ✓ When you stack the dishwasher, if there isn't enough to start it, put soap in the dispenser anyway. That way it is easy to tell whether the dishwasher has run a cycle. If the detergent is gone, the dishes are clean.
- ✓ Make DIY (do-it-yourself) cleaners that are safe and easy for kids to use.
- ✓ Have a place for everything that is convenient to get into and out of if at all possible. If it is difficult to return something to its proper location, chances are much greater that it won't get put there.
- ✓ Use a basket or plastic box to store random odds and ends that didn't get put in the right place. For instance, someone cleaned up a board game and later a missed game piece is discovered. The game piece could get tossed into the random odds and ends box. When someone goes to play the game again, they can look in the odds and ends box to find what they need. I find this is really helpful because if kids find random game pieces, they tend to stuff them in drawers or behind other things just to get them out of site. If they have somewhere they know is fast and easy to toss them, at least the piece won't get completely lost! Periodically clean out the odds and ends box.
- ✓ I will often take a box or basket and make a quick run around the main areas of the house and toss anything into it that doesn't belong. I then put it in the hallway by the kids bedrooms and assign them to put everything in their proper locations.
- ✓ Sometimes it is a good idea to withhold from the children, certain favorite activities until cleaning has been done.
- ✓ Assign the kids a specific number of items to clean up.
- ✓ Set a timer and make it a contest to see how good a room can be made to look in three minutes.
- ✓ Choose your battles. I am pretty adamant about my kids keeping their school books in good order on their shelves. I am not so strict about the order of their toys.
- ✓ Behind a door or in some out-of-the-way place in each room of the house, keep a list of everything that should be cleaned in that room if it were to be given a complete and thorough going over. A member of the family should do one or two of those things each month so that the list gets down at least twice over the course of the year. (Obviously there are things that must be done more than twice a year, like vacuuming.) My Prioritizing Planner has copies of these lists for one home I lived in. My planner also shows my method of how I keep everything organized with my life. Find this inexpensive Prioritizing Planner by searching those key words at our store.

Don't hesitate to take good advice from other homeschooling Moms or things you may find somewhere on the internet. You can do this!

And, by the way, if you ever come to my house...Peeking in the dryer is not allowed!