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FOR THE FRIDGE

By Karen Sampson, MA

Your Holiday Home

THE HOLIDAYS ARE HERE. The big questions, such as "which traditions does our family want to celebrate and continue?" have been answered. It's the little things that are snowballing that need to be addressed now. Such as—cleaning the house.

Develop routines

Maintaining a home is such a big project that a few generations ago, almost every family had a full-time home manager. Today, it is more common that single and partnered adults work outside the home. The challenge can still be met, even with AD/HD as part of the mix.

A secret for many CHADD members, keeping in mind that CHADD doesn't endorse products or Web sites: FlyLady (www.flylady.net). So named for her love of fly fishing, FlyLady is all about "baby steps" and routines. She explains how to develop a routine to tackle the holiday season and the rest of the year, and her plans and control journals work well for anyone affected by AD/HD. Since you design your own routine with her guidance, it will fit the needs of your life.

Other helpful Web sites include ServiceMaster (www.allabouthome.com/directories/dir_cleaning.html) and Queen of Clean (http://www.queenofclean.com/).

Make a plan

Scout your dwelling and note what needs the most work, what needs the least work, and the best hiding places for stuff. (That includes cramming things under the bed—but only for quick cleanings during the holidays.)

Set the timer

Once there is a plan, set the kitchen timer for five, 10 or 15 minutes—and attack the first room. Pick up, stuff away, clear out of sight. When the timer dings, reset it for the next room, whether the first is done or not. Repeat the picking-up in the second room. Ding; same for the third. Set the timer again, grab something to drink or nibble and sit. Rest for the fourth round. Ding, and you're back to the first room. Repeat until each room is picked up, dusted, and vacuumed and any additional scrubbing is completed. Breaking it up over a couple days or a week is a good thing, too.

Handy tips

Leave a second garbage bag at the bottom of the pail, under the current one. That way you have one handy in a pinch without having to hunt for it.

Keep one extra of whatever—laundry soap, can of soup, package of paper towels—on hand. Don't fill your cupboards with more than you need, but make sure you have a back-up at the ready so you don't lose your stride.

Keep all cleaning supplies together—a mop bucket makes a great container to stick everything in so you can move from room to room quickly.

If you use it in that room, find a place for it to live in that room. That goes for brooms (kitchen pantry), vacuums (living room closet), laptop computers and accessories (family room entertainment center), and tablecloths (dining room china cabinet). This works well with cleaning supplies, too (though if there are small children in your life, perhaps up high in a cabinet).

Suggestions from CHADD members

Get out of having the celebration at your house. Consider co-hosting family events at another relative's house.

Make running lists—notebooks and personal data assistants are great for this. Make a list for everything from groceries to library books, and keep lists in one place for easy reference.

Limit your number of guests. A dinner party of six is more manageable than 26. Since this is a holiday season, make use of the time by having two small dinner parties with different guests or one intimate party and then making reservations for the larger group at a favorite restaurant.

Call your favorite grocery store and find out about its holiday meals. Many prepare the entire meal at a reasonable cost. Order ahead, pick it up the morning of your holiday meal—and serve in your own dishes!

Online shopping is good. If the online store includes gift-wrapping, go for it! Have gifts sent to their recipients rather than to you. One wise member pointed out that wrapping gifts as soon as you get them helps to avoid the 3 a.m. crunch before the big day.

As one member wrote, "Change the expectations so the holiday works for you, not the other way around."

If all else fails...

A CHADD member wrote he once had a stack of newspapers piling up in the dining room, evidently for a couple of years. As company was coming rather soon, he struck upon a plan: He placed a board across the tops of the piles and draped a holiday tablecloth over it. The piles were successfully hidden and the set-up "didn't look bad, really."

Except that it stayed that way for another four years before finally being cleared away.

ANDREY VOLODIN / ISTOCK

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