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# Appendix

# 28 Days to Hope for Your Home

(Not for the Mildly Disorganized)

Develop four habits over four weeks. Find hope for real change in your home.

Now for the oft-referenced day-by-day guide I promised throughout the book. I know how much more fun it is to read about cleaning than to actually clean, so the purpose of this is to talk you through the next four weeks. Feel free to ignore this appendix and implement every last strategy from the book before you go to bed tonight. But if you're overwhelmed at the thought of actually getting started, just do the assignment for day 1. Keep going tomorrow on day 2, and by the end of the week, I think you'll be amazed at the difference that ridiculously simple tasks done day after day will make in your home.

# Day 1

#### Do the dishes.

That's it. It's not rocket science, so go get started.

And don't worry—you're not alone if doing the dishes means running the dishwasher six times and handwashing every pot and pan in the house because they're *all* dirty. Or even if doing the dishes means you need to run to the store and get dishwashing liquid because you forgot to grab it the last three times you went.

You can do this. So go do it.

See you tomorrow!

## Day 2

So, how did it feel having all those dishes clean at once? Strange?

Notice how I used the past tense? I said how "did" it feel because I'll bet some of those dishes you washed are dirty again.

So irritating, right? My family does that too. That it's-time-to-eat-again-and-I-need-to-use-a-fork thing.

Are you ready for your big, life-changing day 2 task?

Do the dishes again.

That's it.

Seriously.

## Day 3

Any guesses about today's task?

That's right. Do the dishes.

But let's talk for a minute before you do. How long did it take you the first day? How long did it take yesterday? Any difference?

I'm adding one thing to today's task. It's kind of the same thing, but not.

Part 1: Do the dishes right now. Like, as soon as you finish reading this page.

#### Part 2: Do the dishes before you go to bed.

I know, twice in one day seems like something only a crazy clean freak would do. But you are reading this because you wanted hope. Obviously, the way things are in your home is causing some level of despair.

My gift to you? You don't have to put them away. Just let your hand-washed stuff air-dry and/or leave the clean stuff in the dishwasher until tomorrow morning.

## Day 4

You've done the dishes three days in a row! *That* is something about which you can be proud!

Today, you have two tasks. Both involve dishes, but they are done at different times. I'm also going to go ahead and give you a task for tomorrow.

Right now: Go put your dry dishes away from last night.

Tonight: Do the dishes before you go to bed.

Tomorrow morning (as soon as you get up): Put away your dry dishes from tonight.

# Day 5

Did you put your dishes away this morning? If so, go look at your kitchen. How does it look compared to how it looked before you started on day 1?

Here's the goal: This dishes-done-kitchen should start to look "normal" to you. I want you to get used to it looking this way. It's not just a special thing that only happens when you throw a party. It's not something you would only see in someone else's home. It's *your* new normal. And when you no longer expect a teetering pile in the sink, moving a single dish won't seem like a pointless task.

And that's today's task. Put single dishes either into the dishwasher or into the sink (if you don't have a dishwasher) as soon as they get dirty. Throughout the day, *as you use a dish*, be conscious about what you do with it.

A big part of changing your home is changing your thoughts. Whatever you automatically did before wasn't working, because it resulted in overwhelming amounts of dishes on the counter and day-long dishwashing marathons.

Putting one dish in the emptied-that-morning dishwasher or into the sink takes about three seconds. Somehow, though, putting thirty dishes in the have-I-emptied-that-yet? dishwasher takes a lot longer than *ninety* seconds.

Just so you know, we're still on habit one. This habit is called "doing the dishes." Who knew it was so easy? Who knew it had so many parts?

Put individual dishes in the sink/dishwasher throughout the day today.

Do the dishes tonight.

Put your clean dishes away tomorrow morning!

## Day 6

If you started this process on a Monday, today is Saturday. Around here, Saturdays mean *no routine*! Which is wonderful. But if you're tentatively/ desperately trying to begin a new routine, the wonderful freedom that has always been your Saturday may scare you.

If it *isn't* Saturday today, perhaps you are having another kind of outof-the-routine day or are lamenting the fact that you got behind on day 3. Perhaps you are scared to death that this is going to be one more failed "method."

If that's you, take a deep breath . . . *and do the dishes*. Two days' worth of dishes is easier to do than three days' worth. And three days' worth is *much* easier than a week's worth.

Today, just focus.

Put away your dishes.

Place individual dirty dishes in the sink/dishwasher.

Wash your dishes/start the dishwasher before you go to bed.

## Day 7

It's the last day of your first week of hope.

Are you feeling a teensy glimmer yet? If not, it's okay. Just enjoy your clean(er) kitchen, and let it spur you to keep going in week 2.

Since day 7 might be Sunday (and, therefore, might be *another* out-of-the-routine day for you), I want to briefly discuss what can be the biggest frustration in this process.

Other People.

Specifically, Other People who live in your home.

My best advice? Take a deep breath . . . and do the dishes.

As someone who is years farther down the path, I can tell you there is hope for them. But right now, this isn't about the Other People in your house; it's about you.

You need to stop worrying over what they are doing or not doing, or what bugs or doesn't bug them, and keep working on changing your habits.

Their change will come down the road. Don't look for it in week 1.

So, if you're getting that familiar panicky feeling in your chest, that I-*cannot*-fail-at-this-again feeling, just allow yourself to focus on the dishes.

Put away the clean ones.

Place individual dirty dishes in the sink/dishwasher throughout the day.

#### Wash the dishes at night.

That second task is the one that might send you over the edge with the Other People in your house. On an out-of-the-routine day, you either have people at home who aren't generally there (and who haven't even *seen* the put-dishes-in-the-dishwasher thing yet), or if you work outside the home, *you* haven't had to do that yet with a full day's worth of dishes. When lots of people are home during the day, there are *more* dishes than when they are gone. It's a fact.

My advice is to have them put their own dishes in the sink/dishwasher *if* you remember to instruct them at the end of the meal. Asking for help to clear the table at the end of a meal is natural and will begin to establish some of *your* new habits as family habits.

If you remember at the moment when your family has just started watching a favorite movie, *do it yourself*. That goes against all good parenting instincts, but remember that you are only seven days into the process of creating habits that will establish an environment in which you can properly train your children in these things.

I hope that doing the dishes daily is starting to feel normal to you. Not fun, but normal. As in, your hand automatically knows where to grab the dishwashing liquid, and it's not a three-minute search to find the dish brush. I also hope (and this is my main hope) you are starting to see that doing one day's worth of dishes *isn't* a daunting task.

If you're not, and if three out of the last seven days didn't go as you wanted them to, it's okay. Just keep doing the dishes. Move on to week 2. Each day will include doing the dishes, and if that's all you're able to do... then that's all you're able to do.

Put away clean dishes.

# Put individual dirty dishes in the sink/dishwasher throughout the day.

I'm going to make an assumption. I'm guessing that because you've had some days when you couldn't believe how quickly you finished the dishes, you did something crazy like wipe down the counters or the kitchen table. If not, that's okay. If so, keep doing that. It's amazing how wiping counters is a natural extension of doing dishes.

Today's new task? Sweep the kitchen.

I'm giving you permission to spend an hour or so at this task. The reality for a slob is that sweeping isn't *just* sweeping. It's picking up napkins that got knocked off the table (last month) and the newspapers from (the past few) Sunday(s). It's putting away last week's groceries and getting rid of the bags they were still sitting in. It's gathering up the small and not-so-small toys and knocked-off-the-fridge alphabet magnets.

Once all that is done, you can sweep (after you find the broom).

Tonight, do the dishes before you go to bed.

## Day 9

Did your kitchen feel different when you walked into it this morning? With no dishes scattered around and the floor clear, I'm guessing it did.

Today, just do the same thing you did yesterday.

Put clean dishes away in the morning.

Sweep the kitchen.

Place individual dirty dishes in the sink/dishwasher throughout the day.

Do the dishes before you go to bed.

## Day 10

Ten whole days of not having to dig around for a clean fork. How does it feel?

Put away the clean dishes.

Sweep the kitchen.

Can you believe how quickly you can sweep the kitchen now that you've done it three days in a row? Can you believe how much dirt and debris accumulates on your kitchen floor in just twenty-four hours?

You've been focusing on your home for ten whole days now. (Even if it's not ten consecutive days!)

The reality is that life rarely goes on for ten days without something happening. When you suddenly realize you haven't even thought about the state of your home (much less about this new do-the-dishes-and-sweep-every-day thing) in two days, just take a deep breath—and do the dishes. While you might feel like you're swimming in Jell-O as you move toward the sink, you'll be amazed at how quickly it will all come back to you.

After the dishes, grab the broom and sweep. Even if it's a middle-of-thefloors-only sweep that takes less than a minute, it will make things easier tomorrow when you're back on track.

**Before you go to bed, do the dishes again.** I know. That's twice in one day, but the goal is to get back on rhythm.

## Day 11

Put away your clean dishes. Sweep the kitchen.

#### Put dirty dishes in the sink/dishwasher as they get dirty.

Now that having a nondisastrous kitchen is starting to feel normal, and like something you could maybe really keep up with, you're probably starting to wonder when we're going to get to some real cleaning.

We're not.

The goal of "28 Days to Hope for Your Home" is to guide you to develop four habits that will help you keep your home under control and out of Disaster Status. And contrary to the assumptions of a Slob Brain, day-long cleaning sessions are not what do this. The daily stuff does it.

With that said, go ahead and pick a project. Your day likely feels longer now that you've accomplished so much (a pretty-much-clean kitchen) in a small amount of time. You have permission to use that extra time to bake some cookies with your kids. Or scrub down the bathrooms. Or choose a decluttering project.

If you choose to declutter, follow my Visibility Rule. Choose a small, highly visible space to declutter so you're more likely to complete it before something happens to distract you, and you'll be encouraged every time you walk by it.

Before you go to bed, wash the dishes and wipe down the table/

## Day 12

Put away your clean dishes.

Wipe down the counters/table.

Sweep the kitchen.

Did you just call me sneaky? Last night, I casually added in wiping down the table and kitchen counters. Casually, because there's a good chance you were already doing this. A quick wipe of the counters with an already-wet dishcloth happens pretty naturally when you're doing the dishes.

Who knew, right?

Before you go to bed, do the dishes. (And wipe down the counters/table.)

Is it Saturday? Even if it's not, let's talk about Saturdays again. *The day off.* I have bad news and good news.

The bad news is that, for a slob, *there's no such thing as a day off.* Really, it's true for every home manager, but Normal People don't see it that way.

We think of putting our dishes in the sink or the dishwasher as work. We view wiping down the counter after making a special lasagna as work.

Normal People don't consider *not* putting their dishes in the sink. They wipe the splatter of marinara off the counter without even thinking about it.

We view that splatter as a personal attack. That splatter is proof this clean-house-thing is impossible. "I've been washing and wiping and even *sweeping* all week long, and now that stupid tomato sauce proves that nothing I do to try to clean this house really matters. None of it lasts!"

Now wipe up that splatter, and let yourself feel foolish over your inner monologue. Did you notice how it took all of three seconds *or less* to wipe it up because it wasn't crusted yet? Did you notice how it was just one splat, not a counter layered with unwiped crusty splatters from the past week?

Put away the clean dishes that you (perhaps) forgot to put away this morning, wipe down the counters and table, sweep the kitchen, and do today's dishes.

## Day 14

#### Put away your clean dishes.

#### Sweep the kitchen.

Yes, even if it's Sunday. Another day that's free of routine or at least has a different routine.

You've probably started to grasp the need to make basic, daily tasks part of your normal weekday. You've even accepted that it's necessary to find a way to do these tasks on a day free of routine. But what about the day with a *different* routine? A day with its own unique obligations?

My Sundays involve me leaving for church at 8:15 and my family

leaving at 9:00 because I have to be there early for music rehearsal. I try to get my kids' clothes together before I leave. Many times I do this on Saturday night, but sometimes I'm rushing around trying to match shoes and tights and bows, while also getting myself ready. Emptying the dishwasher the moment I get up on Sunday morning rarely enters my mind.

But knowing that emptying the dishwasher is *necessary* helps when I walk into the house on Sunday afternoon and feel the familiar despair over a kitchen that once again looks messy. A kitchen with crusty cinnamon-roll pans and half-full/half-empty cups of milk scattered on the breakfast table.

I know that all I have to do is . . . wash the dishes.

Having a list of things that are the bare minimum means that I have a plan. On the days with a different routine, having a list helps.

Do the tasks today at some point.

Put away your clean dishes.

Sweep the kitchen.

Put dirty dishes in the sink or dishwasher.

And, before you go to bed, do the dishes.

## Day 15

Put away your clean dishes and wipe down the counters/table.

Sweep the kitchen.

Throughout the day, put dirty dishes in the sink/dishwasher as they get dirty.

It's week 3! Are you itching to move beyond the kitchen?

Just a word of warning/wisdom gained from personal experience: it's fine to add extra tasks like toilet-cleaning, vacuuming, or decluttering—as long as you've already done the daily tasks.

We slobs love big projects. We're generally creative people who love to get consumed with something that will finish with a wow factor. Unfortunately, there's not much of a wow factor in washing the dishes. But remember: the little things are more important than the big things. Not *just as* important, but *more* important.

So what's the new little thing for this week? **Check the bathrooms for clutter.** 

Yeehaw! We're moving beyond the kitchen! Not past it, because it's still number one on the must-do-every-single-day list. But once you've done your kitchen tasks for the day, take a walk through the house, consciously looking into every bathroom. For today, ignore the ring around the bathtub. Ignore the smell. Just deal with the clutter.

The dirty undies and the magazines strewn across the floor. The damp towels and the empty toilet paper rolls. Pick up those things and put them where they should go. Wring out the six used washcloths that are sitting in the bottom of the shower, and throw them in the washing machine. Straighten the wadded-up rug, and close the shower curtain.

Now clear the counter. Put the toothbrushes where they go, cap the toothpaste, take the Pool Partyin' Barbies to their owner's room.

You likely can't resist wiping down the counters at this point. Go ahead, but remember this task is about the clutter.

Before you leave for the next bathroom, step out and then step back in. Is the difference noticeable?

Before you go to bed tonight, do the dishes and wipe down the counters/table.

## Day 16

Put away your clean dishes and wipe down the counters/table.

Sweep the kitchen.

Check the bathrooms for clutter.

Throughout the day, put dirty dishes in the sink/dishwasher as they get dirty.

Glance in each bathroom. Are you amazed they look pretty good? Compared to yesterday, it's like they're *clean*! I mean, *one* little piece of clothing on the floor . . . that hardly bothers you! And a toothbrush haphazardly left on the counter? What's the big deal?

Just pick up the clothes and put the toothbrush back where it goes.

Before you go to bed, do the dishes.

## Day 17

Put away your clean dishes and wipe the counters/table.

Sweep the kitchen.

Check the bathrooms for clutter.

Put dirty dishes in the sink/dishwasher as they get dirty.

Seriously? *More* dirty clothes on the floor?

Didn't your family members notice this bathroom has looked ten times better for the past two days? Did it *not* occur to them that *their* pair of dirty socks was the only thing marring the otherwise clear-for-once floor?

Take a deep breath.

If they're not home right now, pick up the socks yourself. But if they are home, call them into the bathroom and show them their socks. Have them pick up the socks and ask them to start doing this daily. In-the-moment parenting is always most effective. Don't get annoyed when they look like they don't recognize you. Remember what the bathroom looked like on day 15? *That's what they think a bathroom is supposed to look like.* They think you're okay with that because you were.

Until two days ago.

Mad that I'm suggesting you not leave those socks on the floor so you can make your point when the kids get home? Let's be honest here. There's a decent chance you'll forget to tell your kids to pick them up tonight . . . and then you'll have two days' worth of clothes on the floor tomorrow.

Tonight, before you go to bed . . . wash the dishes.

## Day 18

Put away your clean dishes. Sweep the kitchen.

#### Put dirty dishes in the sink/dishwasher. Check the bathrooms for clutter.

Have you rebelled yet?

Let's talk about it. Over the next few days, I'm going to talk about different reasons you may be rebelling. (If you're not rebelling yet, you're a better person than I am.)

You don't have the time. Seriously, you have *x* number of kids. A full-time job outside the home. Or responsibilities at church. Or kids with allergies whose food has to be made from scratch. Or just better things (or at least more interesting things) to do than clean.

Things come up, and you may truly have days when you do not have time to put away your clean dishes when you get up in the morning. But I'll bet since you've put them away eighteen times in eighteen days, you're getting fairly good at it. You're learning that if you hang a coffee cup on each finger, you can put them all away with only one trip to the coffee-cup cabinet.

Here's the thing the rebellious Slob Brain doesn't want to accept: doing these things daily means you are doing them little by little, which saves time.

Just remember why you started reading this guide. You wanted hope for your home. Unfortunately, hope *isn't* as ambiguous as it sounds. It isn't something that floats around in the sky until it settles on top of your head. It's something you work for. It's something you discover *after* you put in some work.

And really, that's *not* unfortunate. Unfortunate things are out of your control. *This is in your control*.

Now go do the dishes and wipe down the counters and table before you go to bed.

Day 19

Put away your clean dishes. Sweep the kitchen.

#### Check the bathrooms for clutter.

#### Put dirty dishes in the sink/dishwasher as they get dirty.

Still rebelling? Feeling a little smug because yesterday's "address the rebellion" speech wasn't talking about you?

How about this? *I* don't get it. *I* don't get your life. I have only three children and didn't start my deslobification process until two of my three kids were in school. I don't have a "real" job. Blogger? Writer? What*ever*.

Maybe your husband is mean. Maybe your kids are teenagers and have actually laughed out loud at your attempts to change the way things have been for their entire lives. Maybe you're a single mom and work three jobs and still can't pay the bills. Maybe your mother-in-law lives next door and shows up unannounced and says rude things in front of your children. Maybe you have septuplets. Maybe you homeschool. Maybe you don't have a dishwasher or even a double sink.

Maybe you have to wash your clothes by beating them on rocks in the river.

I don't know what your unique situation is, and I don't pretend everyone's life is like mine. But I do know these four habits are as basic as they get.

Doing the dishes is just something that has to be done, even if "doing the dishes" means throwing away the pizza boxes and paper-towels-used-asplates.

Sweeping the kitchen? Like I said on day 8, it's not about sweeping the kitchen. It's about paying attention to the floor and keeping your kitchen in a state where you can do what needs to be done in it. Without tripping.

Checking the bathrooms for clutter? It's visual. It's paying attention. And if you've really been doing it, there might have been a day or two when *looking* into the bathroom was *all you had to do*.

These things are the basics, the bare minimum. If you want hope, you're going to have to accept that. They are not things you put off until Saturday. They're things that need to be done every day. In every home.

I know. It sucks.

#### Now go do the dishes.

We're in the twenties! And there are only twenty-eight days! (Well, twenty-eight days of this guide. There are, like, a *million* days after that.)

Put away your clean dishes.

Put dirty dishes in the sink or the dishwasher.

Sweep the kitchen.

Check the bathrooms for clutter.

Is it Saturday? Okay then. Go have some fun.

Just do the dishes before you go to bed.

## Day 21

What? It's 3:00 p.m. on Sunday, and you haven't done a thing? Oh. You just read the "go have some fun" part of yesterday and ignored the rest?

It's okay.

Do the dishes.

Sweep the kitchen.

Check the bathrooms for clutter.

Do the dishes again before you go to bed.

(Tomorrow starts the final week! Are you excited?)

## Day 22

It's the first day of the last week. Have you noticed a change in your home? Have you done some extra decluttering projects with all your freed-up time? Are you feeling the difference? Has anyone noticed?

Put away your clean dishes.

Sweep the kitchen.

Check the bathrooms for clutter.

Do a five-minute pickup.

Oh, yeah. That's the new habit for this week. You've made real change in your kitchen, and the kitchen being clean makes the whole house feel cleaner, right? The bathrooms being clutter-free feels great every time you . . . well . . . you know.

But what about the rest of the house? Maybe there aren't any dirty undies on the bathroom floor, but you're tripping over stuff as you walk through the living room.

Take five minutes to pick things up. Oh, and put them away too. All within the five minutes.

For the dishes, the kitchen floors, and the bathrooms, the first day took extra time. Not today. Just five minutes is all you need. Those tasks were specific and involved defined areas. "Picking up the house" is a little more ambiguous. Asking you to do it all today would be a sure way to cause tears of frustration and possibly some ripped-out book pages.

Look at the clock, or set a timer, and spend five minutes picking up. Personally, I would start in the most lived-in room. For us, that's the living room.

Because it's your first day for this habit, you may need to start with a trash bag. Just pick up trash for five minutes.

Tonight, do the dishes before you go to bed.

## Day 23

Put away your clean dishes.

Put dirty dishes in the sink/dishwasher as they get dirty.

Sweep the kitchen.

Check the bathrooms for clutter.

Do a five-minute pickup.

Do you need to use the trash bag again? If not, you could try spending five minutes gathering things that need to be donated. Bag them or box them up as you go, and then go put them in your trunk at the end of the five minutes.

Tonight . . . do your dishes and wipe down the counters and table.

Put away your clean dishes.

Place dirty dishes in the sink/dishwasher throughout the day.

Sweep the kitchen.

Check the bathrooms for clutter.

Do a five-minute pickup.

Are you a little amazed at the difference you see from just three days of five-minute pickups? *Just fifteen minutes total?* 

Oh. You're amazed. But you don't want to admit it because you're feeling rebellious again.

You're thinking, Look, lady, all this bathroom-checking and dish-doing and kitchen-sweeping is great, but my shower has a glass door I haven't seen through in three years because the soap scum is so thick! When am I going to clean the bathrooms? Huh?

Well, I'll go ahead and answer that: whenever you want to.

How about now? Right after you do the dishes, sweep the kitchen, check the bathrooms for clutter, and do a five-minute pickup.

This is why I resisted writing this much-requested deslobification manual for so long. People want a step-by-step guide to having the home of their dreams. But the problem with dreams is that you wake up. And drop your clothes on the bathroom floor. And use forks.

Clean the bathroom. Maybe that can be your big weekly project in place of doing a week's worth of dishes. Y'know, since you don't have to do a week's worth of dishes anymore.

In my home, I have assigned a major cleaning task to each day of the week. I do laundry on Mondays, mop the kitchen on Thursdays, etc. But I didn't start doing that until six months into my deslobification process. During those first six months, I randomly cleaned bathrooms or vacuumed. Yet my home was in better shape than it had ever been.

And I had hope. I saw, through personal understanding and experience-based knowledge, that small, daily habits are the key.

Now go do your dishes and wipe down the counters and table before you go to bed.

Put away your clean dishes.

Place dirty dishes in the sink or dishwasher throughout the day. Sweep the kitchen.

Check the bathrooms for clutter.

Do a five-minute pickup.

You've been doing five-minute pickups for five days now. Maybe, today, you'll get through the obvious stuff in the first two minutes. You may be tempted to stand in the middle of the room with a bewildered look on your face for the last three.

If you find yourself standing there, shake your head and focus on something that bugs you. Let's not pretend you're at the point where you need to start analyzing the aesthetic value of the figurines on your fireplace mantel. Look for the things that have escaped your vision. Perhaps it's the love seat covered in clean, unfolded laundry. Perhaps it's the pile of paper on the coffee table. I call this stuff *procrasticlutter*.

Spend any remaining minutes on those things. Fold clothes until the five minutes are *almost* up, and then go put those clothes away. Like, in their drawers and everything.

Or go through coffee table papers looking for things you can trash.

Tonight, wash the dishes and wipe the counters and table.

## Day 26

Put away your clean dishes.

Place dishes in the sink or dishwasher as they get dirty throughout the day.

Sweep the kitchen.

Check the bathrooms for clutter.

Do a five-minute pickup.

If you, again, find yourself with three whole minutes left after you've picked up the from-yesterday-to-today stuff in your living room, go back

to whatever you started tackling yesterday. Keep folding laundry. Just leave enough time to put it away before the five minutes are gone. Who knows? You might even find yourself on a roll and end up clearing it *all* off the couch.

Just be ready to comfort your frightened children tomorrow morning when they discover all the clean clothes have disappeared. And to direct them to those things called "dresser drawers."

Speaking of your family, I'm going to ask: has anyone in your family noticed? If they have . . . *yay!* If they haven't, I'm soooo sorry. I feel your pain, and I (far away in my Texas home) understand what a big deal it is that you've made it to day 26.

I know that the discouragement you feel is real. When no one takes your efforts to change seriously (not even your *success* in those efforts), you want to give up.

Just don't let the discouragement win. Keep going. Keep washing the dishes every night, and keep checking your bathrooms for clutter. Enjoy how much easier it is to live in your home. Gain your encouragement from watching your family enjoy it, too, even if they don't realize what they're enjoying.

And if life happens and you prove their theory that this new *method* won't work, just start back on day 1. Because now you know hope is attainable. It just takes work.

Now go do your dishes and wipe the counters and table.

## Day 27

Put away your clean dishes.

Place dirty ones in the sink or dishwasher.

Sweep the kitchen.

Check the bathrooms for clutter.

Do a five-minute pickup.

Are you irritated at spending those five minutes picking up everyone else's stuff? If you're doing this while everyone is at home with you, the five-minute pickup is an excellent habit to turn into a group task.

If you're home alone, let your slowly-becoming-less-cluttered space be the reminder to have them do another pickup when they're home.

Really? Two pickups? Why not just wait until we can do one, but all together?

Waiting doesn't work. It may sound noble, like you're exercising patience . . . but let's call it what it really is. Procrastinating.

Just do it. Put their stuff right inside the door to their room. The big clean-out-the-kids'-rooms project isn't even on your radar yet. When they complain, you'll remember to tell them you'd like them to put their *own* stuff away.

See? A win-win.

Before you go to bed tonight, do the dishes. Wipe down the counters and the table.

### Day 28

Put away your clean dishes.

Place dirty ones in the sink or dishwasher.

Sweep the kitchen.

Check the bathrooms for clutter.

Do a five-minute pickup.

Woo-hoo! You're done! You've made it to the twenty-eighth day!

Well . . . except for washing the dishes tonight. Oh, and then putting them away first thing tomorrow. And sweeping the kitchen, checking the bathrooms for clutter, and doing your five-minute pickup, of course.

The hope doesn't come from what your house looks like after twentyeight days. It comes from knowing what it takes to keep it looking that way every day.

Did I just pop your metaphorical balloon?

Sorry.

When I started my blog, I truly believed the project was temporary. I just *knew* if I put my mind to it, I'd kick this chronic-messiness thing, draft a final post called "The End," and spend the rest of my days writing

about *much* more interesting things than *cleaning* . . . in my always-orderly home.

That vision has changed. Partly because it's no longer a dream, but reality. Which is both good and bad. The bad part is I've realized there is no magic fix. No end to the dishes or the sweeping or the picking up.

The good news is these are skills. Skills can be learned and honed and practiced and developed. And when they get rusty from lack of use, they can be relearned.

And there's more good news! If you've grown accustomed to hearing my voice in your head every day for the past four weeks, that doesn't have to end. You can go over to http://www.aslobcomesclean.com/manage and read about the real-life daily progress of a real-life slob.

Just know you might land there on a day when I'm feeling like a failure and my kitchen stove is crusty with marinara sauce. Because those days happen.

But now I know . . . to go do the dishes.

\* \* \*

Now that you've finished reading, go get started on day 1.

What? You thought I didn't know you were going to read the whole thing before you washed your first dish? I knew.

Now go do the dishes.