



BACK HOME

By Michelle S. Rodgers

Berks Extension
Home Economist

However, there is one idea that we could be trying that would make spring cleaning this year have long term affects.

The first item is not cleaning, but rather clutter control! I believe this is the key! I don't mind the cleaning, it is the constant "pick-up" of disorganized clutter that takes the most time, especially when it is repeated over and over again.

The initial phase is to have the right frame of mind. Put on some fast-paced music, open the windows, and set aside a block of time. Next, get several empty bags or boxes. Label the boxes in the following way: move to another room, garage sale or give away, put in another room, and a big box for throw away.

Then choose a room to begin and place your four boxes inside the room. To be able to see your progress, begin in one corner of the room and work clockwise.

Getting Organized

Ice cream and cake, pen and paper, needle and thread, spring and housecleaning. Now, you pick out the one that doesn't go together. Personally, the thought of joining such a pleasant season as spring with the reality of housecleaning is non-harmonious in my mind. However, it does seem that

somewhere in our "roots" those two items have been paired together for as long as we have said cookies and milk!

Even I must admit that the thought of new life in spring does coordinate with freshness in the home. So, I too, will probably continue this gallant effort of trying once again to get things in order.

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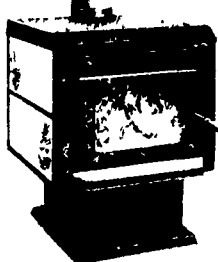
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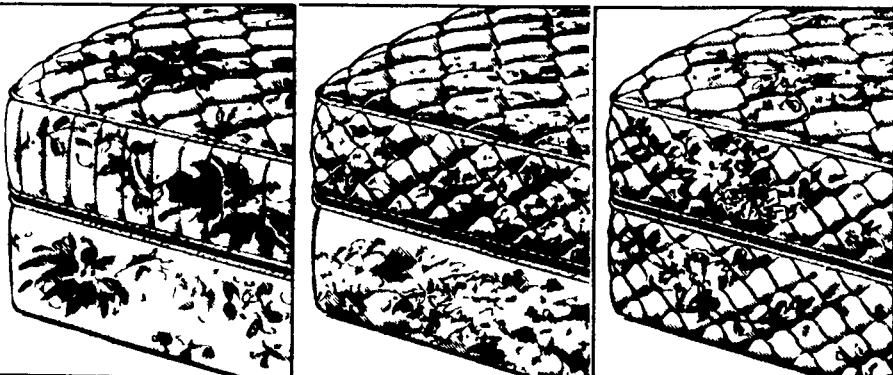
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Don't take on more than you can handle. Set an amount of time that you will work. Then methodically handle each item you come to, categorizing the item in the appropriate box. This way you will be able to see the most progress and this encouragement will help you to get the job done.

The most difficult part is deciding what to throw away. Some key questions to ask yourself are: When did I last use this item? Is it worth its cost in maintaining it, storing, insuring or moving it? With clothing, a general rule of thumb is that if you have not worn it in the past season, you probably will not wear it next year. These "skeletons" are only making clutter in your closet. There are other persons who would really appreciate these items. Inquire with the local clothing banks or second hand shops as to their needs or requirements.

In my early years of housecleaning, I started by making memory boxes. These boxes held special high school and college mementos,

prom flowers, and other "valuable" stuff. Now, I have shelves full of memory boxes and that's before my daughter has started creating art work. A possible solution is to sort through the memory boxes. This is a great job to do on a sunny day when you would rather be outside. Take the memory box out to the patio, porch or picnic table and go through it. Keep one of a set, or one flower out of a bouquet. Another option is to take a picture of items that have great sentimental value but are really not worth the room they take up. A photo takes much less room.

Probably the best reason to do spring cleaning is that it rejuvenates each of us when it is completed. So enough talk, let's get out there and get organized. And a quote from Ralph Waldo Emerson applies here, "Don't waste life in doubts and fears; spend yourself on the work before you, well assured that the right performance of this hour's duties will be the best preparation for the hours or ages which follow it!"

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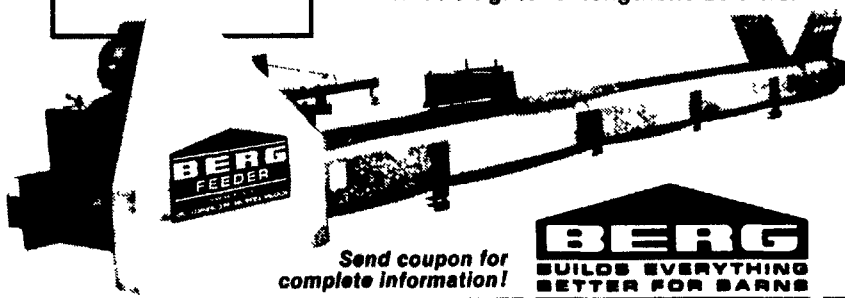
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