

## The Importance of Little Things

### **The Broken Window Theory of Housekeeping**

Just as cities have learned that it is the little things that matter in keeping cities livable and reducing crime, the so-called 'broken window' theory (small damage that is left unrepaired leads to reduced expectations and general sense of malaise that leads to increased crime), it's the little things that make a great difference in the quality of our lives.

Tiny things like fresh linens on the bed, a sink with no dirty dishes in it, fresh flowers, and a host of other small changes make an enormous difference in how we feel about ourselves and our lives, even though we may not be consciously aware of the status of these things. We quickly become accustomed to clutter, mess, or even dirt as we rush through life and struggle with difficult emotions. However, even though we no longer consciously notice these situations, they continue to affect us and lower our spirits and energy. So let's focus on actions that will raise our spirits and energy:

- \* Clear a surface – you don't have to clean the whole house to get the benefits of cleaning (though far be it from me to hold you back if you are so inclined), but just clearing the top of a dresser, putting things away and wiping it off, is nearly magical.
- \* Make things smell good – not with air fresheners (most of them are chemical nasties) but by using healthy cleaning products, most of which will impart a fresh smell. Open the windows and let fresh air in. Hang your blankets out to air in the sun.
- \* Tidy things. Sometimes seemingly trivial details will make a big difference, such as jogging a pile of papers or magazines so all the edges line up evenly, will make a big difference in how a pile is perceived.
- \* Throw things out. This may sound like an anathema to my hoarder friends, but the reality is, every little bit that we lighten our burden of ownership, the more that we feel relaxed and relieved. Start small – clear out a drawer or a box. Revel in how good it feels to have that many fewer things to worry about and deal with.
- \* Polish something. Seeing a surface that shines really lifts a mood. It helps us feel good about ourselves and everything that does that is a good thing. Whether a mirror, surface or silverware, polishing is a mindless activity that lets our stress level drop while we do something beneficial.
- \* Feather your nest. Whatever spot where you spend the most time, your 'nest', give it extra TLC. Making the place where we feel most comfortable extra nice will inspire doing other things that feel good. You can spread out from your nest in stages to get to the rest of the house.