THE MOST SIGNIFICANT HABIT OF THE DAY

A while back I shared a list of "simple rules" I wanted my family to live by—something I was planning to hang up as a little daily reminder. Funnily enough, the one thing I found people commented on more than any other was a line I honestly hadn't thought twice about including: **Make your bed every day.**

Is this really a novel concept?

I have to admit that I am slightly obsessive about making our bed each morning. And even my husband, who used to make fun of this obsession, has now embraced it. In fact, these days he might be even more obsessive about it than me!

But it's not just the bed. Most of the time, our house is pretty neat. Speed Cleaning is my jam--I love doing a quick sweep of the house every day. We also require our kids to make sure their room is tidy before they leave for school.

So I came up with a few reasons why making your bed everyday seemed to top the list of house cleaning or housekeeping chores, and a few others to show why it's so important to your mental and emotional health each day.

① IT JUST LOOKS (AND FEELS) BETTER.

This should be fairly obvious right? Straightened sheets and comforters with pillows in their proper place are far more aesthetically pleasing than disheveled blankets and a pile of pillows on the floor. A sink full of dirty dishes just looks ugly, whereas I could stare at my clean and sparkly kitchen all day long. Likewise, toys and clothes off the floor and put away are so much prettier than things scattered everywhere. And if you are constantly walking by one of these rooms each day, it just feels better to see a tidy room than a messy one.

② I GET MORE DONE WHEN MY HOUSE IS CLEAN.

Taking the time to focus on putting things in order--especially when I set the timer and race against the clock--seems to jumpstart my productivity. When I ignore the mess and try to work around it, I am more easily distracted by the mess itself as I try to do other things, whatever else comes my way, and at the end of the day I'll find I accomplished almost nothing. It doesn't mean I always keep my house clean, but I do get more done on the days that I take the time to first tidy up.

③ I'M NOT EMBARRASSED TO HAVE PEOPLE OVER.

I greatly value hospitality, so I love entertaining, throwing parties and get-to-gethers. When my house is clean I am more likely to invite someone over on the spur of the moment. I also don't end up having to spend hours cleaning up just to have a few guests over for a while.

④ I CAN FIND THINGS.

This part of my life has greatly improved since our Great Purge in December, when we got rid of SO much stuff. Now that everything has a rightful place once again, it is so much easier to put it away and—surprise surprise—to find things again when we need them!

⑤ MY KIDS PLAY BETTER.

My children have the incredible ability to make a mess instantaneously. Do your kids possess this talent? Sometimes it seems like they spend their entire day just dragging stuff out so they can leave it on the floor. During our great purge I got rid of 4 huge bins of toys, and there is still more purging yet to be done. I have noticed, however, that when we keep their room clean (and I do make them help with this), they actually play better and end up playing more. Just like me, they can find the things they are looking for and focus on just one thing at a time instead of being overwhelmed by 5,000 toys staring at them from the floor.

⑥ IT MAKES MY HUSBAND AND I HAPPY.

Who wants to come home after a hard day's work to a house full of chaos? The days where I get off work, the husband and kids get home, and everyones a bit hungry, dishes are piled in the sink, dinner isn't made, and the rest of the house is a disaster, everyone seems extra crabby. But on the days the house is clean, dinner is made, dishes are out of the way, everyone ends up happily greeting each other at the door with an unspoken joy that lights up on all of our faces. It just makes us happier people (even the girls).

⑦ IT SAVES MONEY.

Taking care of my home and my things means I am less likely to need to replace something that gets lost or broken. When things are messy, the only thing I want to do is scape the clutter, which can often mean going to Target and mindlessly filling a cart with even more stuff we don't need. When things are clean, I have no desire to be any place but here.

⑧ I AM MORE CREATIVE.

Instead of seeing nothing but the mess, my mind is clear to see the creative potential around me, and my desk and table are clear to spread out and complete a project. Likewise, when my kitchen is clean, it makes me want to cook things (which I love to do)! I know this doesn't bother some people, but I have a really hard time creating anything--or enjoying the process--when I am

surrounded by clutter.

(9) IT HELPS ME GET A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP.

There is nothing I love more than crawling into a carefully-made bed. It is so comforting! Rather than needing to wrestle with tangled sheets or scoop up blankets from off the floor, I am instantly relaxed and ready for a night of rejuvenation. Even if I can't manage to get to the rest of the house, I almost always make my bed because I hate sleeping in a messy bed. A made bed just feels better, the blankets stay on all night long, and I sleep much better.

(10) I MAKE IT PART OF MY RESPONSIBILITY.

Instead of looking at it like a tedious task to be done later, which if I'm honest ends up being not at all, I look at it like the first task of the day that needs to be completed. It's the one thing I can quickly do, if I don't get much else done, that feels like an accomplishment for the day. Believe it or not, making it a task that's checked off the list actually sets the tone for all the other things to be checked off and completed too. Making it a part of my responsibility also keeps me from skipping out on it.

Until I posted the above list, it never even occurred to me that these habits might be considered obvious to some. Even so, when I really started to think about it, I realized there are some serious reasons why I take the time to make my bed and tidy up each day.

It might seem like a monotonous and tedious task on the surface, but once you get into the routine of doing it, you'll surely begin to notice the subtle positive changes it brings. Let's face it, we're all much happier and feel way more relaxed when we walk into spaces that are tidy and kept. It's an open invitation to forget the world and rest with those you love, and it creates a positive state of mind right from the beginning of the day that can be carried over into the rest of the day's tasks.