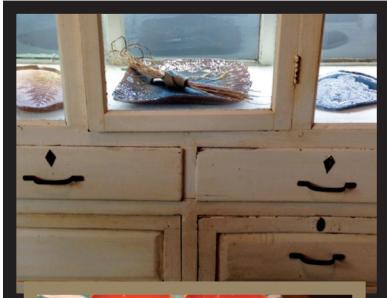


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## Keepin' it Real

Are you living with clutter  
and dented cushions?  
Of course you are!

By Jennifer Scully

**H**AVE YOU EVER flipped through the pages of a home decorating magazine? Every page is filled with picturesque home interiors, walls painted with subtly charming hues, and furnishings that set the heart aflutter with serenity. Walls of open shelving are used to display coordinated antique dishes, and chairs are strategically placed about to give the illusion that much is happening inside the house. Fresh blooms and greenery fill in any "empty" space, and kitchen counters are highlighted only by a tray of seemingly fresh baked bread and jam. Sounds great, doesn't it? But don't you think these so-called "real" homes are all lacking some very "real" elements?

For one thing, where's the clutter? I like to keep an orderly house, but with a young child, that's more a dream than reality. Whether toys or books, puzzles or stuffed animals, there are always things scattered about my living room. I like to think of it as "toddler decorating." I can't be the only one in the world who has a living room full of toys, yet I never see those images in home magazines.

Windows and window treatments are always perfect when you see them on the printed page, while "sunlight" is always at the perfect angle to cast a soft beam of light on the effortlessly staged plants nestled neatly on the window sill. Meantime, in the real world, my windows are always covered by fingerprints from my daughter peeking out at passersby. And, in my house, the only thing that you will see on the window sill is our pet cat, Cali, basking in the sun. Charming, isn't it?

Even the cushions look flawless in magazines. Go ahead, try to find a "butt dent." I'll wait.

OK, I'll admit it, I do enjoy peeking at home decorating publications. Sometimes, it sparks my creativity by providing inspiration, but I'm pretty comfortable knowing my home may never look like anything I see on paper. When it comes down to it, spending time with my family is way more important than the color of my walls.

After all, a house full of fingerprints and dust is in reality, a "real" place that is home to love. ☺

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