

Jen to the Zen

Spring
CLEANING
WORKBOOK



One week of mini decluttering projects designed to jumpstart the process of removing physical and mental clutter from your life.

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Welcome to the Spring-Cleaning Workbook!

The purpose of this workbook is to give you bite-sized mini projects to get you started de-cluttering your home and your mind. The thought of decluttering your entire house is overwhelming and it's easy to talk ourselves out of that.

However, if we start with small manageable projects, that we can complete fairly quickly, it will create tiny successes that we can build upon. Each project that I present should take 10 to 15 minutes to complete. It feels so good after even one small area of your life is cleaned up that by the end of one week it is my hope that you will feel inspired enough to keep going on other projects.

Let's get started!

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Day 1 – Purse

It's day one and the first mini project is cleaning out your purse. For the men, you will find an alternate project at the end of the day one page.

Ladies, I know you probably, periodically, clean out your purse anyway but I have a few challenges for you beyond just cleaning it out. We tend to stash all sorts of things in our purses. Yes, some things we need and some we really do not need. We tend to carry around way too much. Let's consider what we really need in our purses. I know it's in our nature to have things in case of any circumstances that arise. I challenge you, after cleaning out your purse, question what really needs to go back into it.

In addition to paring down what goes back into the purse, I have a **next level** challenge and I have done this myself. Go down a size. Intentionally carry less and use a much smaller purse. It's been such an improvement for me. It's less stuff to keep track of, less physical weight, and it makes it easier to find those essential items you do need. I don't know about you but I hate digging through my purse in a search of something and sometimes have to dump the contents out looking for it. It wastes time and is frustrating.

What's in my purse? For me it is a tiny wallet with only the absolute necessary cards (Drivers License, Debit Card, Insurance card). Sometimes a little cash. A comb. Pack of travel sized tissues. Keys. Sunglasses. Very small make up pouch with only the minimal essentials which includes a Chapstick. A small pill box with a few ibuprophen (not the whole bottle). My earbuds. All of which fits in a small cross body purse. What is Not in there is every store discount card, coupons, membership cards, manicure set, nail posish, etc. I only carry the bare essentials in my purse. Most memberships can be looked up by phone number or email these days. Rarely do I ever need a check so a checkbook does not need to be carried around either. Coupons, can go in on grocery day if I need them. Everything else can wait until I get home.

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Day 1- Continued

The next challenge, come up with a plan to keep it cleaned out. Empty excess change, receipts, and all the miscellaneous, unnecessary items that accumulate regularly.

Day 1- Alternate for the guys, Bedside Table

Now guys- I want you to declutter your bedside table and/or the floor on your side of the bed where there's possibly a pile of not clean but not dirty clothes that either need put away or in the hamper. After the area is all tidy, come up with a strategy to keep from re-cluttering the area. I recommend spending one to two minutes before you go to bed at night to re-tidy. Do a clean sweep of the table and put the clothes in the hamper. You will have to intentionally do it until it becomes a habit.

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Day 2 – Car

Welcome to day 2 of the spring-cleaning project. The mini project for today is cleaning out your car. We spend a lot of time in our car. So, it's important to keep it decluttered as well. If you have kids, I know it's hard to keep it tidy. As they get old enough make them responsible for cleaning up their area of the car. Keep a small trash bag hanging in the back-seat area that they can throw trash in regularly to help keep it clean. Also, create a small car clean up kit to keep in the console that contains:

1. Paper towels.
2. Cleaning wipes.
3. A few small trash bags (plastic grocery bags will do).

When you do not have to make an extra trip inside or outside to clean up the car it really helps your ability to keep it tidy. Since it's right there in the console, do a quick wipe down, and grab the trash bag as you go inside.

Spring is a perfect the time of year to take some fun road trips. So, get the car cleaned out and you can hit the road for some fun adventures! Who's with me!?

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Day 3 – Junk Drawer

Today we are tackling the notorious “junk drawer”. Go through and throw away or donate:

- 1- Things that you don't need, use or no longer have a purpose.
- 2 - Anything you have not used in the past year. If you haven't used it in a year, it's likely you won't need it. Donate it or throw it away.
- 3- If there are items in the junk drawer that you also keep elsewhere make a decision and only keep it in one of the locations. If you keep scotch tape in your desk drawer do not also keep it in the junk drawer. Choose a home for it. Repeat for all items.

It's so hard not to have a junk drawer and they get overrun quickly. Takes this time to evaluate what you really need to keep. An example to consider: you do not need 30 ink pens. Pare it down to the minimum you need. Your favorites and maybe a few extras. Garbage bag twist ties. You don't need 200 of them. Keep a small supply. The same applies to most items in the junk drawer.

Everyone puts different types of things in the junk drawer. I challenge you that almost everything in there probably has another place that you also keep it. So, try to make that determination and choose one place or the other.

Do not add new items after you decide what items you will keep in the junk drawer or you will just repeat the whole process again next time.

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Day 4 – Junk Mail

Welcome to day 4! You are doing awesome and we are already over halfway through the week. We are finding our Zen by removing clutter one small project at a time. Today I want you to go tackle your paper junk mail. I know there is a place in your kitchen or dining room that's either a counter, basket, bin or maybe even the dining room table that all the junk mail gathers. Time to sort.

1. Go through and pitch the ads and offers.
2. Keep the bills and important correspondence
3. File things where they should go.
4. Come up with a plan to make sure there is never a pile again.

Here's a few tips that can help you to completely get rid of the junk pile forever.

1. Each day when you check the mail box, trash the ads and solicitations immediately. They go directly in the trash or recycling bin.
2. Switch to paperless statements for your bills. I know it's a big change for some of you but it is so convenient and now I avoid so much paper clutter.
3. If paperless bills are not for you, create a folder or inbox for items that need your attention or action. This could include the paper bills. As the action items get completed, file them away or shred depending on the type of document.

Following those basic tips should help end the stack of mail and junk mail creating clutter on your countertop. Taking one minute now will save a lot of time later.

Bonus tip If you are a coupon clipper consider going digital with your coupons. Take advantage of technology in this area. Not only will you be able to throw away the bulky coupon magazines you will no longer forget to bring them with you because they will be in your handy smartphone, not cluttering your countertop or purse.

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Day 5 – Email Inbox

It's day number 5 of the Spring Cleaning project. We are clearing away clutter one small project at a time. Today we will de-clutter our email inbox! We get bombarded with so many unnecessary junk emails. Go through and unsubscribe to all the emails that no longer serve your needs. If you are in a simplicity mindset keep the following in mind:

1. Marketing works so unsubscribing from stores and shopping sites will help you avoid spending money on impulse or on unnecessary things.
2. Curate your email so that it reflects what you value in your life. Email is required to do a lot of transactions. So, be mindful of who you wish to receive emails from and unsubscribe to the rest.
3. If you cannot review your emails daily, pick a day once a week to go through your inbox and make it a part of that day's routine so it stays cleared out.

Email can be a great tool but it can become overrun just like our paper junk mail and since it's not in our face it can be an "*out of sight, out of mind*" area that gets forgotten about. Clean up that inbox now to free up more time in the future.

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Day 6 – Pantry

It's day 6 of the Spring-Cleaning project and I have a great one lined up for today. We are going to clean out our pantry. Here's a list to help you get focused:

1. Start with throwing out all the old or expired items.
2. If there are food items that you no longer use at all get rid of them. Find a food pantry to donate so you are not wasting perfectly good food. Sometimes friends or neighbors may want them.
3. If you are recently eating differently such as a certain type of diet and there are foods that tempt you to go off your diet you should remove them also.
4. I use the term *curate* frequently but there is a reason. It is a term that applies so well to simplifying life because a highly curated area is a succinct reflection of your needs. Curate the pantry to a simplified version of your everyday needs. Do not hold on to food goods that you think you will use some time in the future. Example: You have cans of pie filling for 2 months or more. "I really want to make that peach cobbler". But you're not someone who bakes. It's the idea of wanting to bake that pie. Let's get real with our true habits so we can clear out stuff we don't need.
5. Organize it. Make it look orderly so you can find what you have.

CHALLENGE I have a challenge for you and I have done this as well. If you are having trouble getting rid of some of those "just in case" items, use them up. Do not buy any groceries this week and use up stuff you already have. Of course, buy essentials like bread, milk or fruit but let's get creative and use up as many items possible this week. Look at what you have and google some ideas of how to use canned potatoes or whatever oddball item you have in a recipe. Let's have fun with it!

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Day 7 – Your Mind

You have made it to Day 7 and the most important day of the Spring-Cleaning project! Today we are de-cluttering our mind. Find a nice comfortable place to sit that is away from distraction. Take 10-15 minutes away from your responsibilities and just relax. If you meditate, I recommend doing a meditation. If not, just relax and check in with yourself. Do not overthink it. Just be in the moment and allow yourself this time that is just for you. You do so much and deserve this time to refuel your tank so you can be fully present in your life and for your loved ones. I recommend doing this every day. While Breathing in deep and slowly think positive and loving thoughts. While exhaling, let go of any stress or tension that you have been holding on to. Allow yourself to let go of mental clutter on every exhale.

I hope everyone had a great week and feels just a little lighter and less tethered to physical things.

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Concluding Thoughts.

Creating a simple lifestyle requires patience. Especially in the beginning. There is a time commitment up front but you will receive the reward of freeing up time as you move through the process. Spending just 10-15 minutes decluttering each day can make a significant difference. Be sure to take breaks from the decluttering efforts to allow time to relax and reflect. If you make the commitment to new habits that reinforce keeping clutter at bay, you will begin to open up bigger chunks of time. You will start to have more focus and clarity in your life because distractions will slowly move out of the way. Yes it will require some work up front but the reward is worth it. Imagine more time, more clarity, more focus, more you.

Visit my website: www.jentothetzen.com
for other life simplifying projects such as [How to Simplify Mealtime](#) and [my experiment with a Capsule Wardrobe](#).

Enjoy this journey and always be true to yourself!
~Jen to the Zen