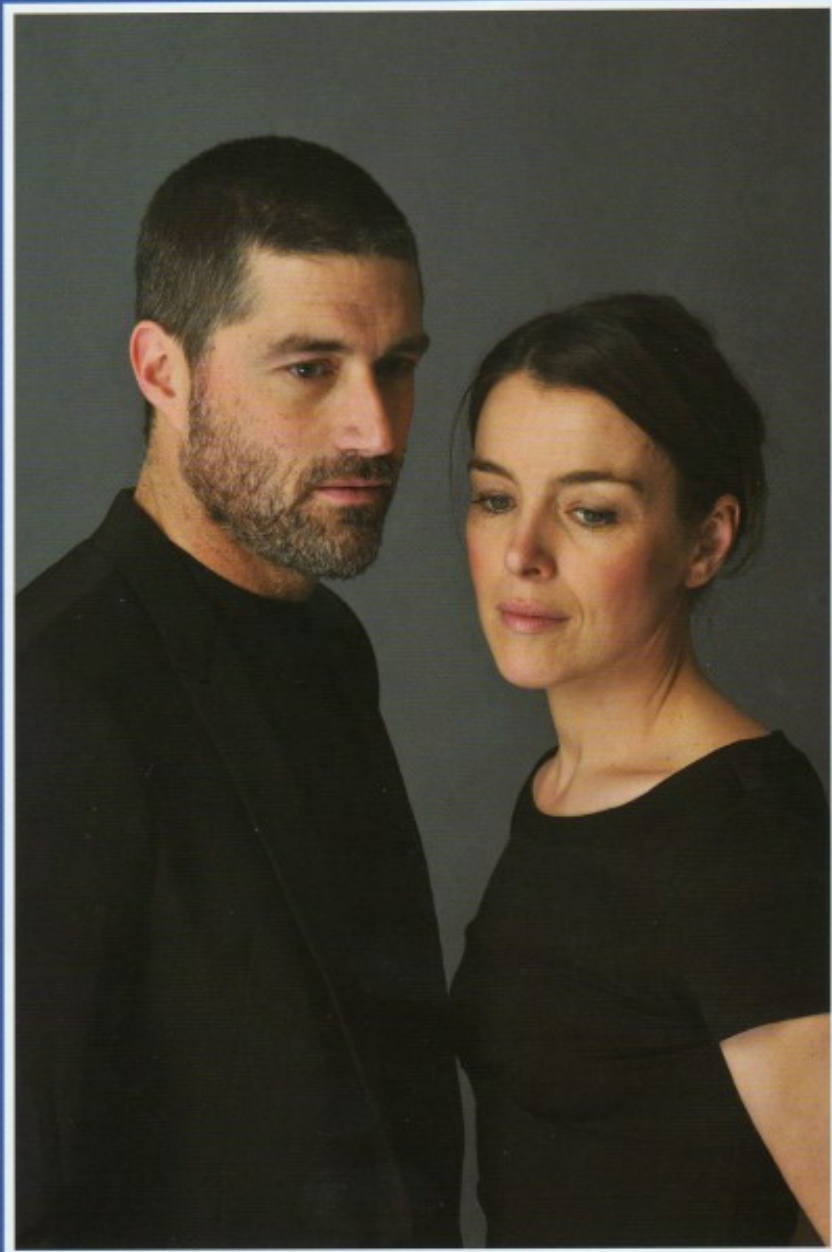


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# Spring Clean

By Cory Cook

This is the time of year when you watch for the first forsythia and crocus blooms, for the colourful break from winter's dull tones and the promise of warmer weather. The spring season of renewal has long been marked with the traditional deep cleaning of hearth and home. But a good clean should mean more than bleaching grout and a donation-trip to Oxfam.

It's not just the physical stuff we have; it's the attachments we have to it and what it represents. So, if we stop and reflect on who we are and the direction in which we want our lives to go, then the ritual cleaning process can be more powerful. Not only will a good household purge give you more physical space, but also more mental space.

Here are my five tips to help you refresh and revitalise your home:

**1. Plan mentally:** Before you dive in and start shuffling things about, take time to think about what you are moving towards in your life. Starting a new chapter? Changing career? Trying new things? Wanting to simplify? Breaking an old habit? Whatever your goal, identifying it

and keeping it the front of your mind will help you decide what is still important to you, and help spotlight the obsolete.

**2. Prepare physically:** Gathering a few materials in advance, and blocking out some uninterrupted time, will make it much easier to get started and work solidly. Are you a morning person or late afternoon? Use your energy cycles and concentration levels as your guide. If you can only concentrate a couple of hours at a time on any given task, avoid scheduling a 6-hour block. Break it down into 2-hour time-slots with tea-time in between. Have plenty of bin liners or boxes, sticky notes and Sharpie markers. Label the bin liners or boxes for easy sorting. For example: rubbish, recycling, gifting, charity shop, eBay, to-be-mended, etc. Also designate a box for items that stay but need returning to another room where they belong. Place those items in the box as you work and make one round at the end to return items to their respective locations. This will save time while you work and avoid you getting distracted.

**3. Execute:** Start with a commonly used room or area where clutter tends to accumulate, then follow suit room by room. Begin sorting by putting like items together. It is much easier to sort what you have when similar items are together. You might discover 6 pairs of similar black trousers or shoes – but you only really wear 3. Your kitchen cabinets may be holding 23 coffee mugs – but you regularly use the same 4. Make a mental note of any item that seems to multiply.

Then edit the categories. This is the time to use your goal as your beacon. With every item ask yourself: Do I use this regularly? Do I love it? Will this help me progress towards my goal? Pay attention to how you feel when you look at each object. Other questions to consider: When was the last time you used it? Are you likely to use it in the next 6 months? You may have things that served a purpose at one point in your life, but be honest – if it no longer serves you, it's time to create room for new things and experiences. All that should remain are belongings that are truly useful and treasured.

**4. Carry through to completion:** Now that the hard part is over, don't let all that good work go to waste by not finishing the job. Review what is left. Depending on how



Before and after

much was edited, you may have plenty of room to store what you are keeping without additional containers. The important part here is that your remaining items have a consistent place where they will be returned after every use. If you need additional containers, be sure to take measurements so that your purchases will fit the physical space as well as hold the items – and allow some extra space for growth. The other crucial element here is to transport immediately the unwanted items off your premises. Schedule a time in your diary when you will deliver items to family/friends, charity shops, the skip etc. Check for organisations in your area that collect larger items, such as furniture and appliances, and schedule a pickup time.

**5. Seal the deal:** Congratulations, getting to this point was no easy feat and I strongly urge you to treat yourself. Unless you have one already, hire a professional cleaner to give your home a thorough deep clean. Or get everyone under your roof involved for a team clean. Introduce some vibrant new plants and/or fresh cut flowers – this will infuse your new environment with vitality and remind you that spring is here.



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