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Sometimes We Need to Press 'Reset' Button and Return to Basics

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Sometimes We Need to Press 'Reset' Button and Return to Basics

By Erin O'Flaherty
UCF Forum columnist
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I'm not a germaphobe by any means, but I love cleanliness. When I clean, I really clean, and I usually won't stop until the mixed smells of my various cleaning products permeate my house.

I will fill countless bags of giveaway items to be taken to the local Goodwill. I would describe myself as the opposite of a hoarder, whatever that would be called. And if I've just vacuumed the carpets, forget about walking on them. You're confined to the hardwood floors in the kitchen so as to not mess up the beautiful vacuum lines I've so perfectly created.

Now that spring has sprung, unsprung, and then sprung again around most of the country, I've been thinking about my spring-cleaning rituals. It's the one time of the year where my cleaning standards are socially acceptable, because for some reason, a lot of other people are doing it, too.

I don't know how the tradition of spring-cleaning started. I'm assuming it's the beautiful weather and the promise of an exciting summer peeking around the corner that makes us want to get our living quarters so organized and ready for whatever will come. We're cleaning out the gray sludge of winter to prepare for summer.

This year, though, my spring-cleaning is leading up to something more: a move to Tampa after graduation for a promotion within my company.

So far, this year has been filled with lots of exciting and life-changing events that have, ultimately, been mentally and emotionally taxing, no matter the positive effects that they will have on my life in the future. Change is hard.

During the ins and outs of everyday life, it has become easy to forget to take care of my own needs and give myself attention, too. In the midst of cleaning and packing, I've realized that spring-cleaning is about so much more than just getting ready for summer. For me, it's become a symbolic "refresh" button I get to push on my life. As I'm now not only cleaning my closet, but packing it up to move it 100 miles away, I'm extending my spring cleaning to my mind, as well.

Traditionally, I'm extremely independent and self-sufficient. I moved away from home when I was 16, eager to grow up too quickly, and, I guess, those qualities have naturally resulted. In my career and extracurricular activities, an extroverted personality is required of me, but I'm an introvert at heart and big groups of people make me uncomfortable. Lately though, I've found myself relying on others for my source of energy and emotional support more than I'd like to admit.

When my girlfriend recently told me she felt as though she wasn't getting enough time to herself between her career and our relationship, it got me thinking. First, though, it hurt my feelings. I didn't really understand how giving her time to herself, which I perceived to be space away from me, would benefit our relationship. We have a great relationship, so I was just confused.

I felt like I was being punished for loving her, until I realized that I had been unnaturally clingy – perhaps because I had forgotten I can make myself happy in ways that others can't, and I had been pushing to get that happiness from her, instead. And, not surprisingly, it wasn't working. She didn't realize she was giving me the wake-up call I had needed for myself, too.

I had the epiphany that if it had been my best friend coming to me, saying she needed more time to herself so she could give more in other aspects of her life, I would tell her to take it in a heartbeat. And that when we feel fulfilled on our own, it enables us to authentically give more in other relationships in our lives!

I've decided to try to go back to the basics. What makes me happy when it's just me? I had a reality check when I realized that I haven't read a book from start to finish in about 10 months; cracking open a good book was something I used to crave at the end of a long day.

"Wow. How disconnected have I really been from myself?" I thought.

After some reflection, I added exercising, blogging, and cooking to my list of neglected activities that I'm usually so devout to. I know that it is not my love for these activities that has changed, but the concept of entertaining myself without relying on others for happiness is something I've lost sight of.

Whatever your situation, whether furthering your career, graduating from college, or living for your relationship or kids, don't forget to remember yourself. This spring, pledge to yourself to clean more than your closet, and press your own "reset" button by going back to the basics.

Do it for yourself, knowing that it will also enhance what you've been living for, too. It feels good, I promise.

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