



## REWRITING THE RULES YOUR MOTHER TAUGHT YOU

**W**e all know what happened as two-career couples became the norm over the last several decades: Scores of new duties came rushing onto our to-do lists like a tsunami. In days of yore, Ozzie-and-Harriet families had one adult who went into the world to make money and another who managed the home front. Today, most families would collapse without two incomes.

With that as a backdrop, consider this interesting bit of research from the Soap and Detergent Association: 62 percent of women say they clean their homes pretty much the same way their mothers did. For goodness sake, corporations took a wrecking ball to the rules of business, but we're using the same old 1950s rules to manage our homes? No wonder we're overwhelmed. No wonder we're all going crazy.

It's time to rewrite the rules your mother taught you for housecleaning. Nothing less than your sanity is at stake.

One of the hardest things to set aside will be perfectionism. Why? Because we are inundated with images from movies,

television, and magazines depicting homes with clutter-free, glimmering countertops—places where upholstery and dog hair never meet, where dust bunnies are extinct. Such homes are not achievable in the real world. Even when we work hard at housecleaning, we feel guilty that we're not meeting unreachable goals. Let's wipe the slate clean and substitute a new set of priorities that meets the needs of modern families—a change that will restore your mental health.

**GOAL 1: KEEP A SAFE AND HEALTHY HOME** If you have to choose between killing germs and dusting your Hummels®, kill the germs. *How to Cheat at Cleaning* shows you how you can easily sanitize in all the right places.

**GOAL 2: BE ABLE TO FIND YOUR POSSESSIONS WHEN YOU NEED THEM** If your system's functional, it's fine. For those of you still in search of a semblance of order, this book provides scores of easy de-cluttering techniques.

**GOAL 3: KEEP THE KIND OF HOME YOU ARE HAPPY WITH** You are the one who has to be pleased with your surroundings, not your mother or your next-door neighbor.

### NEW RULES FOR CLEANING

New goals require new pathways for reaching them and a new mind-set. Rather than perpetually marching toward perfection, we need real-world

approaches—corner-cutting, time-saving, minimal-effort techniques for cleaning. Yes, we need ways of *cheating*.

The new rules for doing this are divided into two categories: mind-set, to get you properly focused, and procedures, to make sure you expend no more time or energy than absolutely necessary. These general principles will serve as valuable background as you proceed to all the specific corner-cutting advice in the coming chapters.