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How to keep house while drowning free

How a Gentle Approach to Cleaning and Organizing Can Bring Relief By KC Davis, LPCOver time, I've worked on mastering daily tasks such as laundry, dishes, and cleaning. Despite some uncertainty around certain chores, I'm gradually figuring things out. Today's guest, KC Davis, is the author of "How to Keep House while Drowning: A Gentle Approach to Cleaning and Organizing." This book profoundly impacted my perspective on cleaning, self-compassion, and hygiene. Here's a clip from KC's TEDx talk, "How to Do Laundry When You're Depressed."KC Davis, a therapist with ADHD, shares her personal struggles during the COVID lockdowns. She recounts how her house became chaotic, dishes piled up, and laundry reached new heights while dealing with breastfeeding difficulties, toddler tantrums, and depression. Despite feeling like she was failing as a mom to two young children, KC turned to TikTok to post humorous videos about her messy home.One video, featuring a joke about her cluttered space, received the comment "Lazy." This stung KC, but she continued posting, hoping for more criticism. Instead, hundreds of stories poured in from viewers who connected with her struggles and found solace in her humor.KC Davis explained how she started discussing shame around not being able to do basic adult tasks like cleaning and cooking during her therapy sessions. She found it interesting that people rarely talked about this kind of shame. Davis defined "care task" as any domestic task that takes care of oneself, such as doing laundry or taking medication, and emphasized that she uses this term instead of "chores" because it reframes the tasks as something done out of self-care rather than obligation.Chris Duffy shared a personal experience where his wife's health issues led to him becoming her caretaker during the pandemic. He struggled with feelings of guilt and inadequacy when he couldn't take care of simple tasks like cleaning the bathtub due to lack of energy or time. Davis agreed that people often view these tasks as evidence of their failure, leading them to avoid doing them.Davis divided barriers to completing care tasks into two categories: environmental stress and physical/mental disabilities. She highlighted how shame arises from feeling like one should be able to do these tasks but can't due to external circumstances or personal limitations. This leads people to conclude that they are lazy, stupid, or irresponsible.It's hard not to get caught up in the comparison of suffering, feeling like you're the only one who isn't at the top of their game. But suffering is real and painful, even if some aspects of life are easier for others. Just because things are objectively harder for some people doesn't mean they're not objectively painful too.KC Davis: I think we try to be respectful by acknowledging our privileges, but sometimes it's hard to figure out where we fit in terms of being disabled. We don't want to put ourselves in a category we're not in, but at the same time, we need to recognize our own struggles and show compassion towards ourselves.Chris Duffy: I agree with you, and your message is radical because it removes moral judgment from our experiences. Taking care of tasks has nothing to do with being good or bad; it's just about what we can handle. We should focus on self-compassion rather than trying to meet an impossible standard.KC Davis: We're all in this place of uncertainty, wondering who we are, what we can and can't do. We need to recognize that everyone deserves compassion, regardless of whether their struggles have a legitimate reason or not. Compassion is the key to motivating ourselves and finding ways to overcome challenges.This podcast conversation revolves around reevaluating how people perceive tasks such as cleaning and self-care. A listener shared their personal struggle with feeling inadequate due to imperfect household management, hoping to emulate someone they admired from a book. The speaker, KC Davis, emphasizes the importance of shifting this mindset by acknowledging current limitations rather than striving for perfection.Davis suggests reframing one's perspective on daily tasks, focusing on what can be accomplished in the present moment with available resources, rather than adhering to unrealistic standards or comparing oneself unfavorably to others. This approach involves adopting a more compassionate and realistic attitude towards personal capabilities and imperfections.A significant turning point in Davis' own journey was when she realized the practicality of organizing her clothes without folding them, using wire baskets for categorization instead. This change significantly improved her quality of life by making it easier and quicker to find what she needed. Davis' message encourages listeners to consider the value of "good enough" rather than striving for an unattainable ideal.The conversation also touches on the psychological impact of self-criticism and the benefits of treating oneself with compassion, especially when faced with challenges or imperfections. KC Davis advocates for a mindset that recognizes individuals who are struggling deserve kindness and understanding towards themselves.I felt like there was an order of operations to solve my problems, but if I couldn't fix one issue, everything else seemed impossible. Then I realized I didn't have to be limited by my struggles and could still improve my life. I've applied this mindset to everything. Chris Duffy asked me about my belief that laziness isn't a real thing, and I explained that when we dig deeper into people's issues, it's usually due to mood problems, depression, motivation, procrastination, being overwhelmed, or other factors - not laziness. It's also subjective, as everyone has different priorities and motivations. Just because someone doesn't want to do something doesn't mean they're lazy; it might just be that they don't enjoy it. We all do things we don't enjoy, but that doesn't make us lazy. The issue of division of labor often comes up in discussions about laziness, where one person might be shouldering all the domestic tasks while the other avoids them. However, this isn't necessarily laziness, but rather entitlement and exploitation. It's different when someone avoids a task because they're overwhelmed or struggling, versus avoiding it because they know someone else will do it for them. Chris Duffy brought up the topic of distributing tasks and how it can be challenging to ask for help due to fear of judgment. I recommend being open and honest about your struggles and asking for help when needed, whether it's paid help or assistance from friends and family.People ponder the issue of fairness in relationships, but KC Davis suggests we're going about it the wrong way. Instead of focusing on equal work hours and intensity, Davis recommends prioritizing fairness in rest time. This involves recognizing that everyone deserves time to recharge, regardless of job demands or duration.According to Davis, traditional approaches to comparing workloads often lead to devaluing someone's labor, creating an unfair dynamic. By shifting the focus to fair rest time, individuals can prioritize their own needs and autonomy. However, care tasks, which are often cyclical and require constant attention, disproportionately fall on one partner or person.Chris Duffy points out that care tasks extend beyond the home, with many offices relying on employees to take on additional responsibilities, such as cleaning and maintenance. This burden can also fall unevenly on certain individuals, perpetuating an unfair dynamic.The conversation highlights the importance of acknowledging and addressing the disparities in care tasks and rest time within relationships and workplaces. Davis notes that women are often expected to perform extra care tasks at home and in the office, while Duffy emphasizes the impact of young children on family dynamics and care responsibilities.You may still struggle with these daily tasks even without children, and it's not just about being a parent. KC Davis talks about how having kids can impose a routine on you, making some care tasks easier but also harder in other ways. This routine is not limited to household chores; it's about remembering appointments, bills, and other invisible labor that requires mental effort. For example, keeping track of when to oil a door or replace its hinges might seem trivial, but the planning, organization, and mental preparation required can be overwhelming. KC Davis emphasizes that everyone has different strengths and weaknesses when it comes to managing care tasks, and what might be easy for one person could be a significant burden for another. The daily repetition of these tasks can be discouraging, especially if you don't feel like doing them one day, which only adds to the challenge. In contrast, larger projects or tasks often have a sense of accomplishment attached to them because they have a clear beginning, middle, and end, and produce a tangible outcome.Life is like Sisyphus pushing a boulder up a mountain, only to have it roll back down - that's just what we do, and it's okay. We can't always reach the top, but we can make progress by breaking tasks into smaller, manageable pieces. KC Davis shared her own experience with ADHD and how she uses strategies like listening to podcasts or audiobooks while doing chores to increase motivation. She also emphasized the importance of finding ways to inject pleasure and satisfaction into daily tasks, whether it's creating a systematic approach to cleaning or making decisions about where to focus on reducing overwhelm. When faced with a daunting task like cleaning dishes, Davis recommends identifying the bottleneck - the part that causes the most stress or resistance - and then brainstorming ways to make it more enjoyable or less painful. In her own case, she hates unloading the dishwasher because of the lack of system and pattern, so she's working on creating solutions to make this step more bearable. By breaking down tasks into smaller, achievable steps and finding ways to make them more pleasurable, we can make progress and create a sense of accomplishment, even if we can't always reach the top of that mountain.I feel like I've found my solution, but let's work backwards to see if it's as simple as running my dishwasher more often. Even when it's not full, maybe that's just what I need to do. But what if it's not about the dishes themselves? What if it's about how overwhelmed I feel when looking at a pile of them in the sink? Maybe instead of just loading everything straight into the dishwasher, I should organize it first.What if I create a ritual where every night at 7 pm, I put on my favorite playlist and spend 10 minutes doing dishes? No matter how many are there, when those 10 minutes are up, I'm done. It's that simple. And instead of getting bogged down by the tasks themselves, let's focus on creating a system to overcome the barriers. Whether it's depression or grief, sometimes we just need to simplify things.One thing that has been a game-changer for me is having a family closet where everyone puts their clothes in one place. I used to do laundry and then distribute the clothes to different areas of the house, but now everything comes off in the closet. It's made doing laundry so much more efficient. And it got me thinking - what if we applied this same principle to reactive care tasks? Instead of getting bogged down by the messes that need to be cleaned up, maybe we can create a system for those too.To maintain productivity in daily tasks, especially those requiring minimal effort, prioritize completing them within a set timeframe. In my approach to household chores like laundry and cleaning, I've found it essential to have designated storage containers or baskets in each room, allowing me to quickly collect and put away items.If I feel the need to interrupt my focus due to an overwhelming task, such as sorting clothes, I take action immediately. This prevents frustration and helps me stay focused on more important tasks.When discussing household habits with others who may have differing opinions or offer unsolicited advice, it's crucial to remain calm and assertive. By reorienting myself towards the benefits of my approach and explaining how it aligns with my personal goals, I'm able to address concerns while maintaining a positive tone.Having a functional space is not about achieving perfection but rather creating an environment that supports your well-being. It's not about winning some sort of award for having a spotless kitchen; it's about being able to cook, eat, and live comfortably. A few years ago, I made a commitment to myself to end each day with a clean sink and counters. This habit was crucial in the morning, especially during the pandemic when social interactions were limited. However, maintaining cleanliness has become more challenging for me due to lack of focus and energy.I recently read "How to Keep House While Drowning" by Fiona Davis, which helped me understand that shame is a terrible motivator for taking care of myself and my space. Shame can lead to burnout, guilt, and exhaustion. Davis emphasizes the importance of recognizing rest as a fundamental right, not just sleep. Rest allows us to recharge, but it's often associated with productivity.What struck me most was the work of The Nap Ministry, founded by Tricia Hersey, who advocates for rest as an act of resistance against capitalism and white supremacy. As someone who has been guilty of co-opting social justice movements started by Black women, I want to acknowledge and respect Hersey's leadership.The book's message resonates with me: approaching chores from a functionality perspective rather than striving for perfection can be liberating. By removing shame from caring for myself and my home, I can ask for help, hire professionals, or prioritize self-care.My conversation with my housemate about hiring someone to deep clean our home was a turning point. Initially, it stirred up feelings of guilt and shame, but we both agreed that it's exactly what we would suggest to others in similar situations. It took practice, and I'm still learning to let go of perfectionism.this book has been super helpful for me in rethinking my unhealthy relationship with productivity. i loved the radical perspectives she shares about how laziness doesn't exist and that care tasks are morally neutral. listening to the audiobook was like getting a big hug from someone who gets it!july 2, 2022how to keep house while you're drowning is the first self-help book that actually made me make positive changes in my life, despite myself. whenever the author said it's okay not to do something, like doing the dishes, i ended up doing it anyway. if i had known about k.c. davis before reading this, i wouldn't have checked it out from my library - i've yet to find a blogger-turned-author who wrote a good book. "drowning..." focuses on two big ideas: not beating yourself up and prioritizing only what's necessary each day. intuitiveness is all the rage right now, especially on tiktok, and this author promotes it too. the idea is to identify what triggers negative feelings and respond in a way that works for you (the phrase "morally neutral" keeps coming up). if the task isn't inherently bad, then not doing it isn't wrong either. humans are creatures of habit, so intuitiveness can be a useful tool. however, i feel like the author's enthusiasm to validate negative emotions comes across as more like making excuses for yourself rather than solid advice.Your house is only as good as it needs to be, and the fact that it's not perfect doesn't mean you're a bad person. The key is to create a functional space that allows you to live, relax, and recharge.I was struck by how the author challenged societal norms and expectations about cleanliness and household management. For me, it was revolutionary to hear that it's not a moral failing if the dishes aren't done or if things aren't perfect. The focus is on creating a functional space, not a flawless one.The audiobook version of "How to Keep House While Drowning" offers a practical and compassionate approach to household chores, with chapters dedicated to laundry, dishes, and rest. The author's soothing voice emphasizes that treating ourselves with kindness and doing what we can with what we have is enough.This resonated deeply with me because I often push myself to maintain impossibly high standards. However, the goal should be to create a functional space that allows us to live, relax, and recharge. The audiobook format makes the advice feel more like a conversation, where you're constantly reassured that you're doing just fine.The book is valuable for anyone who struggles with finding balance between life and chores or simply need to hear that it's okay to let go of perfection. It's a gentle reminder that care tasks are just acts of care for yourself, and doing what's necessary to maintain a life that allows us to thrive, not just survive.As an autistic individual, I found this book to be particularly helpful in challenging my negative thought patterns around cleanliness and household management. The author's message is clear: not folding your laundry does not make you a bad person, and care tasks are morally neutral.The idea that everyone deserves equal rest time, regardless of their income or ability to contribute financially, is a crucial concept. Rather than splitting tasks evenly, it's more effective to determine what needs to be done to ensure each person gets the same amount of rest. "Rest" doesn't mean meeting basic needs like sleep, hygiene, exercise, or eating. This approach encourages considering individual energy levels and needs when creating routines.Magdalena Mikiska, a blogger from getbooky, shared her thoughts on a book about housekeeping and self-care. The author emphasizes that one's worth isn't tied to the cleanliness of their home; instead, it's about finding a space that works for them, not striving for perfection. Breaking down overwhelming tasks into smaller, manageable steps is also highlighted as an essential aspect of self-care.A reviewer who read the book in 25 minutes on their lunch break found it moving and impactful, particularly in regards to tackling care tasks like hygiene and keeping spaces clean. The author's approach is described as kind and understanding, making it easy to follow. This book is a health non-fiction title that focuses on productivity, aiming to help individuals create routines that fit their energy levels and needs.Another reviewer shared their personal experience with ADHD and the stress they experienced due to care tasks. They found the book's advice on reframing care tasks as value-neutral actions, rather than moral judgments, to be particularly helpful. The author encourages finding one room in the house that needs to be kept tidy and assigning daily tasks for it, which the reviewer thinks will be valuable in their own cleaning journey.The book is described as short, less than 75 pages, making it a quick read that's not intimidating. It offers gentle encouragement to try new ways of thinking about care tasks, recognizing that life can be hard and people are struggling but want to improve. The author's framing of care tasks as actions without moral value has already helped the reviewer in their own struggles with cleaning during the pandemic.Cleanliness has become a source of stress for me, as I struggle to keep up with cleaning the entire house every week. However, I recently read an idea that suggests focusing on one room at a time makes it more manageable and allows for a sense of accomplishment. Additionally, framing my space in a way that serves "me" rather than trying to serve the space itself has been incredibly liberating.For instance, I need to keep my downstairs floors clear of debris to ensure my dog's safety during seizures. By prioritizing his needs over my desire for a perfect living space, I can feel more at ease and focus on other aspects of my life. The author correctly points out that assigning value to the care task of one's space is not productive, but rather reframing it in a way that serves my needs and desires is key.I found this book to be thought-provoking, especially for those who struggle with shame around their living spaces and hygiene. It encourages self-compassion and kindness, which I believe is essential for maintaining a healthy relationship with one's home.The author believes that the tone of this book is overly simplistic, suggesting that one should just "hit the easy button" at every opportunity. They argue that life is too hard and often overwhelming, but this approach does not provide a sustainable solution. The author finds the environmental advice in the book questionable and contradictory to their own values.However, the author acknowledges the book's potential benefits for others who may be struggling with similar issues. They appreciate the author's insights into how our brains perceive care tasks as stressful or morally charged, but believe that these tasks should be viewed as a necessary part of functioning in daily life.The author notes that childhood trauma and negative messages about chores can have a lasting impact on individuals, but recognize that not everyone may find this book's message applicable. Nevertheless, they appreciate the author's ability to convey an important message that resonates with many readers.She's writing this from the trenches, but even she can't help but think that taking some responsibility would be a good idea - for herself and her family. I saved this book to read during my maternity leave because it might offer some tips on managing home life with two young kids, but all it did was make me laugh at how little the author achieved without trying hard. The "tips" in the book are actually just excuses to be lazy and justify giving up. My favorite part was when she suggested throwing out all your dishes if they've been in the sink for over two weeks - what even is that? Her advice is basically "just throw everything away and use paper plates until you feel like it." The author's main message seems to be that guilt-tripping yourself about money or household chores is optional, especially when you're a mom trying to survive. What I dislike most is how she justifies her lack of effort by saying everyone struggles sometimes, but in this case, the lockdown was hard because she has a husband at home and resources. If someone wrote a book like that without some kind of legitimate reason for their struggles - not even PPD can justify such weak excuses. The author's advice to not feel guilty about accomplishing nothing is just toxic. Following her lead would make anyone feel unworthy, which is the opposite of what self-help should do. I'm appalled that this book was published and hope it doesn't end up in the self-help section anywhere.This book left a sour taste in my mouth. The title promised valuable insights on keeping a house clean, but it fell short of delivering meaningful tips. Instead, the book validated the idea that one shouldn't strive for perfection, which resonated with me since I believe cleaning is a functional activity, not a moral one. However, the content catered more to individuals who struggle with internal motivation and shame, which wasn't my primary concern.I couldn't help but feel that the book was tailored for people who are emotionally overwhelmed due to trauma or negative self-talk, rather than those who are simply busy or overwhelmed due to external factors like chronic illness. The author's focus on internal struggles ignored the role of external pressures in one's life.The book's repetitive and often rant-like tone made it feel more like a personal rant than a helpful guide. While I appreciated some of the relatable advice, such as prioritizing tasks when struggling with disabilities, the overall message felt shallow. The author's assumption that readers were fine with their lives was jarring, especially when she concluded by stating that one should focus on being nice to themselves.I couldn't help but wonder if the book's popularity stemmed solely from its title. Overall, I'm still trying to understand why this book became a bestseller.I was a messy person before my new home with plenty of storage space. Now, it's easier to keep things tidy. I'm motivated to maintain a clean and organized home, but it's not perfect all the time. With many responsibilities, including work and a big garden, I need help staying on track.Perhaps the author needs organizational assistance instead of writing this book. I recommend "Tiny Habits" for useful tips. It suggests doing small tasks daily, like flossing one tooth at a time, which helped me create a daily to-do list. The book's advice is practical and can apply to various areas of life.The author's home might be too large to care for on its own. Some houses are so big that they could easily accommodate two families. Downsizing might be an option.The writer's disappointment with the book stems from several issues: the author compares her methods unfavorably to others, fails to follow her own guidelines, and includes skippable chapters, including one on cars where she admits her ineptness. This hypocrisy raises questions about her credibility. Furthermore, she contradicts herself by stating that having children doesn't make care tasks harder, despite repeatedly mentioning how challenging it was for her after becoming a parent. This inconsistency is particularly irksome to parents who can attest to the increased difficulty of managing households with kids. The book's advice often contradicts conventional wisdom on keeping a house, which may be due to its focus on accepting imperfection rather than striving for perfection. Perhaps the title should have been more accurately reflected in alternative titles like "Embracing Messy Homes" or "Making Excuses for Not Keeping House."

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