

Homekeeping Lists

for the chronically ill and disabled

christianhomekeeper.org

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Introduction

What this eBook will cover. Keep in mind that these are only patterns and suggestions. You will have to tweak them to fit with your personal needs.

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This is something most women with chronic illness are not able to do by themselves.

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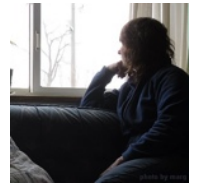
Make a list of what absolutely has to be done daily. This is the bare minimum of what has to be done for you and your family to be comfortable.

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Welcome

If you have a chronic illness or disability, I understand how difficult it can be to get your home cleaned to your personal specifications and keep it clean.

It can be just as difficult to keep up with the laundry. I have had a chronic illness since I was 27 years old. I'm 52 now and I have good days and bad days. Sometimes the bad days last for weeks and weeks. When that happens, I can't just let the house go. I have to rally and do the best I can and still try to take care of myself. These lists are the result of years of working out a way to keep my house clean and my family taken care of—even when I'm feeling less than well.

Before we start the lists, I want to make sure that everyone who might use them knows that these are patterns and suggestions. You will have to fill in the blank, so to speak, with your own household requirements to make them work. You can use as many of my suggestions as you like, but leave out the ones that you can't use. Then this will truly be a

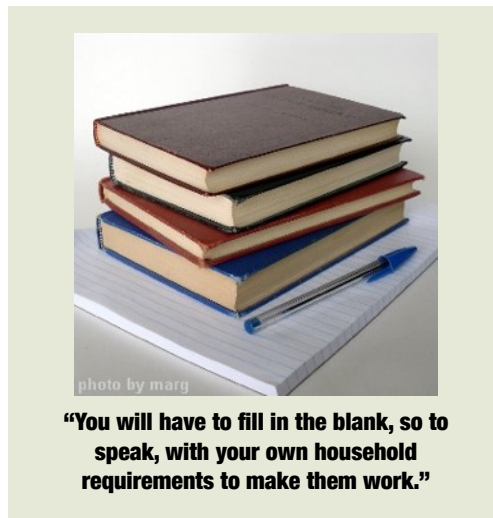


photo by marg
"You will have to fill in the blank, so to speak, with your own household requirements to make them work."

tool to assist you and not a list of things you have to do to be a good housekeeper.

This eBook contains information for the chronically ill and disabled on these topics:

- **Major decluttering** is essential to creating a home that works for you if you have chronic pain or other illness.

- **Getting help** when it is needed. There comes a time in life when we *all* begin to realize we cannot do all the things we used to do. More so for the chronically ill. Our health changes. We have to change our methods and lifestyles to match the changes in our health.
- **Teamwork.** Sit down with your family and talk about your illness and how it effects your ability to keep up the house. Talk about teamwork and work out ways to share the workload.
- **Scheduling of workdays and rest days.**
- **Dealing with major life-changes.**

We start with major decluttering.

This is something most women with chronic illness are not able to do by themselves. I've thought and thought about this. I don't see any way to keep a home clean, organized, hygienic, and easy-to-manage if it is not decluttered and organized.

Women with chronic illness are not always able to do this kind of major cleaning. But there are some options.

The first option is to work on it a little at a time. This can be done in several ways. The everyday running of the household can be handed over to other family members. Family members can be asked to make their own meals and take care of laundry. Daily cleaning routines can be delegated.

The second option is for the homekeeper to plan the decluttering and have family members (or church family, thanks Karen!) to carry out the actual decluttering. These two options can be frustrating and seemingly never-ending if the whole family is not working together toward the end result.

The final option is to hire someone to come help you with decluttering. My suggestion is to plan out exactly what you want done and then hire someone to come and do exactly what you direct them to do for only a short period of time each day until the work is complete.

There are ideas and instructions for decluttering all over CHK and the internet. Finding out what to do is not nearly so difficult as actually getting it done. But this is your first line of action: Get that house into shape. Think of an individual who is blind. That person cannot function in a house where nothing has a specific place. A blind person needs order. This is what you need, as well, if you are chronically ill. Just for different reasons.

Get help. Sit down and talk with your family.

As I have read and talked to people in my life who have disabilities or who struggle with chronic fatigue, this is one of the most emotional topics. The reasons are many.

- Some women will not admit to others or themselves that they need help.
- Some women know they need help but will not ask.
- Some women know and will ask but cannot find help.
- Some women cannot afford to pay for help.
- Some women ask for help but it makes them feel so badly that they don't ask again.

There are various other reasons why this is an emotional topic.

So, I do realize that there are many, many reasons why women with a disability just don't ask for help, even reasons I have not mentioned here. But I think they must ask and keep on asking until they find help, in order to have a good quality of life. If a woman puts off asking her family or her church family for help when she needs it, there will only come a day when the difficulties progress and she absolutely *has* to have someone come in immediately to work in her home. You can use your imagination, but you probably know someone or have heard of someone who has put off getting help and her home is almost unmanageable.

Get help if you need it. If you can afford to pay someone once or twice a week, go through an agency and hire someone. If not, then ask your church or your family to sit down with you and talk about your needs and ask for help.

If you are going to need to declutter and pack to move, you need someone to do the lifting, moving, packing and legwork. You can do the brain work until you are in need of a rest. Be sure you only work for short periods of time. Stop before you are exhausted.

Talk to your family. Families are all different and it wouldn't do a bit of good if I was to tell you how to address your own family about your disability. But, using years of mentoring and counseling women as a pattern and guide, I can offer some suggestions before you start:

- **Pray.** Not just right before you talk, but for a long time before you talk to your family. Ask God to soften hearts, direct minds, give you strength and courage and help the relationships to grow stronger through this event.
- **Stay calm.** Don't get upset or overexcited when you talk, especially if they refuse to help you or if they tell you they will and don't show up to help. Stay calm. Know that the Lord is your strength and help.
- **Have a plan written down.** It's your home, you are in charge. Know what you need and what you want from others. Write it down and make sure everyone understands it. You can make changes, take advice, but if you don't want to change something important, you don't have to. As part of your written plan you should include ample time to complete the task (it could take weeks) and supplies needed for short term projects.
- **Be the manager.** You are the manager of this venture, so you are in charge of managing people to get the job done. That means you may need to make phone calls to firm up (remind) appointments and give people lists of things to bring to help--like garbage bags, etc. Remember to be kind and think of others' needs. It's easy to get that single-minded determination going and forget that you're managing humans!
- **Make sure everyone realizes that you can only work for short periods of time before resting.** They can continue if you allow, but you need to rest.

The Importance of Work and Rest

If you've never had to pace yourself at home while you were working, you may not understand this concept. I used to run full-throttle, wide-open all the time until I finally collapsed in exhaustion at night. I was younger then and I didn't have to deal with a disability. I'm thankful for those days when I had two energetic little boys and needed to have lots of energy. It was a regular habit of mine to get up at 6 and work all day, then stay up until midnight or one o'clock in the morning--sewing and cleaning in the quiet. I could never do that today.

Everyone slows down...at least as the years go by. Women with chronic illness can often find themselves slowed down beyond their years. Or they find that they are slow some days and almost normal on others. But there is always that undercurrent of concern that today will be the last day she can function and keep the household together.

A women with a chronic illness must learn to pace herself and to schedule work days, rest days and to implement unscheduled rest days. She must also learn how to recognize a day where she has energy and strength and use it, but not overtax her body.

In essence, she must learn to know her body. This is not as easy as you might think, some women are very slow to learn the way their bodies act and react. Lots of paying attention to the body in many different situations is the way to go about learning this.

Not everyone is going to understand.

If you don't look sick, and you don't sound sick, you must not be sick, right? Wrong. You can look like a million bucks and know that today you need to rest. So, others may not understand your reasoning. It is up to you not to abuse your illness by demanding rest when you can go, but by patiently explaining that when you feel thus and thus... it is time to rest.

Is there a day of the week when you feel especially bad? If so, then look at it closely and try to figure out why. Do you do too much the day before? Was there a lot of emotional stress in the previous days? Can you adjust your week to lessen the physical fallout on the "bad" day?

Look at your week. Is it out of control? Can you schedule your week so that it is under control?

Unlike most women, you are probably not going to want to do *all* of your out of the house errands in one day. Can you spread them out through the week? Give the responsibility to others? Let it go altogether? Think about all of these things and make your week work for you. Don't lock yourself into a schedule and feel that you can't change it. A woman with a chronic illness or disability has to be able to adjust and change her schedule to work for her.

One of the things I remembered from my days as a young, nursing mother was the fatigue and anxiety over the house. Face it, there are a thousand things that women at home do every day and no one sees the result. Traci and I were talking about this just a few days ago. We realized that this is the reason why women who work outside the home often say to stay-at-home mothers, "What do you *do* all day?"

The best thing I learned while I was young and nursing those babies was how to multi-task. Not enough to stress my body, but enough to make a difference in my peace of mind and my house. So, I will be including some of those multi-tasking tips in the Homekeeping Lists in the next article. The philosophy you must adopt is "How many things can I do in this room before I leave?" Lists are great to post on the doors of each room to remind us of what can be done when we are in a brain fog.

Plan your days of rest. Know that certain days of the week are your rest days. Or that certain hours of the day are your rest hours. Work a little, then lay it down and rest. When you rest, do what provides the maximum amount of rest for your body. For me it is quiet instrumental music, hot Earl Grey tea, a blanket, a nice view out the back window, and peace in my household. I keep the tea where it can be made quickly and I don't have to search for it. My blanket stays on my chair and my children know when its mom's rest time. They go to their rooms and read, or play quietly nearby. It took a lot of training to get that last one right!

You can divide your days into hours or your weeks into days, but however you do it, you need to **plan for rest**. When you are rested you will be more able to pick up where you left off and work.

Work in short time spans--whatever you can do without taxing yourself. Work a bit, then sit down to do something like read, write, make grocery lists, listen to books on tape, or Scripture on tape or CD. Then, after a period of rest, get back up and do some more work. If your work is spelled out for you on a list, you will have less trouble figuring out what exactly to do next.

When your home is uncluttered and organized, you will be rewarded with quick, effective work. We will work on making our lists and including rest days in the next article.



The Homekeeping Daily Lists

I am using a friend's list of things she needs done each day for an example. You will use your own duties and make your own lists.

Your First List

Make a list of what absolutely has to be done daily. This is the bare minimum of what has to be done for you and your family to be comfortable. Then, you can add to your list little by little.

My friend's bare minimum is:

- Beds clean
- Toilets and bathroom clean
- Dishes and kitchen area clean

To do those things she needs:

- A bottle of alcohol or spray-on cleaner
- Hot, soapy water and cleaning rags
- Broom or vacuum

NOTE: Any time you see the word "rest," sit down. Read or watch TV. Take a little nap. Do some paperwork or whatever you need to do to be refreshed.

Use the space at the end of each column to make your notes!

Monday

- Get up and get dressed, make your bed, get breakfast.
- Run a sink of hot soapy water, but not too full. You will add water and dirty dishes to this throughout the day.
- Make a bowl of hot, soapy cleaning water and set it on the counter. Get yourself a cleaning rag.

Rest.

- Bring clothes to laundry room.
- Start a load.
- Rinse and put breakfast dishes into soak.

Rest.

- Change out laundry, start another load, etc.
- Sit down to fold clothes, stack them in your laundry basket.
- Wipe down countertops and appliances if needed.
- Prepare lunch.
- Put lunch dishes in to soak.

Rest. *(Plan your weekly menu.)*

- Pour cleaner into the commode.
- Run a sink of hot water in the bathroom and add cleaner to soak.
- Apply your cleaner to the tub and allow to soak.

Rest. *(Make your grocery list.)*

- Rinse out the commode, sink and tub if needed. Sweep the floor in the bathroom.
- The dishes will need little more than a hot rinse at this point. Rinse them off and stack to dry or put them in your dishwasher to run. The hot, soapy water cleans them while they soak and the less you have to move them around, the less tired you will be while fixing supper.
- Start supper. If you are finding that this is a difficult day, use paper plates and cups. If you don't use paper, then just rinse the dishes and put them into soak, or have a family member do it after the meal.
- Wipe down the counters as you cook. Clean the stove as you go, rag in one hand, spoon in the other.
- If you are not using paper, rinse and soak the supper dishes. You can rinse them tomorrow morning. You can put away dry dishes tomorrow, too.

Tuesday

- Get up and take care of yourself.
- Make your bed.
- Take laundry to the laundry room.
- Start that sink of hot soapy water.
- Get breakfast and put the breakfast dishes in to soak.

Rest.

- Start a load of laundry. Remember the basket of clothes from yesterday? Add to it today as you wash, dry and fold the laundry. If you make a trip to the bedrooms or other rooms the laundry goes in, take some with you. If not, then let it sit folded in that basket until you make the trip to those rooms! If someone needs something, it's there--nicely folded in the basket.
- Make your bowl of cleaning water.

Rest. *(Whether you think you need it or not.)*

- Sweep the kitchen.

Rest.

- Mop the bathroom.

Rest.

- Prepare lunch.
- Put the dishes in to soak.
- Wipe down the kitchen faucets and counters with your cleaning water or alcohol.
- Wipe down the bathroom faucets and sinks.

Rest.

- Start supper. After supper, do the same thing you did last night.

Wednesday

- This is laundry day for the linens, so instead of making your bed, take the sheets off. Take care of yourself, take the sheets to the laundry and make breakfast. Always take any laundry from the bedroom and bathroom to the laundry room in the mornings.

- Make your sink of hot water and your cleaning water.
- Put the breakfast dishes in to soak.
- Start laundry.

Rest.

- Vacuum, or sweep part of the house.

Rest.

- Put sheets on the bed.

Rest.

- Serve supper, rinse dishes and let them soak. Have everyone take their own dishes to the sink. If you clean as you go, there will be few pots and pans waiting for you at the end of the meal. If you do find that you have pots and pans to scrub, put them in the water to soak overnight and tackle them in the morning when you are running your new sink of hot, soapy water.

NOTE: Crockpot recipes are less taxing on your mind and body, so find some your family likes and use them frequently.

Thursday

Rest day! (*The only thing to be done today is cook and put dishes in to soak.*)

Friday

- Get up and take care of yourself. Make your bed, take laundry to laundry room.
- Start the sink of hot, soapy water, your cleaning water and start one load of laundry if needed.
- Get breakfast, put dishes in to soak.

Rest. (*And read.*)

- Wipe down the kitchen.
- Sweep the kitchen.

Rest. (*Fold clothing.*)

- Do another load of laundry now or iron a couple of shirts.
- Get lunch and then put the dishes in to soak.

Rest.

- Start supper.
- Put supper dishes in to soak.

Rest.

Saturday

Saturday is reserved mainly for getting ready to go worship on Sunday. (*If you go to church on some other day than Sunday, just change around the order of your days and use another day as your worship preparation day.*)

- Get yourself up and ready for the day, make bed, take laundry to laundry room, run hot, soapy water in sink, make bowl of hot soapy water to clean with. Get breakfast and then put dishes in to soak.

Rest.

- Start a load of laundry. Take some of your laundry from the week and put it away. Once you get to your room, choose what you will wear to church. Get it out and prepare it. Prepare other family member's clothing throughout the day. Remember to take as few steps as possible, multi-task and take things with you from room to room.
- Sweep or vacuum one area of the house.
- Make your bowl of cleaning water.

Rest.

- Straighten up one area of the house.
- Sit down to fold clothes.
- Prepare lunch, put dishes in to soak.

Rest. (*Plan steps out for Sunday's dinner. What will need to happen, and when?)*

- Start supper. While supper is cooking, take care of any leftover dishes in the sink or on the countertop.
- Put supper dishes in to soak.
- Before bed tonight, if you have energy, rinse off the dishes and put them away. If not, leave them until tomorrow.

Sunday

- When you get up this morning, get yourself ready for church and then have your breakfast. Put dishes into soak and then do what you can for Sunday dinner.
- When you get back from church, set out dinner and enlist help from others. If you plan simple Sunday fare, you will be less frustrated.
- Put the dishes in to soak and enlist the help of those who enjoyed your meal to do dishes or to dry and put them away.

Now rest. (*Visit with family and enjoy the day.*)

Ideas: Making Homekeeping Easier

One for each room

Get a set of cleaning supplies for every bathroom, all upstairs rooms, and your downstairs kitchen.

“Make your bed.”

When I say, “Make your bed,” that doesn’t mean to make that thing with hospital corners! Just pull up the sheets, pull the comforter over the sheets, and let it go. If that isn’t satisfactory for you, you will have to find the energy to make it correctly.

Perfectly-placed basket

Place a basket at the foot of the stairs and fill it during the day with items that go upstairs. Don’t climb the stairs more than you have to, but when you do go, take that basket with you. Don’t over fill it.

Another basket

Place another basket in the living room or dining room. When you find something that belongs somewhere else in the house, put it in the basket. Then later in the week, ask someone in the family to empty the basket into the correct rooms.

With you when you go

Take stuff with you when you go. Anytime you go to the kitchen for example, you can take dishtowels or napkins. When you are headed to the bathroom, take some towels or washcloths with you. When you go to your room, take a couple things that either belong in your room, or in places along the way.

It’s true!

The less steps the better. So multi-task by taking things to

rooms that you are going to anyway. This will take some time to get used to doing, but it will save you so much wear and tear on your legs and knees!

All in one load

Get in the habit of bringing all dirty laundry with you from the bedroom and bathroom when you go to the kitchen every morning. Put it in the laundry room so you don’t have to walk back that way to do laundry.

Leave ‘em to soak

Don’t stress about leaving dishes in the sink to soak. Get in the habit of letting them soak instead of struggling to wash them after every meal. Dishes soaked in hot, soapy water practically wash themselves! If you want, you can add 1 teaspoon of bleach

to the soaking water to disinfect them. This is handy if someone is ill in the house. Allow disinfected dishes to air dry.

Time it right

Take your shower or bath when you it helps you most. Some people get really tired after a shower. If you do, then you should wait until evening to shower. If it energizes you, then take it first thing in the morning. Or maybe you need a burst of energy in the afternoon--take it then instead!

Flexibility

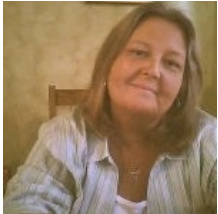
Don’t follow a set list if you don’t want to. If you can feel a good day or a bad day coming on when you get up, schedule your day at that time. For example, you get up feeling low, choose to schedule your

rest day for that day instead of Thursday. Or you get up and feel pretty good, you can choose to do the day that involves the most work. You can also alter the lists by combining two or more days and only using the bare essentials in the lists.

Look around

If you are in the bathroom, make it a habit of looking around and seeing if something really needs to be done. Have your cleaning supplies ready so you can swish the toilet or spray cleaner on the tub faucets to soak.

Meet the Author



Sylvia Britton is the owner of the Christian HomeKeeper (CHK) website and ministry. She and her husband Mark live in Tennessee. They are the parents of five children and have homeschooled since 1990. She enjoys reading, mentoring women, writing articles for several magazines, gardening, Bible study and creating a peaceful, holy home. You can read about daily life at Sylvia’s home at her blog, The Christian HomeKeeper.

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