



The Magical Housekeeper *By Yoeke Nagel - The Netherlands*

When searching for a spiritual path, mopping floors, washing windows, and making beds aren't usually the first things that come to mind. However, old stories about self-development, manifestation, and removing barricades often allude to housekeeping. The Magical Housekeeper, a new book with simple exercises and clear explanations unravels this mystery.

Snow White and Her Sisters

Snow White isn't the only heroine that had to survive her story armed with broom and dustpan. Fairy tales are filled with the adventures of her cleaning and sweeping sisters.

- Gretel was mercilessly exploited in the household of the candy house witch.
- Cinderella had to finish the dirtiest and most ridiculous chores before a charming prince brought back her glass slipper.
- The sad sister who had to retrieve a bloody spindle from the well was immediately recruited by Frau Holle to do her cleaning, including shaking out the blankets.
- In an Italian fairy tale Prunella has to do the housekeeping chores for a witch, from the Danish we learn how Esben becomes the witch's underpaid laborer, and Russia gives us Baba Yaga, the witch who lives in a little house raised on crows' feet and uses an innocent Russian girl to keep her house clean.

In short: fairy tales from all over the world emphasize time after time that if you want to apprentice with a witch and become a wise woman, you need to start by learning how to use a broom. Before receiving your reward, first you learn how to mop, dust and sweep. Modern fairy tales, too, start with wisdom in soapy water. Juniper, the witch apprentice described by Monica Furlong, starts off with mopping.

Karate Kid, the movie hero, learns from his knowledgeable karate master that he has to start with sweeping floors and waxing the car. "Wax on, wax off..." Why? The Buddhist rather asks why not: "Before the enlightening: chopping wood and carrying water. After the enlightening: chopping wood and carrying water." Apparently keeping house is of unexpected spiritual importance in every culture.

Mopping: the Road to Initiation

The stories of Snow White and her mopping sisters and brothers contain a mystery that could be polished until it sparkles like a brilliant mind. Why is it that in folk wisdom housekeeping is so strongly recommended as a road to development, even a road to initiation? And how do we walk that road with pleasure and enthusiasm, when we usually

pick up the vacuum and the mop with a hearty dislike? Isn't it a waste of time, all that cleaning? Don't emancipated women and hard-working men have anything better to do than housekeeping? And, most importantly: does it really work, magic in the household? Just give it a try. The least it can get you is a clean house, and that is worth something!

Magic Household Song

Cleaning, washing, mopping
Makes me feel free
What I do to my house
I do unto me
Patience
Patience

The Essence of Housekeeping

Household chores lend themselves very well to focus on self-exploration, giving the inside a thorough cleaning while reinforcing our wishes and desires in stated intentions. Every household chore can be used for this purpose, as long as we penetrate to its essence.

Whatever we do to our house, we do to ourselves.

Whether we start from our outside world or our inside, the two constantly influence each other, making each act a possible act of magic. All we need is some patience to see how it works.

A burned pot needs to be soaked overnight before we can remove the caked on leftovers. Our soul risks a similar fate: we may hold on to outdated ideas, go through our routine, remain sad about things or continue to yearn for them long after they have passed, only because we haven't gotten around to ridding ourselves of what we no longer need. Our minds get cluttered with unnecessary worries, fears, and desires, the same way our closet, shed, or attic is cluttered with our earthly belongings. Surely we can put a broom to good use.

When connecting the various forms of self-exploration and self-support to our household chores, we need to bring them back to their 'essence' in a philosophical way. It is important to make personal adjustments when you find that the essences chosen in this book don't fit your perception of a certain chore. For example, many people feel that the knick-knacks and keepsakes in their home are filled with memories, desires, and history. Therefore, 'letting go of souvenirs' is the theme of the exercise 'cleaning up'. However, it is quite possible that you collect belongings for an entirely different reason. Perhaps because they give you the reassuring feeling that you live a trendy life, providing you with a certain level of self-esteem. Or because every Sunday you go to the Flea Market and you want to build a rapport with the cute vendor in row 13. Or because you don't dare tell your great-aunt that you really don't like the presents she so kindly gives you every birthday ...

Household Chores and their Magic Power

This book transforms the common household tasks described below into magic by using a simple trick: any work can become a work of magic if you perform it with intention.

Obviously, the intention of ‘mopping’ is that your floor becomes clean. But in a more philosophical way, ‘mopping’ translates into taking care of your basic needs, maintaining your home base. When performed with intention — ‘I’m aware of my basic needs and how they are taken care of’ — mopping suddenly is much more than a household chore resulting in a sparkling floor. Pushing the wet rag back and forth allows you to concentrate on basic themes like the money you earn, the network of friends and family that support you, your health and other basic needs, while magically charging those with your attention and energy. You end up with new insights and a nice clean floor.

Household Chore	Essence	Magical Intention
Sweeping	Gathering together	Concentration
Mopping	Cleaning the floor	Basic needs, cleaning home base
Tidying up	Organizing	Differentiate
Dusting	Freshen up	Creating space for yourself
Cleaning with wet cloth	Clearing up	Choosing
Washing windows	Getting a clear view	Exploring opinions, clearing judgement
Grocery shopping	Adding	Exploring needs
Cooking	Providing nourishment	Satisfying desires
Setting the table	Preparation	Identifying desires, patience
Doing the dishes	Removing leftovers	Creating a clean slate
Making the bed	Welcoming rest and love	Exploring the unconscious
Vacuuming	Gathering small trash	Dropped and open attention
Folding the laundry	Personal presentation	Recognizing your individual qualities
Ironing	Reshaping	Here and now
Mending	Maintenance, repair	Maintaining relationships
Bathroom	Enabling flow	Organizing energy
Polishing the mirror	Seeing yourself	Accepting yourself
Cleaning toilet	Differentiate, discriminate	What do you send into the world
Scrubbing the front porch	Being part of the world	Responsibility in the community
Broom closet	Choosing materials	Humanity and environmental awareness
Moving	Change	Letting go and rebuilding

Discover the Essence of a Chore

Every household task holds a very personal meaning. For some, ‘cooking’ is an enjoyable activity that makes one feel appreciated while pampering people. For others, it is an unpleasant task that day after day requires your ultimate patience. It is important to always explore your personal ‘essence’ of a certain household task, and how it can be used in your spiritual development. Sit down in a quiet place without distractions, keep

pen and paper at the ready, and close your eyes. Carefully consider which household chore you hate the most. Allow yourself to be fully engulfed in your disgust. Enlist your senses: how does that chore smell, how does it feel on your skin, does it bring up thoughts of resistance and protest. Take two minutes to write about this, without lifting the pen from the paper.

Get up after these two minutes, pour yourself a drink, and take the time to read over the associations you wrote down about this household chore. When you summarize the text in one single sentence you get a construction that might look like this:

“Mopping the floor to me is... demeaning, because I have to look up at everything.”

“Washing windows to me is... exhibitionism, because I’m in plain view of everybody.”

“Cooking to me is... always having to be available to others, while no one ever asks me how my needs can be fed.”

Discovering your associations with a certain household chore enable you to decide which aspect of your life needs an overhaul in the process.

Add a Drop of Love to Your Soapy Water

Whether you are mopping the floor, doing the dishes, cleaning with a wet cloth, or cooking dinner, water is always willing to absorb your deepest feelings. Masaru Emoto’s gorgeous photographs of water molecules are proof of that. It is simple to charge your soapy water for example with ‘love’ before use. Place the bucket in front of you. Open up your crown chakra and allow warm love energy to flow through it from the cosmos, directly into your heart. Let your heart overflow with love energy. Use the overflow to fill your entire body with love energy until every cell is filled with it. Spread your hands above the bucket, and simply allow the love energy to overflow into the bucket as an additive to your soapy water. You can name the different kinds of love you can feel or have known. Now when you use the water, you replace dust with love.

Washing Windows

Creating a Clear Frame of Mind

The windows through which we look out into the world reflect our experiences and opinions. If we can keep our frame of mind clean we will be able to observe without prejudices. But that is not as easy as it sounds. Perhaps you consider yourself to be free of preconceptions, but once the spotlight is on you may still discover a few hidden ones, like streaks on a window that was just washed. Each time you think ‘I knew it’ about some one else’s behavior you have uncovered a prejudice — something has been confirmed about that person or ‘that kind of person’. We can keep an open mind and remain flexible as long as we don’t burden our frame of mind with stale conclusions of old experiences, but time and again look at our world with a fresh view. Washing windows is the perfect occasion for examining our prejudices, making our frame of mind as free of streaks as the shining glass. While washing windows, choose one of your strongly felt convictions. Make a conscious change in your expectations during a certain period of time. For example, for three days straight be convinced that people are good, that they have positive intentions, and are ready to help each other (and you, too!). Make notes of changes you observe during those three days.

Clutter and Life's Debris: Reminders of Living

Everything we do leaves behind an impression in our community. Neither we nor the people around us need to be bothered by the invisible memories of our activities while we cherish them. The visible souvenirs, however, are much more a part of our living space: a set of coasters from the Southwest, a book that has never been read, a newspaper clipping, but also the mud on our shoes that we brought into the house after our hike in the canyon. Items — and especially dirt — lose their emotional value quickly, or they are misplaced, they distract and represent a different world and a different moment. Dust is the smallest form of debris we know. We use our skin cells to live and when we no longer need them for that purpose and they have finished their life cycle, we discard them, leaving them like the dusty grit at the bottom of a lady's purse after it has been emptied of all its contents. Life's debris are what is left after matter has fulfilled its task, drained of its energy by life itself.

Human

*Life's debris.
We are dust.
So please
be careful with
the garbage bags.*

Mopping

Acknowledging Your Fundamental Securities

The floor that carries us is our own little piece of earth. Everything around us evolves from the earth and eventually returns to it. The floor on which our table and chair stand, our feet walk, and the fluffy dust bunnies that reveal forgotten corners run, is our foundation.

We can attach a lot of importance to the beautiful and interesting things our brain can think of, but if our foundation is ripped from underneath us, we fall down right along with it. That is something we don't often think about, we usually don't even question the fact that we are being supported.

Which element provides the foundation of your life? Financial well-being? Health? Relationships? Which basic conditions need to be met for you to function without thinking of them constantly? Who of the people around you support you unconditionally, without asking? What would happen if that foundation crumbles? And how do you show your gratitude for that fundamental security? If needed, after mopping make that phone call to say 'thanks, dear!' or visit that old friend to show that you care too.

Doing the Laundry

Coping With Experiences

Our experiences leave their marks on our body and its wrapping. Sweat marks are proof that we truly committed ourselves to reaching our goals. Stains show the things we confronted and how hard it is sometimes to deal with them immediately. And these are just the things related to our clothes.

Generally we chose our clothing in order to accentuate those things of ourselves that we want to show the world around us. A tailored suit because we want to be taken seriously as a business partner and we want to look respectable and trustworthy. A sassy short summer dress because we like to show off our allure. Our closets are filled with many clothes, proving that we are always more than just what is visible at first glance. The soccer player inside a man might blush from embarrassment because of an ugly stain on his sports jersey, but the lover inside him remains intact, because his dark red silk shirt is unblemished.

Exercise

Show Me Your Clothes...

Shake the wrinkles out of each piece of clothing before transferring them from the washing machine to the dryer, hanging them up, or folding them. With each garment (or other fabric), ask yourself which aspect of you it accentuates. Consider on which occasions you might wear or use it.

You can take a satisfying look at the stack of folded laundry in front of you, projecting the variety of qualities inside you. Abundance to choose from!

Piece of clothing	When I wear it	'Me'-characteristic
Jeans	Moving a lot	Sporty, sharp
Loose-hanging shirt	Receptions	Shy, reserved
White socks	Job	Work
Black skirt	Work	Dedicated, trustworthy
Glitter t-shirt	Parties	Having fun
Short jacket	Job interview	Serious, convincing
Red panties	Going out	The chase is on!
Silk shawl	Hospital visit	Keeping a distance

These examples are only to give some ideas. The meaning of each piece of clothing is different for each person of course.

Colophon

More Information

-*The Magical Housekeeper* combines classic techniques from the Reclaiming network with original exercises for self-insight, transformation, and good old house cleaning. It includes a foreword written by Starhawk, one of the founders of Reclaiming.

-These fragments are taken from the book *The Magical Housekeeper*, by Yoeke Nagel, March 2007, ISBN 9789022547731 through Forum publishing company, De Boekerij, Holland, 14.95 Euro.

-Yoeke Nagel is journalist, therapist, Reclaiming Witch and former editor in chief of a national magazine for natural health and spirituality.

-The cover and illustrations are drawn by Pol Wijnberg.

-Translation by Titia Martin

-This book has been published in Dutch only, so far. Publishers from all over the world are welcome to contact De Boekerij www.deboekerij.nl to show their interest in translating the work.

What the press and others say

Wendy Hermsen in Vitaal:

“Magical Housekeeping is a piece of art. The book combines Zen, meditation and witchcraft and above all gives many practical advises.”

Isis Mulleman in De Morgen, Belgium:

“The Dutch Yoeke Nagel is the prototype of The Good Witch: interested in herbs and spirituality, knowing her stuff but nonetheless dreamy... Nagel is the Dutch alternative for Starhawk, the American guru of feminist spirituality... Harry Potter meets Cleaning for dummies...”

Peter Kemperman in De Gelderlander:

“Cleaning windows, mopping and vacuuming... can be fun and useful to do. Ask Yoeke Nagel... She uses the expression ‘as a witch I have learned to...’ as if it is a profession. And it is, she claims.”

Roelof in Housemen.nl:

“Many of the exercises are classics in the modern witchcraft tradition Reclaiming... In this book I recognize a lot of the struggles of any houseperson and that feels like an acknowledgement of the work we do.”

Anonymous, Boekenrubriek.nl

“The purpose of the book is to elevate the ungrateful chores of the household to inspiring activities. Other than that is fun to read. You’ll see: every time you are housekeeping with dismay you will remember the content of this book.”

Ingrid, Yoeke Nagel’s cleaninghelp:

“I figured if she’d write about housekeeping that would be a very, very tiny little book. It’s not.”