

# Five essential decluttering tips for busy parents



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**T**he juggle is real! Between laundry, dishes, picking up toys and getting on with regular life, anything we can do to make tidying up a breeze, so we can get back to actually living life, is a bonus.

So if you're a time strapped mom or dad who wants to gain a few more hours of freedom, here are my 5 essential decluttering tips for busy parents. **1. Deal with paper immediately.** From permission slips to pizza lunch forms, paper can overrun a household! To ensure mounds of paper don't build on all your surfaces, deal with paper immediately as it comes into your house.

Dedicate ten minutes (set a timer even!) to go through paper as soon as you get into the house from kids' backpacks, or from the mailbox.

Anything you can address in ten minutes (like signing a form, or filing a piece of correspondence) do immediately. Anything that needs more time to be addressed, coral in a tray to be dealt with when you are able. Commit to ensuring that tray of paper does not build up by clearing it out daily.

**2. Eliminate the search.** So much frustration occurs from having to look for something, especially when you are in a rush.

Commit to having a dedicated place where regularly used things like your keys, your wallet, and cell phone 'live' while they are at home. For example, always put your purse on the same shelf in your closet when you enter the house, or have a hook near the front door where keys always get hung.

Commit to the behaviour of placing the items in the same spot every time. For chronic key losers, try a product like Tile which

To learn more about her tips for managing a house and a large family, join Lisa her at the BabyTime Show for her live presentations Nov. 16-18 at The International Centre in Mississauga. For more information, visit [www.babytimeshow.ca](http://www.babytimeshow.ca)

syncs with your phone to help you find your lost set. **3. Commit to the one-third rule.** Visual clutter can also make us feel really overwhelmed. As a rule, I ensure that any practical surface in my home: countertops, desk tops, coffee table, etc. has no more than 1/3 of it covered with stuff.

So this means only 1/3 of your kitchen counter has a coffee maker, small appliance or other decorative items on it, only 1/3 of your desk surface has a tray, or paper on it, and no more than 1/3 of your coffee table has books, remotes or decorative items on it.



To avoid visual clutter, ensure that any practical surface in a home such as a countertop has no more than one-third of it covered with stuff.

**4. Keep your living room toy free.** If space allows, keep toy storage out of your main living room. This is a really important tip for a busy parent's sanity! Parents need at least one room that is peaceful, and orderly, at the end of a busy day.

And let's be honest, sometimes the last thing we want to do when we have been working hard for everyone is clean up a room full of toys.

So, store toys in a playroom, the basement, or kids' rooms. Toys will inevitably

make their way into your living room, so everyday, at the end of the day, commit to tidying up by throwing anything that does not belong in this space in a large decorative basket to be taken to its appropriate home. **5. Practice the 15-minute rule.** Living in an uncluttered home is the result of small actions everyday.

So at the end of every day, involve the entire family in 15-minutes of tidying up. This is your chance to move through the main areas of

your home, and commit to this life style.

These small habits daily, will make a huge dent in the order of your space and by extension, the overall quality of your family life at home.

— Lisa Canning is a parenting, interior design, and lifestyle expert in Toronto where she lives with her husband and seven children, ages nine and under. Visit [www.lisacanning.ca](http://www.lisacanning.ca)

# The new star of high-rise living



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I recently gave a presentation to builders, designers and architects about millennials (19-35-year-olds), and the affect they will have on the building and design industry.

You may be asking, "Why do millennials matter?" Well, simply put they are, and will continue to be a bigger demographic than the boomers and will be running the country in the future.

## Millennials matter

We know that as a generation, they are not only making major home purchases later than the Boomers did, they are changing the way we build and what we can expect in a home as a result. It is a good

news story, actually, because we are already heading in that direction.

## Future proofing

Millennials are concerned about their carbon footprint and believe in climate change and want to do their part to preserve energy and the future of the planet. They have big ideas of making a difference and they will let you know faster than you can say, 'Instagram' when they uncover a misdeed to the earth.

## Going green

So, the good news is not only for millennials, it's something every new home buyer will benefit from. EnerQuality, a Canadian certifier of energy efficient homes is on a mission to accelerate housing innovation and improve building performance. They have now introduced

ENERGY STAR certification on Multi-Family High Rise Homes in conjunction with Natural Resources Canada.

## Look for the logo

You've seen the ENERGY STAR logo on everything from windows, water heaters, appliances, to electronics, lighting and more. We use it as a short cut to find the top energy performers on the market. Now you can purchase or rent a home or condo that has been certified with the trusted ENERGY STAR.

## Green living

Since 2005, EnerQuality ([www.enerquality.ca](http://www.enerquality.ca)) has certified more than 85,000 homes. These homes yield an average of 20% more energy efficiency than typical code-built homes.

Choosing to purchase or rent an ENERGY STAR certified home offers a green liv-



Choosing to purchase or rent an ENERGY STAR certified home offers a green living option with many benefits, not least of all is helping the environment.

ing option with many benefits, not least of all is helping the environment.

Sure, using less energy means emitting less greenhouse gasses into the environment and lowering our carbon footprint, but it also means your home has been constructed by an approved, ENERGY STAR certified builder, incorporating efficient heating and cooling systems, improved indoor air quality and energy saving windows and doors. It also means it has been inspected, evaluated certified and labelled by a third-party energy advisor.

## Save energy

Your home is more air sealed, reducing drafts and cold spots, reduced dust pollen and pests from getting inside. An air exchanger (heat or energy recovery ventilation system) improves indoor air quality — expels stale air replaces it with filtered outdoor air. All this leads to improved health and comfort.

## Save money

Less energy consumption means less money going toward your utility bill. I think

that's something everyone can support.

If the force of this large demographic has anything to say at all, it will be to demand energy-efficient certifications to be standard so they can live in a home that represents their values.

I see a shift in the real estate listings too as the industry moves to address this generation of home buyers.

— Jane Lockhart is a celebrity designer, TV personality and leading expert in the world of design. Visit [www.janelockhart.com](http://www.janelockhart.com)