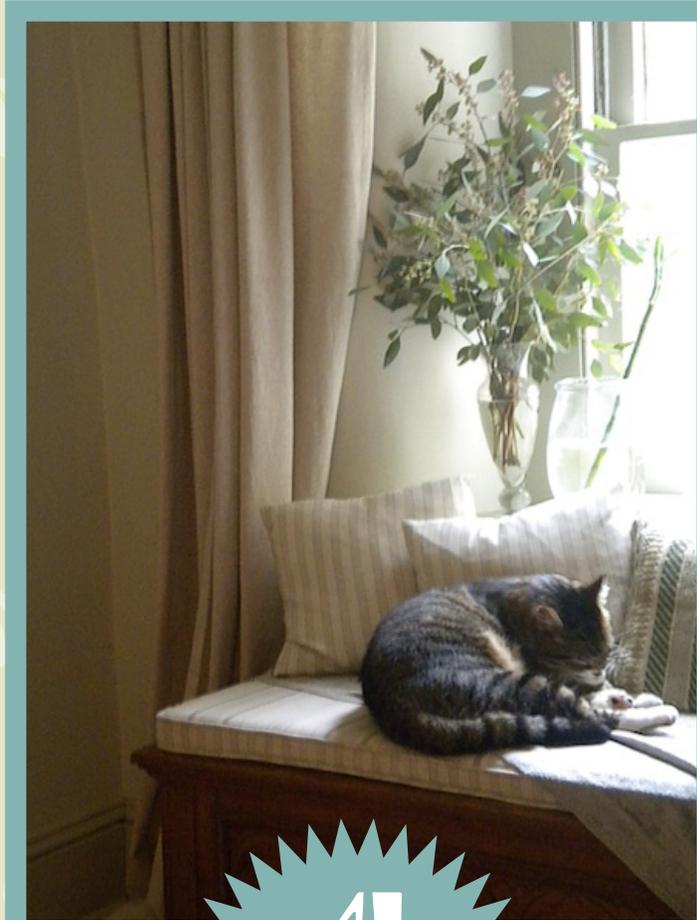


Project Home WORKBOOK



4

WEEKS

TO A NURTURING, LOVELY HOME

By Erin Cochran

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Introduction

HOW TO USE THIS WORKBOOK:

Hello! I am SO happy for you--you have taken the first step in a very important, life-changing process--the process whereby we develop a healthy, supportive relationship with our house, so that it can in turn support us, and be the place that we truly do feel at home.

I have developed this workbook so that you can roll up your sleeves over the next four weeks, and get real, meaningful work done. It is said that the journey of a thousand miles starts with the first step, so I congratulate you for doing just that! Let's talk about some key ideas to remember on this very important journey:

 Your work will be most effective if you choose ONE room to focus on for our projects here together. I suggest it be the room in your house that bothers you the most, and one that gets a lot of day-to-day use. This is probably the room that pushed you over the edge and made you sign up to receive this booklet in the first place....and you probably wish it would just GO AWAY. But, trust me, start here, and your rewards will be great!

 Even though our work will focus on one room, the whole house will benefit. Your house will start to feel better to you overall, and you will develop tools & strategies with which you can deal with those problem areas....AFTER THIS MONTH IS OVER :)

 If you are planning to work on a space containing items of a particularly emotional nature, such as items from a loved one who has passed away, things from a divorce, etc., please consider asking a trusted friend to help. This person should be someone who can be impartial and supportive, will gently keep you moving forward, and will help you make difficult decisions as you are decluttering.

 Just like in a healthy marriage, the work we do on our houses is never done. I say this not to discourage you, but to help you to see that you and your house should have a long-term relationship--and some days will be better than others. Because I believe that it is more harmful to have the illusion that we will reach the place where our house is finished (the idea of perfection hurts us more than it helps), I invite you to embrace the journey ahead with its bumps in the road, its ups and downs, its ins and outs--knowing that the work we will do together here will make for a much smoother ride with lots of pretty places to stop and smell the flowers along the way.

YOUR OWN *Before & After*

Once you have selected the room you are going to focus on this month, please take a picture or two of it today, affix it below, and then take a few minutes to jot down some words that best describe it to you...especially words that tell how you **FEEL** about this space.

At the end of this month, we will revisit this page and take another picture. More on this later.....:)

Before Date _____

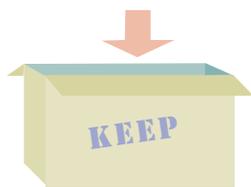
DESCRIPTION (How does this space make you feel?)



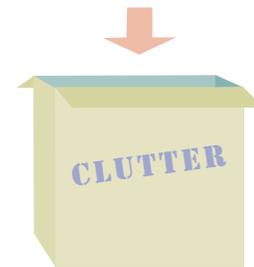
After Date _____

DESCRIPTION (How does this space make you feel?)





YOU
RELIEVED, HAPPY



Bye Bye

A FEW WORDS ON

Clutter ...AND HOW TO GET RID OF IT

Each week this month, you will be spending at least 30 minutes sorting through drawers, closets, and other areas in the room you have selected, to seek out and get rid of clutter. (Yes, I am talking to YOU--even if you feel you don't have any clutter! WE ALL DO).

I am sure right now you have a high head of steam, and want to just charge ahead and get it all done in an hour. Am I right? I beg of you--DO NOT DO THIS. Decluttering is tiring, emotional work, and it is most important that you have a sense of accomplishment through this process...not just that you feel you have "finished," whatever that means!

What is clutter? I would like you to refer to the above drawing, because it says it all. Only the things that you find USEFUL & BEAUTIFUL should be given space in your life. Things that your Aunt Gladys gave you five years ago at Christmas don't get a pass simply because you feel guilty admitting that you find them to be neither of these qualities.

To start decluttering, start immediately to your left as you enter the room, and work methodically to your right...not skipping any space, drawer, or pile. Work your way around the perimeter of the room this way, until you eventually, at some point in the future, reach the doorway again.

I would like to suggest the following tools to make this process the easiest it can be:

- ✓ **Four large** (approx. 20 gallon size) **plastic storage totes**.
- ✓ **Large labels** for these totes: writing on a full size piece of paper with a black marker works well. After writing the labels, stick the pages to the bins so they are easily seen & read from where you are working.
- ✓ **Timer:** you can use the timer on your cell phone or an egg timer from the kitchen--whatever is most convenient.

Line your bins up within arms reach of where you will be sorting. The bins should be labeled as follows:

- ✓ **KEEP** (for items that are staying in this room only)
- ✓ **TRASH** (self explanatory! :)
- ✓ **DONATE** (for items that are going to Goodwill or other charity)
- ✓ **ELSEWHERE** (the MOST important bin--for items that belong elsewhere in the house. These are to be distributed ONLY when you are finished your work in the room for the day. Don't allow yourself to go do this sooner and become distracted!!)



Set your timer and work for just 15 minutes at a time, quickly sorting each item and placing it in the appropriate bin.

When you are finished your session, immediately take the trash to the outside bin, put the “donate” items right in your car to be taken to Goodwill or the charity of your choosing, and put the “elsewhere” items away where they belong in the house. If you have completed these steps, and you feel you would like to work a little longer, then you can initiate another timed decluttering session.... :)

A Note About “Valuables”-- Every time I work with clients, we will come across things that they feel they simply cannot get rid of because they are “too valuable,” even though they themselves don't particularly like the item in question, or even find it useful. “Perhaps,” they will say to me, “I can send it to my cousin in Wisconsin-- they really like these doohickeys, and would love to have it!” OR “I can sell this wingnut on eBay! I bet it is worth at least \$3,000!”

It is at this point that I gently remind them (and YOU) that our goal in this project is to make this room wonderful and peaceful, not to make their cousin happy or start a side business selling found items. Keeping our goal in the front of our minds is very important, and if you really feel an item is too valuable to let go “so it can bless someone else” as the FLYlady says, then you are allowed to hold on to it...with these stipulations:

- 1.** You are only allowed to keep 5 of these types of items. If you find a sixth, then you must select one from the group to switch it out with so you still only have a total of five.
- 2.** Recognizing that these items are now projects that need to be addressed, you must be committed to following through and actually shipping and/or selling it in the near future. Really.
- 3.** Put a date on your calendar that is your deadline to accomplish this.
- 4.** If the date passes without the item leaving your house, then ask a friend to help you decide the best way to move this item out, and make them your accountability partner so that you actually DO IT.

I don't mean to sound harsh, but even if the item really is valuable, it is my job to make you recognize that your time, your life, and your peace of mind are worth more. Amen.



Week 1: **NAMING YOUR PURPOSE**

Have you ever visited Monticello, Thomas Jefferson's home, the 5000 acre plantation in Charlottesville, VA? I ask because if you have, you know just how amazing it is to see all of the incredible attention to detail that Jefferson put into everything that he did. With clear thought and careful planning, he created a stunning, remarkable place where beauty and design perfectly intersect with function and purpose.

I know that you and I don't live in a home as grand, but nonetheless, it is no less important that we "start where we want to end up" with our houses and all the spaces within them. What are your intentions for each room? What do you want them to do for you? Have you thought about it? Named it?

If you are frustrated with a room, it could be that what you want it to be and do is totally different than what it is currently...like a laundry room that has become a catch-all and now has sports equipment at your feet as you try to put a load of wash in. Or a master bedroom that you wish was your retreat, and yet you have a pile of papers you have been meaning to go through on the nightstand....

hmmm.

Focusing on our project room, let's work on gaining some clarity about what we want its purpose and function to be. We will start by answering the following questions:

1. How do I want this space to feel when it is finished? It is important to be specific when answering this question, because a clear answer will help you to determine things that fit that feeling for you, versus those that DON'T. For instance, a room in which you want to feel "carefree, and completely relaxed," should not contain a white sofa that has loose scatterback pillows always in need of straightening, and a coffee table on which you can't set down a drink without a coaster. Just sayin'.... State how you would like the room to feel here: _____

2. What is the purpose of the room? What function does it provide for those who use it? (Does this sound like a silly question to you? You would be amazed how often there are things in a room that have NOTHING to do with helping that room meet its purpose and support you. These things are there sometimes by default, they are taking up valuable space, and are just in your way. Answer that question with clarity, and move the clutter out).

The purpose of this room is: _____

This Week's Decluttering:



Keeping in mind your answers to the previous questions, begin sorting through things in the space, making sure that only the things that are going to help you achieve your purpose or evoke the feeling you are after are staying...

___ decluttering session--15 minutes ___ decluttering session--15 minutes

(Remember, when you are done take the items that are trash right to the outside trash bin, and the things that are to be donated should go directly to your car so that they can be dropped off at Goodwill the next time you are out and about!)



Week 2: **RECOGNIZING & REMEMBERING WHAT WE LOVE**

The picture above is of one of my favorite places on earth, even though to my knowledge, I was only there once. The house no longer exists, but in my mind's eye it still sits quiet and proud on the quaint Santa Monica street where I visited my Great Aunt Margret when I was only 5 years old.

My experience visiting here as a child left a lasting impression on me, to say the least. It was a magical place the likes of which I had never seen in my five oh-so- long years of life, with its fragrant, blossoming grounds, the simple and uncluttered rooms, and the good feelings that seemed to reside there.

Finding these pictures a few years ago helped me to see how this special place profoundly influenced me when searching for and creating the spaces I would live in as an adult.

In Winifred Gallagher's book *House Thinking*, she writes of research connecting the recognition of meaningful places in a person's past, and the ability to then create a "just-right home" that provides a "deep, gut-level feeling of identification and comfort."

And that is just what we want for you!

1. Our goal this week is to identify what Gallagher refers to as our “best places.” So, what are the rooms, homes or gardens of your past—environments in which you felt truly yourself, truly alive? List the place or places from your past where you have felt your absolute best:

2. Please describe what this place looks like in your mind’s eye:

3. How did you feel when you were in this space?

4. What were the most beautiful and important qualities of this space?

5. Create a real collage or just a virtual file of images: Using Google Images or websites such as Houzz.com, search for rooms that are described just as you said you wanted your room to feel. For example, if you want a “airy, light kitchen” put those words into a search box, and then collect the images that speak to you in a file or collage that we will refer to later.



6. Next Task: Complete Two 15 minute decluttering sessions this week.

Keeping in mind your answers to the previous questions, begin sorting through things in the space, making sure that only the things that are going to help you achieve your purpose or evoke the feeling you are after are staying....

___ decluttering session

___ decluttering session

(Remember, when you are done take the items that are trash right to the outside trash bin, and the things that are to be donated should go directly to your car so that they can be dropped off at Goodwill the next time you are out and about!)



Week 3: **SETTING IT ALL UP TO FUNCTION WELL**

When I make my cup of coffee each morning, there are a couple reasons why this daily ritual makes me so happy.

First, I love coffee.

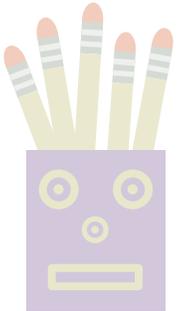
Second, everything I need to get my cup of joe ready is all within an arms reach of my coffeepot. So satisfying.

This is true about all of the tasks we do on a daily or weekly basis, and how they can either be annoying and time-consuming, or satisfying and efficient. Which side of things they come down on has everything to do with the way we set the whole thing up—this is the very heart of good design.

It sounds almost silly to say that you should store items where you use them, but the truth is often we don't. The tools and items we need for daily life can be scattered about and we make getting through the day so much harder as a result.

With a little planning, these day-to-day things can be almost effortless. Depending on what space you are working on this month, here are some examples to think about and perhaps apply this week as we focus on function:

In The Entry: A “landing strip” for your arrivals and departures—car keys, purse, jacket, briefcase all stored together, as well as other daily incidentals— preferably right by the door you exit and enter the house. For the pup—leash, waste bags, walking shoes, umbrella, biscuits all together at the ready for the daily walk.



If You Have Young Children: A homework bin kept near the kitchen table containing sharpened pencils, erasers, markers, crayons, colored pencils, and glue sticks. (I did this last September just using the leftovers from the previous school year. That bin came in so handy each afternoon, and easily went back in the cabinet when the work was done.)

In The Home Office: A single place for all the tools you need to pay your bills each month—perhaps a drawer near your computer with stamps, calculator, pens, any bills that come in by mail, paper shredder, etc...along with a list of your bills and when they are due.



In A Family Space: If you are working on a Family Room, probably the most important function that the space has is to facilitate communication and good times between friends and family. Instead of placing furniture only based on watching TV, be sure that sofas and chairs are also oriented toward one another, so that conversation is easy between those sitting in them.

A good test to see if a task area is set up efficiently is to see how little you need to move your feet to gather the things you need to complete it. If you can stand in one place and get your hands on all the components, you win!

1. What obstacles have been in the way of things working smoothly in this space in the past?

List them here:

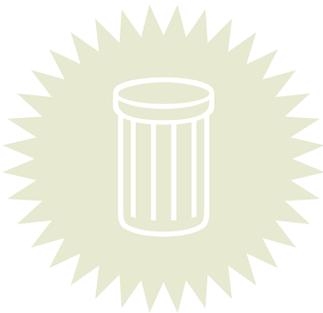
2. What tasks are important for you to plan for in this space? I want to be able to do the following things EASILY in the space:

3. Next Task: Complete Two 15 minute decluttering sessions this week.

Keeping in mind your answers to the previous questions, begin sorting through things in the space, making sure that only the things that are going to help you achieve your purpose or evoke the feeling you are after are staying...

___ decluttering session

___ decluttering session



(Remember, when you are done take the items that are trash right to the outside trash bin, and the things that are to be donated should go directly to your car so that they can be dropped off at Goodwill the next time you are out and about!)

Week 4: **ADDING BEAUTY**

This is the part where most people want to start...but it is important to save it for last. Adding all that is pretty--the finishing touches, or what I call the 'top layer'-- simply won't have much impact on how a room feels to you if you haven't done the ground work first. Removing the things that are bothering you, the things that are simply cluttering it up and getting in your way, and then thinking about what you want the room to do for you so that the function & purpose are securely in place, is the way to create a room that feels truly good at a heart and soul level.

As of today you have done this work! You have named a purpose, thought things through, and you have done the work of clearing out the clutter that doesn't fit with your vision. You also have taken the important step of remembering and envisioning spaces from your past that were especially meaningful to you. Now that we are ready to add your room's top layer, we are going to go back to the work we did in Week 2 to figure out what to do next...

Step One: Pull out all of your images that you have gathered on your computer or on your actual collage. As you look at them, hopefully they lift your heart and make you feel good! Take a minute to jot down some similarities between the pictures, some common traits--maybe each one has something yellow in it, maybe they all have a dog sleeping somewhere, maybe they just all evoke the same feeling in you. List the similarities here:





Step Two: Read through the descriptions of your “Best Place(s)” and list again some of the most important characteristics and feelings that you noted:

Step Three: Use the above images and descriptions to create a short phrase that will describe your “best place” room...your phrase should tug at your heart when you read it and feel good at a gut level.

The above phrase will now be your yardstick of sorts as you think about the decorative elements you would like in your room. As you go to select special things to make your room beautiful, make sure that they “fit” when you measure them against your phrase.

Final Assignment: Schedule a special shopping day to celebrate the completion of all of this hard work, and to find a few special items (fresh flowers included) to beautify your space!

Always With Gratitude

When it comes to our homes, we all spend a lot of time dwelling on the things we wish were different about them. You know the drill:

“Oh, how I wish my house just had...._____”
(fill in the blank with whatever you have been longing for lately).

But if we choose to shift our focus, we can instead notice all of the things that our homes do well for us day in and day out—even such basic things as keeping us warm and dry on a cold and rainy night. We can choose to count our blessings, and what a powerful choice that is--which is why I wanted to close this workbook with an exercise focused on **GRATITUDE**.

I am sure that you have heard how important it is to practice gratitude, but the thing is that the message that we need more, better, bigger, & newer gets a lot more airtime. That message drowns out the smaller voice inside of each of us that reminds us that we are enough, and that our houses, while imperfect, have amazing beauty, purpose, and function just as they are.

SO, in the coming weeks when you find yourself frustrated with this or that, take a moment to list the simple yet wonderful things that your house does for you--its charms, possibilities, and positive characteristics that you don't often recognize...

What are you thankful for? List them here:

Finally,

I would like to share a Navajo prayer/meditation with you that I find especially moving...

Find a quiet place in your house, sit and focus on your breathing. Say the following lines slowly, focusing on each word, each direction, acknowledging the beautiful things that are surely there...

Beauty before me.

Beauty behind me.

Beauty to the left of me.

Beauty to the right.

Beauty above me.

Beauty below me.

Beauty within me.



Recognizing the beauty all around & within us, and taking the time to appreciate it brings balance to our lives and opens our hearts to new possibilities. Focus on these things, the things that are beautiful and those that fill your heart with gratitude, and you may just feel that you & your house have gone through a complete renovation.

***Reminder: Now that you have completed the work of these past four weeks, make sure you return to your "Before and After" Page and be sure to place your "after" picture in its place, and make note of how you feel about the room now!!*

About Erin



Erin Cochran is owner and president of **Revealing Redesign**, a company she started in 2006. Having been raised in a house that was constantly in chaos and full of clutter, it was as an adult that Erin realized her calling to help others have a real relationship with their houses where they can enjoy peace, beauty and order. Erin's work focuses on creating stylish, nurturing spaces full of beautiful color and meaningful possessions that create a "just-right" home for her clients, that then enables them to put their best foot forward in the world.

If you are frustrated by uninspiring rooms, closets full of clutter, and a house that feels cramped and uncomfortable, contacting Erin can be the first step to understanding exactly what is keeping your house from being a source of satisfaction, balance, and beauty in your life. Contact Erin today to get some help and insight to create your beautiful, just-right home!

erin@revealingredesign.com

(484) 904-7391