



# 10 Keys to Making Your House Do the Mothering for You

(And help your kids)

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## 1. Music for mood

Use the music you play in your home to set or shift the mood. Bring the energy up for times to clean up or get ready to go and settle it down at bedtime or when you need more calm. (Remember, some children will be distracted by any music.)

## 2. Me space for mom

Have a table, desk, chair, bed or other place that is mom's *Me Space*. If she is there, anyone needs to ask permission before interrupting her - and also knows to ask a sibling or dad for help **first**.

## 3. Transition tubs or totes

Have plastic tub, cardboard tote, or basket for kids to use to regroup at the end of a day at school or camp. Backpacks get emptied into it and everything gets reorganized before dinner time to be ready for the next day. (For littles, have them throw things away only with help.) A snack bag can be waiting for them there (or in the fridge, labeled with their names) so they can manage this transition themselves.

## 4. Scale down, streamline & simplify

Not a new idea, but it's so key to your house serving you that it's worth repeating. Clear your space. Cull out everything you don't need - or use the KonMari approach and dump everything that does not bring you joy when you hold it in your hand.

## 5. Make every item pass the 3-Part "Worth it?" test

Before you purchase anything, or give a gift a place in your home, make sure you honestly answer 'yes' to each of these questions. Is it worth: the money? the storage space? the upkeep time? Once you've done # 4, you can just ask, 'does it bring me joy?' (After thanking the giver, it is perfectly OK to put gifts straight into the *donate* box if you don't want them. A gift is supposed to bring joy. Send it where it will.)

## 6. Box up, label & rotate toys and more

Box up and label about 1/3 - 2/3 of your children's toys. (Do the same with art supplies, seasonal items, and anything you can't bear to give away but know you don't really want to keep.) Every month or two, rotate out about 1/3 of the toys and rotate in 1/3 from storage. Surprise! It's like a ton of new toys suddenly show up! Imagine how much more they will engage your kids. The independent play time you gain will be well worth the time it took to get this system up and going.

## 7. Use shelves and containers to make kids able to keep toys tidy

Toy boxes are impossible to keep tidy (unless they are just filled with one kind of toy - all stuffed animals, all balls). Use low shelves and tubs, baskets or other containers to allow kids to find, clean up, and keep tidy all their own toys.

## 8. Cut cleaning time and clutter with doors, dust covers & hooks

Can you store it in a cabinet or on a shelf with a door or put a dust cover over it (appliances that won't fit in a cabinet, sewing machine, seldom used office machines)? Can you hang it on a hook? Anytime you can, you cut down dusting and often make it easier to find things and to put them away where they belong.

## 9. Use timers to manage screen-time and for handy reminders.

Use apps that let you set timers to turn off electronic devices automatically. Let the device set the boundary so you don't have to. Use timer apps on tablets or phones to give reminders of get-ready-for-bed time, 10 minutes until dinner, time to go, etc.

## 10. Use visual reminders - to remind, remember & mark boundaries.

Here are just a few options:

- ❖ Labels to show where things belong
- ❖ Standards for what passes for clean & step-by-step lists for cleaning jobs
- ❖ Schedules
- ❖ Calendar
- ❖ Table manners tent card on the table
- ❖ Grace & Courtesy cards (Two minute respect lessons. You can get a free set [here](#).)
- ❖ Transition times checklists (*Done Before School, Done Before Dinner, After a Bath*)
- ❖ Master shopping list - Post on the fridge for everyone to mark needed items. If you only have to make a checkmark by the item, people are more likely to do it.
- ❖ Agenda book for *Family Meeting* issues - All family members jot down plans & schemes as well as challenges and problems to solve in future meetings.
- ❖ *Closed* signs - Post in the kitchen at 8 pm, put on computers or T.V.s (Use humor and put one the door of a bathroom that the Health Department might shut down or a garage full of toys that is dangerous to walk through 😊.)