

A young woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a white t-shirt and a tan apron, is sitting on the floor in a kitchen. She is smiling and has her hands in a meditative gesture. In the background, there are white kitchen cabinets, a wooden countertop with a yellow pitcher and two small yellow pots, and a green bucket and blue spray bottle on the floor. A white curved line separates the top text from the bottom text.

SPRING CLEANING for good MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health is an important element of overall health which is often overlooked. As our modern world becomes more demanding and we continue to feel the effects of recent year's global events, people are reporting record levels of anxiety and depression.

Taking care of our mental health is becoming more important than ever before and one simple way we can do this, is through regular cleaning. A 2017 study on clutter and overconsumption found that cleaning helps our minds feel more in control and elevates feel-good hormones in the body – which means cleaning is good for the mind and the body!

Psychologist and Life Coach Dr Tshepiso Matentjje outlines 5 ways cleaning can be beneficial to our health and wellbeing.

1

When we clean, we get our bodies moving, which helps to release endorphins and feel-good hormones into the blood and reduce cortisol levels, which cause stress. Overall, this helps to relieve tension and anxiety, allowing the body and mind to unwind.

2

Cleaning can create a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction by increasing our mind's feelings of control. The achievement of a goal, like a clean space, can give us the motivation to tackle other challenges in our lives, beginning with the belief that we are capable and can overcome any obstacles we come across along the way.

3

A clean and tidy environment can help to create a positive attitude and the resilience to keep going, no matter what. The discipline and habit of cleaning and tidying on a regular basis can also lay a foundation for developing positive habits like discipline, focus and motivation.

4

When we clean with others, it can be a bonding activity that can improve intimacy and strengthen relationships. Untidy and chaotic home environments have been found to be related to parental stress and to negatively impact parenting behaviour and children's problem behaviours. But, when cleaning becomes a positive group activity, it creates cohesion, helps everyone to feel like they play their part and relieves the pressure from being shouldered by one individual, which often creates tension in the home.

5

Your home is an extension of your how you feel about and see yourself, so cleaning is a form of self-care that can help with developing and maintaining self-esteem. People who struggle with depression and anxiety in particular often find cleaning difficult but report feeling safer, calmer and happier when their space is clean and tidy.

For some people, motivation can be a struggle when it comes to cleaning. Others may feel they lack the necessary skills to get going but committing to small daily tasks instead of letting the cleaning build up and become a daunting task is another good way to stay on top of cleaning and enjoy a happier home.

For more information or assistance, you are welcome to contact Platinum Health's Mental Health Services (014 590 1700 or 080 000 6942). EAP Counsellors (010 133 0525) are also available 24 hours per day, 7 days per week to offer counselling and support.

