

THE SPACE MAKERS

BY **KAREN GASPIN**
PHOTOGRAPHS BY **SHANTI LARUE**

A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO DE-CLUTTERING goes beyond the physical space and AFFECTS US EMOTIONALLY



Laura Forbes Carlin talks about home in a way that inspires an immediate desire to clean out, pare down and take stock of what makes you happy and what does not.

Together with her sister, Alison Forbes Van Hook, the pair has been changing lives since 2003 through their conscious homemaking lifestyle brand, Inspired Everyday Living. As authors, life coaches and consultants, the sisters take a holistic approach to creating and transforming home environments that reflect the dreams and goals of their inhabitants. Although de-cluttering is all the rage at the moment thanks in part to a certain Japanese organizing consultant, Laura and Alison learned at an early age that physical clutter equals emotional clutter. At just six and nine years old, Alison was already the furniture re-arranger and redecorator, while Laura was the de-clutterer and organizer.

Today, "our process is a holistic approach of consciously creating a home you love to inspire a love-filled life," explains Laura, who has a master's degree in Spiritual Psychology. "I do not come into a home and clear the physical clutter. It is a very personal process...emotional and spiritual," she adds, explaining her role as a facilitator to help her clients find their "passion and purpose." Getting rid of clutter, she says, helps to breed clarity and can actually cause a life shift.

In their new book, *Clutter-free Parenting: Making Space in Your Home for the Magic of Childhood and the Joy of Parenthood*, Laura and Alison explain how physical blocks in the home can hinder the flow of love between parents and their children. Laura gives a concrete example to explain this concept, emphasizing that there is a definite ripple effect from

clutter in our lives. "Let's say you are trying to get the kids out the door for school and can't find a backpack [because there is too much stuff around and no specific place for school gear]. It gets later and later, the child misses the bus, the parent has to drive to school and is late for work, misses a meeting." With this as the starting point to the day, everyone is frustrated and negatively affected. "One small change," she says, "like clearing a space for backpacks, would solve the problem."

The message that Laura and Alison communicate to both their families and clients is the idea of conscious homemaking. "Homemaking should be embraced," says Laura, "and not according to the traditional, old-fashioned definition." The real message behind Inspired Everyday Living is that "we are creating a foundation for our children," says Allison. Laura adds, "Our homes and lives are inextricably interconnected." Conscious homemaking should teach children how to live, not only in their own homes, but also in the larger world.

"It's about peace, connection and way of being," says Laura. "What we carry out beyond the four walls of our home."

TIPS TO TACKLE DE-CLUTTERING

- Pick an area and start small. Small successes are motivating.
- Take everything out and address each item individually.
- Physically clean the space.
- Determine if each item is loved or useful, and observe your physical response to each item.
- Divide items based on their function. Is this item useful? Is there something else that fulfills the same need? Would you take this item with you if you move?
- Find a home for everything. Whether it stays, is given away or thrown away, develop a relationship of gratitude and intention.

OPPOSITE PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Sisters and expert clutter-clearers Laura Forbes Carlin (left) and Alison Forbes Van Hook; a clutter-free laundry room; minimal front door; their new book, *Clutter-free Parenting*, brings clutter beyond just the physical and onto an emotional level; cooking utensils are easy to find when there's no more than necessary; a clutter-free living room is a healthier space to spend time with family. ABOVE A simple and clear counter in the bathroom makes for a calming getting-ready routine.



“A HOUSE IS A STRUCTURE with four walls; a place to sleep and eat. But a home is a conscious extension of the WAY WE LIVE OUR LIFE.”
 - Laura Forbes Carlin



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