

My View

Quick cleaning process works for surprise guests

By MARY FAGAN



The dust kittens in my house are so big I'm fitting them for collars. I've considered a spay/neuter program for them, but unfortunately it requires regular use of long-handled tools with suction - quite a chore. I deal with such matters on an emergency basis.

Every housekeeper, male or female, has great respect for emergency responders. We can relate. Take, for example, responding to the call that someone is coming over and you have only a few minutes to hide the tell-tale signs of everyday life - mounds of mail with no place to go, tidbits of proof that you really do eat at home sometimes, clothing in various stages of suitability for wear, and those pesky dust kittens. It takes specialized training to respond to this situation. I have developed a four-point technique an army of one can easily put into action.

All it takes is 10 minutes, a catchall location, a pungent household cleanser (I like Murphy's Oil Soap) and five cleaning wipes. First, identify and prepare your triage area. This will become your guest confinement room. "Confinement room" is a special-ops term; your guests are not supposed to know they are being confined. This requires some effort on your part, but it can be done. Serving snacks only inside the confinement room is helpful in this regard.

Step two is the rapid collection of all junk and its deployment into the large catchall location that you have previously identified. This can be a closet, but some have gotten creative and purchased large trunks or baskets for this purpose.

I have one in each room. Junk items include, but are not limited to, newspapers, magazines, plates, mail, grooming tools, videos, wrappers, plates, cups, slippers, worn clothing and any other items obscuring otherwise good seating space.

Now, dip your fingers into the pungent household cleanser and dab it under your chairs and in the four corners of the room. Thank God that stuff is good for wood and a great camouflage for clean. (I don't think they advertise that second point.) Next, eyeball the open floor from a seated position, sweeping from side to side for five seconds to identify the visible crumbs, pretzel bits, lint balls (a.k.a. dust kittens), Hershey Kiss foils or beer caps in plain sight. Then stand and gather them up. You have two disposal options - either the catchall or the garbage can, which will hopefully be their final resting place sometime soon anyway.

If there is time, a quick vacuum around the open areas is nice insurance, but optional as long as you have performed the evacuation procedure described above.

Last is attacking the bathroom, since your guest may have to use it. Cleaning wipes are essential. Quickly remove five from the dispenser. Run one around the back of the toilet and the bowl, one over the sink and faucet, two wadded together make a quick once around the floor and the last one hits the mirror.

Toss them into the garbage can, making sure they are unfolded, so that they cover up the garbage actually in the can. Hint - using scented wipes leaves behind a bleachy-lemon or orange smell to mask any odors that might be present naturally, if you catch my drift.

So much in life is about perception, hence the success of my four-point program. I do offer a word of caution: This maneuver is for emergencies only. It is not intended as a substitute for real clean, but as an effective tool in your housekeeping arsenal should a situation arise.

I am in the process of detailing the work required for a real housecleaning, but I am having trouble finishing the research. People keep calling to come over and visit.

Mary Fagan of Middleport has a four-point technique for battling dust kittens and other home debris.