



# Employee NEWSLETTER

Employee Assistance Program  
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## 4 Great Ways to Clean Up Your Life and Boost Well-Being

By Deborah L. Davis Ph.D.

**As winter thaws and the weather warms, we throw open our windows and feel inspired to freshen up our homes. Traditional spring cleaning might include clearing out cluttered closets and vacuuming under the heavy furniture.**

But, like many people, you may be reluctant to devote time and energy to this mighty endeavor. Or, in this modern age of busy, busy, busy, the accumulation of dust bunnies may never even hit your radar.

Anyway, forget about the dust bunnies under your bed because there is a far more insidious mess that warrants your attention: Let's call them "must bunnies." Must bunnies dwell in your mind where they generate stressful thoughts, bothersome compulsions, and irrelevant must-do lists full of should's, such as "I should wake up earlier, or "I should help out," or "I should spend time with them," or "I should get over it."

Must bunnies wreak havoc because they impose unnecessary obligations, meaningless distractions, and unrealistic expectations that interfere with your awareness of your authentic self, what you truly want, and how you truly feel. Separated from your true potential, priorities, and feelings, you may feel anxious, overwhelmed, or even depressed.

For a new type of spring cleaning, try minimizing the must bunnies, so you can free your mind, cultivate calm,

boost your wellbeing, and live your best life.

Here are four basic types of must bunnies and strategies for clearing them out.

### Rumination Must Bunnies

Rumination means deep and careful thought. In particular, you may ruminate on what happened in the past to make sense of it or extract the lessons. And you may ruminate on what might happen in the future, weigh the options, or make plans. But when rumination is obsessive and stressing about the past (If only I'd done it differently; I should've known better), or worrying about the future (I'm going to fail; I should do more; I'll be all alone), your sense of self-worth and wellbeing falters.

Practice bringing your awareness to the present moment to clear out those must bunnies. Turn your attention to what you see with your eyes, or hear with your ears or your breath. You can observe colors and light, the sounds of music, traffic, or people, or the sensations of your breathing, in and out. Your attention may wander, but you strengthen your ability as you keep bringing it back to the present moment. How does this cast out the must bunnies?

When you mindfully bring your awareness into the present moment, neither the past nor the future matter. Your mind calms and accepts that you can't change what has happened nor predict what will happen. Then, instead of ruminating on what-ifs and shoulds, you can cultivate self-compassion for your mistakes, focus on what you truly want right now, and wonder what will happen next with a curious mindset. This practice cultivates a calm mind and a centered life.

### Digital Must Bunnies

Digital intake of news, information, and social media can

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add to one's life, but for many people, it overtakes life. Yes, world events, updating knowledge, and scanning posts by friends and favorite celebrities can be super-compelling, but mindfully notice, "How involved am I in living my own life?" With a mostly outward focus, you may feel informed and in the loop, but these "must-dos" and lack of inward focus lead to losing touch with yourself, what you experience, and what you want.

To experiment with this, try going on a run, walk, hike, or bike ride without earbuds, and notice where your mind wanders. As Socrates observed, "The unexamined life is not worth living." And if you're feeling bored or anxious unless you're plugged in, perhaps you've fallen into a modern twist on this truism: "The unlive life is not worth examining." Unplug so you can calm your brain and free your mind to reconnect with yourself. Your life is waiting for you, and it'll be as interesting as you make it.

### Social Must Bunnies

Having a vibrant social life is important, but when social "must do's" are wearing you out or keeping you from your priorities, it's time to tidy up. This entails reducing the amount of time you spend with people you don't really care about or people you find draining. Then you can increase the amount of time you spend, preferably face-to-face, with people you enjoy, who fill you up and energize you. You can also carve out more alone time, letting your mind wander or pursue what fulfills you.

### Time Sink Must Bunnies

We all have responsibilities that need tending. And a key responsibility is to unload the "shoulds" that waste your time or energy and keep you from meeting the responsibilities that really matter and doing what you really want to be doing. Now, you may worry that if you only do what you want, you'll stay in bed and eat chocolate for the rest of your life.

And if that's what you truly desire, go for it. But after a time, maybe even a couple of minutes (or maybe a whole weekend), even this indulgence gets tiresome. And actually, doing what you want includes doing what's necessary to live your best life, which, yes, means you actually want to do the laundry, file your taxes, walk the dog, and meet important deadlines. That's because meeting these responsibilities holds

intrinsic rewards you value.

And mindfully notice, when you think you should do something, but you don't really want to, you can probably put it off until you feel motivated to do it. (And in due time, I finally got around to writing this blog post.) But what if there are no rewards you'd value, ever? What happens when you scratch that task off your list? How does it feel, for example, to not vacuum under heavy furniture? If that's not your jam, you're under no obligation. Really! Instead, go live your best life.

### References:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/laugh-cry-live/202204/4-great-ways-clean-your-life-and-boost-well-being>