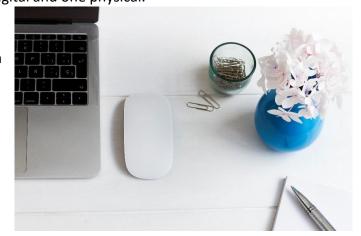Hi graduate friends,

Now that spring has officially sprung, I thought I would take the time in this GRADUpdATE to talk about a few different ways we might take part in some healthy spring cleaning! As our commitments stack up throughout the semester, it's about this point in the term that things often feel overwhelming, whether it's exams or essay due dates creeping up on us, a quickly filling social calendar, or the number of dishes sitting in our sink.

That's why this is a great time to invest a little in ourselves and clear away some of that build-up; the great thing about spring cleaning is that it can be whatever it means to you. You can do as little (or as much) as you want based on your own needs and capacity! To try and keep things relevant, I'll be sharing two tips with you today: one digital and one physical.

My first tip to you has to do with keeping physical spaces tidy. Studies show that visual clutter, such as an overflowing trash can, can have a negative effect on cognitive capacity (Gkoumas & Shimi, 2021; Neo et al., 2022). Look around your room; it can be your kitchen, your office, your bedroom, or anything else that might need a good tidy and set a timer for five minutes. The goal here is to try to do as much as you can in that time. Another strategy here is to queue up one of your favorite songs that is about five minutes long and see how much cleaning you can do before the song ends! This trick doesn't work for everyone; I sometimes spend longer trying to find the 'perfect' song than I do cleaning, but it's all about developing strategies that work for you! After those five minutes, your desk will feel much cleaner, and you'll probably feel some upward momentum to getting other work done.

My second tip to you involves your digital workspace. As much as it pains me to admit it, as someone with six windows and probably 100 tabs open on my laptop, there is such a thing as having too many things open at once. Though it might only seem to be affecting your computer's processing power and not your own, switching between multiple tabs leads to more multitasking, which often has a negative effect on performance (Adler & Fitch, 2012; Srna et al., 2018). One option is to set a timer for five minutes and spend that time really going through your tabs, to decide what you should and should not keep. Another option, which is especially relevant if you often have a lot of articles open at once, or are typically engaged in multiple projects, is to use a tab manager. TaberOne and OneTab are both solid options that work a little bit differently. Both have the same goal of decluttering your web browser and getting you back to what's important when you're spending time on the information superhighway. I encourage you to investigate and see if there's something that works best for you.

Best,

Western

Aldean Ellis (he/him), from your [Learning Development & Success](#) team!

GRADUpdATE is a monthly e-newsletter dedicated to helping students succeed in graduate school. This information is provided by Learning Development & Success, Room 4100, Western Student Services Building, Western University, Canada.

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