

the monkey house

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by Melissa Bohn

In a past episode of Bravo's Project Runway, host Tim Gunn politely rebuked a contestant who had used human hair as fringe in his collection by telling him, "You've been living in the monkey house for too long." Gunn's analogy went something like this: When you first walk into the monkey house at the zoo, what do you do? You cover your nose and think, "This place stinks!" After 15 minutes you've adjusted a bit; "Well, I guess this isn't so bad." A little later, you may not even notice the disgusting smell (though it never actually dissipated).



I often feel like I'm living in my own monkey house. My daily chores get lost in the bustle of other priorities, and I become blind to the stacks of paper on the counter, countless emails in my inbox, and the clumps of dog hair in the corner. I stay in my sweaty clothes for hours after my run, and aside from applying a bit of mascara at stoplights, have no consistent beauty regimen.

I want to take care of myself and keep a clean house, and I know that I function better when I set limits and have less on my plate. But cutting back is hard. I prioritize certain tasks, like making sure my little boy gets mental stimulation, clean clothes, and weird, organic health food every day but am unsure how to accomplish all the other tasks on my list.

And to be honest, not every day is a Monkey House day. Some mornings I hop up, shower right after my run, and dust, scrub and vacuum. Or my sweet husband turns on a movie, hands me a pile of papers and says "Go." I feel a huge sense of accomplishment afterwards.

I think everybody lives in the Monkey House to some extent. Each day our time gets divided amongst our most pressing obligations, and we decide what we're willing to live with (and without). I choose to take great care of my son, train for marathons, and work part-time. I'd love to keep up with daily household chores

more regularly, but also realize that means giving up another to-do. Part of having a happy and fulfilling life means recognizing that I'll never get it all done.

I'm planning to start small this month and get dinner ready on time each day. Then maybe I'll sweep the floor. Or maybe I'll just run an extra mile instead.