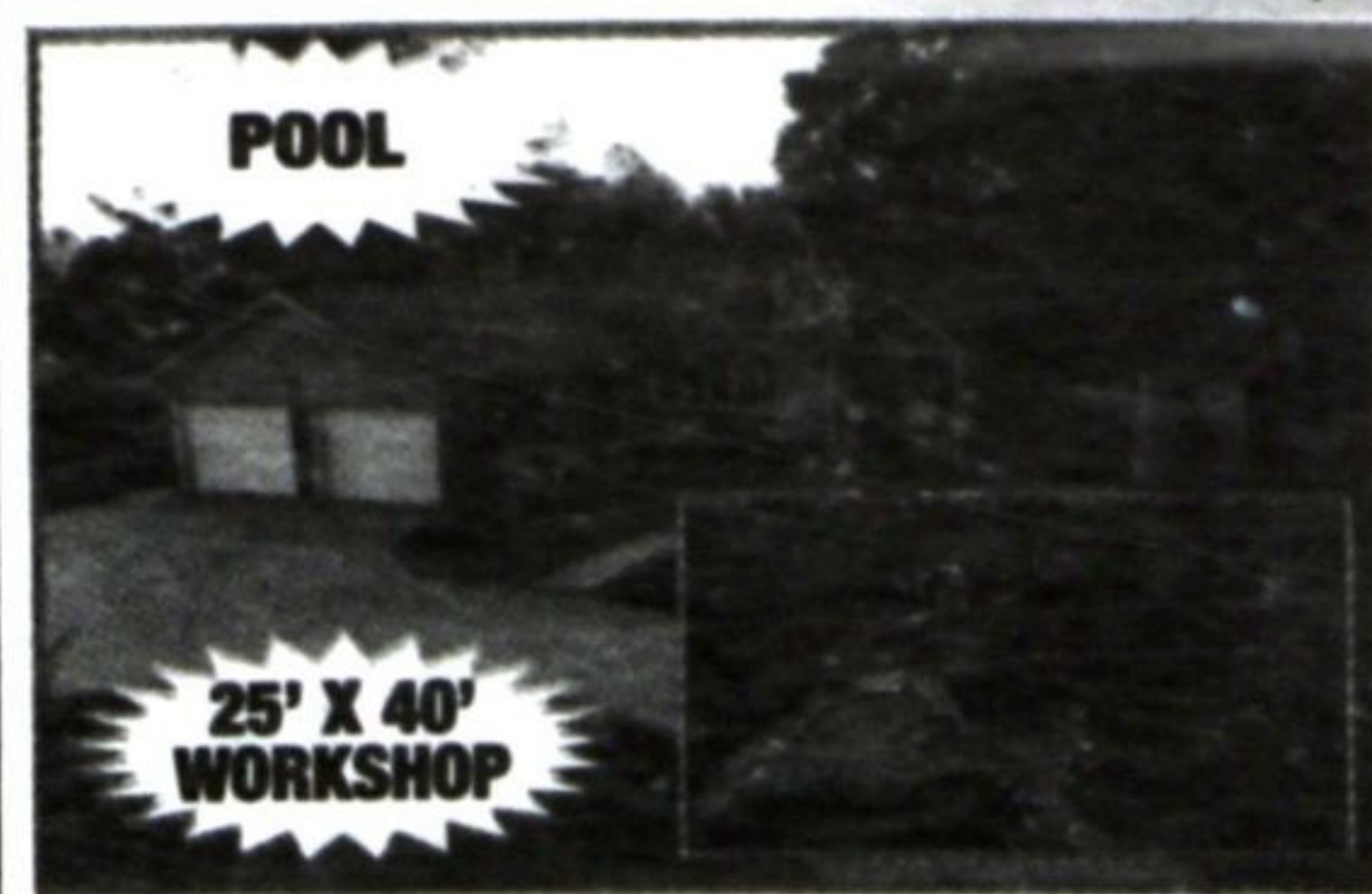




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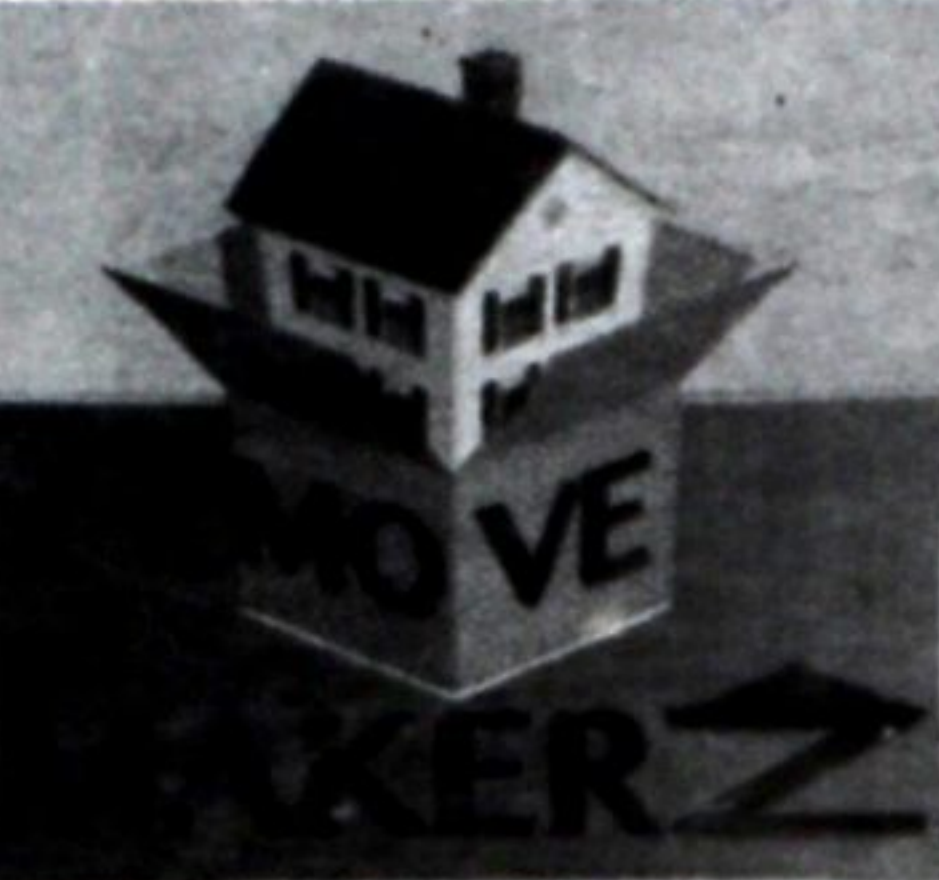
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Advertorial

Create a family clean team to enjoy more time for festivities

By Dr. Karyn Gordon

While the holidays are supposed to bring tidings of joy, many parents get overwhelmed with the combined pressure of gift buying (sometimes last minute!), decorating, cooking large meals and the myriad of extra household chores that come with entertaining extended family. The surest way to not only survive the holiday season but enjoy it is to divide chores up among family members.

While it may seem that household chores are the last thing kids want to think about when visions of sugar plums dance in their heads, the holidays provide a perfect opportunity to teach your children about what it takes and how they can help to make the magic happen. Ideally, you can foster routines that will stay with them long after all the wrapping paper has been tossed.

In fact, a new survey from Windex, Scrubbing Bubbles and Fantastik demonstrates that families who clean together have stronger, happier relationships. And shockingly, the survey found that while practically all parents believe that their children benefit from participating in household chores, only 54 per cent of Canadian children actually partake in chores. It's not only about getting things around the house done – 97 per cent of parents surveyed think that teaching your kids to take on chores fosters greater levels of confidence and 97 per cent believe children who take responsibility for household chores may have healthier relationships when they're grown.

And it's not just about kids. Parents have a responsibility to split up chores between amongst themselves. Less than 6 in 10 Canadian couples say that they equally share responsibility of household chores, with men (68 per cent) significantly more likely than women (43 per cent) to claim they equally divided responsibilities. The survey found that men continue to take on outdoor tasks, such as shoveling snow, and women are still more likely to be responsible for all the other indoors household chores. It's important, especially during the extra workload and expectations of the holidays, that parents divide chores evenly, both for the health of their own relationship and to set a good example for their kids.

Below are some tips to help you get through your chores this holiday season and allow you to focus on what's really important.

• Getting the kids involved – A key tactic I've always used with my kids is to differentiate between "chores" and "responsibility." Teach them how each task benefits them (tidying their room to make sure they

have space for their new toys from Santa) while a chore benefits the entire family (helping set the table for Christmas dinner). This way, they'll see both the personal and holistic benefits of chores.

- Age-appropriate chores – With 2 to 3 year-olds, keep it simple by making a game out of putting their toys away, stacking their books or placing laundry in the bin. Try playing holiday music and challenge your kids to finish the task before the song stops. Four to five-year-olds can make their own beds, clear dirty dishes from the table and empty the dishwasher. Starting at the age of six, kids can be responsible for keeping their rooms tidy, while helping sort laundry and set the table. Kids between eight and nine can sweep, mop and vacuum the floor (always helpful when guests are on the way), and can help put away laundry and groceries. After the age of 10, kids can help with more complicated tasks, like prepping for meals or helping with outdoor chores, like setting up the fiberglass reindeer on the lawn.

- Use a chore wheel – One of my favourite strategies for engaging family members to do their fair share is to use a chore wheel, which can be found on comecleanwithus.ca and evenly divides the chores and changes it up every time you spin it.

- Split household labour with your partner – According to the new survey, 6 in 10 Canadians living with their partners who feel that they have a strong relationship, indicate they share the responsibility of household chores equally. You and your partner need to have clear communication on who is responsible for what chores at the outset of you deciding to share a home together. Split up your chores based on preference, availability and skills, but be flexible. During the holidays, when there's more cooking and cleaning to do, responsibilities may need to shift a bit so one person doesn't feel overwhelmed.

- Stronger cleaning habits, happier families – When everyone pitches in, household chores can become an activity that strengthens family relationships. Did you know that by keeping your home clean you can actually keep your relationship happy? The survey found that, of those couples happy in their current relationship, roughly three-quarters (77 per cent) were satisfied with the division of household chores.

Keep these findings and tactics in mind, this holiday season so that the time you spend on chores is not frustrating or exhausting, but rather an opportunity to foster good traditions and create warm family memories, which the holidays should be all about.