



PACK UP THE FEVER!

BY LISA EVANS

If you're drowning in toys and other kid junk, here's how you – and your family – can conquer the clutter.





If you're guilty of shoving toys into closets when company arrives and buying things twice because you can't find the original, you could be teaching your children to be packrats.

Watching Candice Olsen's *Divine Design* one night, I scoffed at the eloquent living room panning across my television screen - the simple white couches, carefully placed throw pillows, and the round minimalist coffee table with gold criss-crossed legs that prohibited storage. "These people clearly don't have kids," I said. "Where are all the toys? Where's the clutter drawer?"

It's easy to blame clutter on the kids. After all, it's plastic barber shops, train sets and teddy bears that are blocking the way to the hall closet. But, TV has a lot to teach us. While you, too, may view a toy-filled hallway as the mark of a normal family home and dismiss designs like Olsen's as unattainable for a family with children, programs like *Hoarders* and *Consumed* are at the opposite end of the spectrum, warning us that a house bursting at the seams could be a sign of unhealthy consumption patterns that could turn children into lifelong pack rats. Perhaps Olsen's minimalist designs have something to teach us and our children. But first, how do you stop the clutter?

STOP THE CYCLE

The process of de-cluttering starts with having an understanding of what you really need. "If you want less stuff, you have to be on a stuff diet," says Jill Pollack, de-cluttering expert and host of HGTV's *Consumed*. "What I love about the show is that you literally take everything out of the house," says Jill. Once participants have had the experience of living without all their "stuff", they are forced to think about what they missed. While removing everything from the family home is done in extreme circumstances where clutter has taken over a family's life, the principle applies to all on the packrat spectrum. "It's taking inventory of your life," says Jill. She tells parents the first step to combating pack-rat tendencies is to take control over the amount of stuff entering the family's space.

**"When you're not there enough,
you buy a lot of toys and a lot of clothing because toys
and clothing can be a transference of love."**



