

Start The New Year with a Little Oosouji

By Leslie Fields

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In Japan, to observe Oosouji means to clean the clutter, dirt, and dust of the past. The word Oosouji literally means "big cleaning," and that is exactly what takes place. It is often practiced at the end of the year, with the purpose of banishing any old problems or ways of thinking and to welcome a new start with a clean slate and home, as well as creating space for prosperity. The Japanese see each year as completely separate and distinct. Here are some ideas for your annual oosouji tradition:

Set up containers for trash and donations before starting each area. Begin at the entrance to a room and work your way clockwise around the space, working from top to bottom. Dust ceilings, wipe down walls, dust furniture, then vacuum and mop floors. As you exit the room, take a moment to appreciate your work! Remove stains, scratches, and blemishes throughout your home and office. Let each member of the family be responsible for their areas and things, to allow everyone to experience this lovely tradition. Keep in mind that elimination of excess by donating, recycling, and considering the environment is considered good for the soul.

Here are a few suggestions to consider in your cleanse:

- Eliminate piles. File what needs filing and toss or shred the rest (set aside tax related documents in preparation for tax season)
- Put away or donate books, magazines, clothes, and shoes
- Clean up your computer (delete old files, store and organize files)
- Clean garbage cans by soaking (I suggest a 50/50 hydrogen peroxide/water mixture), rinsing, and drying with a microfiber
- Disinfect or replace toilet brushes
- Clear kitchen counters of all appliances not used on a daily basis
- Organize contents of all cabinetry and eliminate excess
- Go through your spices, dispose of old or near empty bottles (I date mine when I open them), and return them in alphabetical order
- Replace baking soda in fridge and freezer
- Organize pantry and donate unwanted non-perishable items
- Launder or clean all bedding: mattress pads, pillows, duvets, blankets, and comforters
- Vacuum, flip, and rotate your mattress
- Vacuum refrigerator coils
- Use brush attachment to vacuum underside of furniture
- Clean under beds
- Deep clean carpets and interior windows
- Dispose of expired or unneeded cleaning chemicals and medications (vitamins, supplements, etc.).

- Oil wood furniture and window sills to bring back luster and shine
- Wash chandeliers and dust light bulbs

I also like to:

- Schedule dental checkups and annual doctor visits for the year
- Make an appointment with your financial advisor to check the health of your investments and make any adjustments

I encourage you to start out the New Year in control of your environment and free from unnecessary clutter, freeing up space both physically and emotionally for a peaceful new beginning.