FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Self-Help

Pretty Neat: The Buttoned-Up Way to Get Organized and Let Go of Perfection
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Sarah Welch
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For the millions of women (and men) who single-handedly tackle domestic life, there is help, and even better, a reality check for those with unrealistic expectations. *Pretty Neat* is a guide for the woman who finds herself overwhelmed, depressed, and out-of-control on the domestic front. Drawing from hundreds of real-life interviews with women from all walks of life, *Pretty Neat* puts chaos into proper perspective and suggests sensible ways to gain some measure of control in the home.

Surprisingly, women's worst enemy in maintaining order isn't clutter (or children) but something authors Alicia Rockmore and Sarah Welch call "org porn." It is what it sounds like: "that glossy, airbrushed, fantasy world where everything is pristine, serene, and perfectly in order, sort of like *Playboy*, but with chore charts and name-plated cubbyholes." Magazines, advertisements, and movies all play to the fantasy that our homes can be minimalist yet cozy, with white slipcovers and a fan of *Architectural Digest* arranged on the re-purposed vintage coffee table. But this fantasy also sets up women to be perpetually self-critical about the hard work they *do* get done at home. They become dissatisfied with "good enough" housework and secretly afraid of being judged for the condition of their homes.

In writing *Pretty Neat*, Rockmore and Welch "interviewed hundreds of women on the topic of organization and an astounding 80 percent of them feel they fall well short of the mark when it comes to getting organized." The authors combat this misconception by encouraging the reader to take a realistic look at what really *needs* to get done and what *can* get done. After that, they say, the rest is gravy. "Even if it involves shortcuts and a little messiness that might horrify your mother or mother-in-law, the goal is to have enough structure in place to avoid missing important things, yet remain limber enough to handle the inevitable curve-balls that get thrown your way." Their plan is not prescriptive in any way (no products to buy, no instructions for

color-coded coat hooks and white boards). Instead, it emphasizes honesty. What is really important? And what can wait until tomorrow, next week, or even next year?

Most importantly, *Pretty Neat* takes a hefty crack at the "org porn" myth. "Postpone anything long enough and it will take on epic proportions, dooming you to spend more time and energy than is necessary wrangling it into completion." Perfectionism, anxiety, and self-judgment are the real problems, *Pretty Neat* says. And if you want to be comfortable in your home—then it's time to clean house.

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