Dealing With Your Laundry… an excerpt from Kathi Lipp’s Book:

The Get Yourself Organized Project
Step 1: Your Plan of Attack

In our house, our laundry system works. We all have clean clothes on a regular basis, and laundry just doesn’t stress me out. If you have a system that works for you, great. Otherwise, here’s what works in our house.

In our hall, we have four, 30-inch tall, plastic laundry hampers. Each one is for a different type of laundry:

- Whites
- Colored underwear
- Everyday clothes
- Jeans, towels, sweats

I also have a drawstring bag for shirts that I take to the cleaners and a garment bag for delicates. Both of those bags hang on the wall in the laundry area.

Everyone knows what basket their stuff needs to go in. If you want your clothes to be clean, then they need to go into the right laundry basket.

This system worked great except for a brief time when one of our boys didn’t really care if he was wearing clean clothes. (I’ve heard several moms divulge this secret shame about their male offspring, so I knew it was just a phase. I’m here to report that both of our boys are contributing members of society and wear clean clothes every day.)

Other items I have found helpful to make the laundry space work:

- Two small laundry baskets for folding and putting away clothes
- Open storage tubs (about the size of shoe boxes)
- A hanger bar (we have a shower-curtain tension rod in our space)
- Hangers
- Hooks for hanging delicates
- A garbage sack for dryer lint and various oddities found in little boys’ pockets

**Step 2: Sort It Out**

Now, let’s get your laundry area in order. Time for your three boxes and two bags. If your laundry area is small, you can tackle the whole thing in one project. If that feels overwhelming, then take just a section of the area (the tops of the washer and dryer, the shelves, the floor) and work on that. Take out only as much as you can put back in the time you’ve given yourself. (I suggest about fifteen minutes at a time.)

**Put Away**

Place any dirty clothes that are sitting around in the appropriate hampers. Any clean clothes that are hanging out in that space need to be put away. Keep your regular laundry routine going as you’re working on the space. Make sure that your laundry baskets are empty and ready for all the clean clothes you’ll be folding and putting away.

**Put Back**

Hold on to this stuff for Step 3: Clean It Up.

**Give Away**

We have a permanent “Give Away” box in our laundry area for clothes our kids have outgrown and clothes we don’t wear anymore. When the box gets full, I take it to Goodwill.

**Garbage and Recycling**

Get rid of any old bottles of cleaner, laundry soap, etc. If you have bottles that have just a little bit left in them, either use those up first or combine the contents with bottles of the same product. Recycle whatever you can and throw the rest away.

**Step 3: Clean It Up**
Before you start stocking the shelves again, give them and your washer and dryer a good wipe down. You’ll want many rags as this is one of the dustiest places in the house with all the blow out from the dryer (not to mention spilled laundry soap). This is also a good time to make an appointment to get your dryer vent cleaned, if needed.

**Step 4: Label It and Put It Away**

Shelving is important in this space. We have a couple of shelves above the washing machine and dryer. If that’s not possible in your space, perhaps a small shelving unit would work.

This is also where those small open tubs come in. You can use anything from cute organizational boxes to cardboard shoeboxes. Just make sure that you won’t mind if the boxes that hold liquid supplies get wet.

Take a minute and label each box with its contents. I have a labeler, but you could also use mailing labels or even “Hello, my name is…” labels. Make your font or printing giant so you have no trouble seeing which box is which. Here are some labels I have on my boxes:

- Stain removers
- Dryer sheets
- Socks
- Delicates bags

I also have room on my shelves for the laundry detergent, bleach, and fabric softener.

**Step 5: Keep It Up**

The best way to keep up on laundry is to do it every single day. Even if you are doing only your personal laundry, doing a load every or every other day will keep you from having to devote your whole Saturday to the chore.
The other thing that will make your life a lot easier is to remember this rule: *Until the clothes are put away, laundry isn’t done.* Just because the clothes are clean and dry doesn’t mean you’ve done laundry. Until those clothes are hung up in your closet or put away in your drawers, the laundry isn’t done.

Just as I want you to start your day with an empty dishwasher, I want you to start your day with an empty washing machine, dryer, and two empty laundry baskets.

Are you one of those people who has no problem with the washing, drying, and folding of your clothes, but when it comes to putting all those clean clothes back in their rightful place, they never seem to make it? Please understand that you are not alone.

What’s the main resistance to putting clothes away? Look inside your drawers and closets. Are they so stuffed it’s hard to squeeze anything else in there? Well, no wonder you don’t want to put your clothes away. Who would when finishing the task requires a crowbar?

I’ve experienced this with my kids as well. There’s just about nothing on the planet that I hate more than to find a clean, folded shirt in the dirty clothes because some kid couldn’t be bothered to put their clothes away (probably due to an overstuffed dresser or closet). It just lay on their bed or on their floor until it became part of the decomposing bottom layer. When they finally cleaned their room, the shirt was thrown back into the dirty clothes.

*Grrrr.* As far as I’m concerned, this is a capital offense punishable by the removal of all forms of communication (TV, iPod, Internet, tin cans and string).

This is one of those problems where you have to work backward. Getting rid of all the clothes that you and your kids don’t wear is one of the simplest ways to stay on top of laundry. I know it doesn’t seem like it will, but just try it.