

How To Read a Label

Clean doesn't mean complicated. It means conscious. — Emily Velasco

Many products are marketed as safe without meaningful regulation.
One question cuts through all of it: "Do I know what's in this?"

Marketing Words That Mean Almost Nothing

- ◆ **"Natural"** — no legal definition. Anything can call itself natural.
- ◆ **"Baby-safe" / "Gentle"** — marketing claims, not regulated standards.
- ◆ **"Dermatologist-tested"** — tested doesn't mean approved or safe.
- ◆ **"Fragrance"** — legally conceals hundreds of undisclosed chemicals. *This one matters most.*

What To Actually Look For

Green flags:

- ◆ Short, recognizable ingredient list
- ◆ Full ingredient transparency
- ◆ No "fragrance" or "parfum"
- ◆ EWG Verified or scoring 1–2
- ◆ Brand publishes safety data
- ◆ Third-party certifications

Watch out for:

- ◆ "Fragrance" or "parfum" listed
- ◆ Parabens (methylparaben etc.)
- ◆ Phthalates (often in fragrance)
- ◆ PFAS (in non-stick cookware)
- ◆ Oxybenzone (in sunscreen)
- ◆ Formaldehyde-releasing agents

Free Tools That Do the Work For You

EWG Healthy Living App

Scan barcodes for instant safety ratings

ewg.org/apps

Think Dirty App

Rates personal care products 0–10

thinkdirtyapp.com

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Bonus Chapter Clean Living

The Clean Swap Guide

You can't control the whole world. But you can control your own home. Start here.

No pantry purges. No guilt spirals. One swap at a time — starting with what touches your family most.

Start Here — Highest Daily Exposure

- ◆ **Sunscreen** → Choose mineral-based with zinc oxide. Avoid oxybenzone.
- ◆ **Body lotion / baby lotion** → Fragrance-free, short ingredient list. Check EWG score.
- ◆ **Shampoo & body wash** → Ditch "fragrance." Look for transparent brands.
- ◆ **Deodorant** → Aluminum-free options widely available and effective now.

Next — Kitchen and Cooking

- ◆ **Non-stick cookware** → Replace with stainless steel or cast iron. PFAS-coated pans off-gas when heated.
- ◆ **Food storage** → Glass or stainless instead of plastic. Especially for hot food.
- ◆ **Water filter** → A basic pitcher filter removes many common contaminants affordably.
- ◆ **Cutting boards** → Wood or glass over plastic, which releases microplastics when scratched.

Then — Laundry and Home

- ◆ **Dryer sheets** → Swap for wool dryer balls. Conventional sheets coat fabric with fragrance chemicals.
- ◆ **Laundry detergent** → Fragrance-free, dye-free formulas. Baby skin especially sensitive.
- ◆ **Candles** → Soy, coconut, or beeswax with transparent ingredients. Avoid paraffin + synthetic fragrance.
- ◆ **Air fresheners** → Open a window. Or diffuse pure essential oils sparingly.

One swap a month is still progress.

Progress over perfection is the cleanest kind of living. — Emily Velasco, *Living the Cleaner Life*

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Bonus Chapter: Clean Living

Burnout vs. Thriving — Where Are You Right Now?

The difference between surviving and thriving isn't doing more. It's carrying less.

This isn't a test. It's a map. Wherever you land — you are not failing. You are human.

Signs You're In Burnout

Running on empty constantly

Rest doesn't restore. You're depleted before you begin.

Can't remember the last thing you enjoyed

Joy feels inaccessible or frivolous.

Everything feels urgent and heavy

No room between stimulus and reaction.

Saying yes to everything, resentful of all of it

Overcommitted and overwhelmed.

Performing okay while feeling anything but

The gap between outside and inside is enormous.

Signs You're Moving Toward Thriving

Rest actually helps

You can tell the difference between a hard day and depletion.

You can name what brings you joy now

Even if small — you can access it.

You can pause before responding

Space exists between trigger and action.

Saying no feels like self-respect

Boundaries feel possible, not shameful.

What's inside matches what's outside

Authenticity feels more possible than performance.

If you're solidly in the burnout column right now:

Thriving begins with permission — to stop being all things to all people. That's the first step. Just that.

"You are not meant to hold everything. Different seasons require different versions of you."

— Jessica H. Maurer, *Burnout & Thriving Coach*

Bonus Chapter: Thriving Is Not a Finish Line

The Thriving Framework

Thriving is not a destination. It's a practice built on four foundations.

Most mothers try to add thriving on top of an already collapsing structure.
These four pillars aren't extras. They are the structure itself.

REST

Not just sleep.
True restoration.

- ◆ Protected sleep
- ◆ Mental quiet
- ◆ Stillness that isn't productive
- ◆ Permission to do nothing
- ◆ Screen-free downtime

"Rest is not reward. It is infrastructure."

NOURISH

Body and mind.
Both matter.

- ◆ Food that fuels
- ◆ Water consistently
- ◆ Input that inspires
- ◆ Books, music, beauty around you
- ◆ Less content that depletes you

"You can't pour from a cup that was never filled."

CONNECT

To self, others,
and meaning.

- ◆ One real friend
- ◆ Alone time that isn't hiding
- ◆ Your partner as a person, not a task manager
- ◆ Community that sees you

"Isolation is not introversion. It is depletion."

PURPOSE

Something that is yours — not just for everyone else.

- ◆ One thing that lights you up
- ◆ An identity beyond "just" a mother
- ◆ Goals that belong to future you
- ◆ Work, creativity, service, growth

"You are still someone worth investing in."

When all four are present — even imperfectly — that is thriving.

Not balance. Not perfection. Presence across all four, season by season. — Jessica H. Maurer

Bonus Chapter: Thriving Is Not a Finish Line

The Joy Pairing System

You can't always choose your tasks. But you can choose what you pair them with.

The idea: pair a task you must do with something you actually enjoy.

You're not adding more to your day. You're adding more life to what's already in it.

Task + Pairing = More Sustainable Day

The Hard Task	+	The Joy Pairing
Night feeds	+	An audiobook or podcast only for this time
Folding laundry	+	The show you'd never otherwise have time for
Morning school run	+	Your favorite playlist. Non-negotiable.
Grocery shopping	+	Headphones in, one thing in the cart just for you
Pumping at work	+	A real break — something funny, something beautiful

Build Your Own Joy Pairings

Ask yourself: What do I actually enjoy?

A voice note to a friend · A specific candle · A snack you love · Music that changes your mood
A comfort show · Walking a different route · Ten minutes of silence · Something beautiful to look at

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