

I Don't Have to Do that Anymore

By Marilyn Reeves

I used to work a forty-hour week. Get up to the alarm clock, rush to get ready, drive to work and put in an eight-hour day. Then I'd drive back home, change clothes, fix dinner and clean up the dishes. I'd rest for an hour or two, straighten up the house, and then get ready for bed. And I'd do it all again, five days a week, week after week, for more than forty years. I don't have to do that anymore.

I used to have to mow the lawn, trim the trees and pull the weeds in the garden. But now I live in a place where all that work is done for me. I'm surrounded by beautiful gardens and trees. And I don't have to do that anymore.

I used to have a series of cats. I adopted the kittens from my sister's Mama Cat in pairs, so they'd be company for each other. They were all indoor-outdoor cats, coming in and going out as they pleased. But now if I wanted to keep a cat, I would have to have its claws removed and keep it indoors all the time. I'd spend all my time feeling sorry for the cat, so I choose not to do that anymore.

I used to have a little dog named Cindy. She had a fenced backyard where she could go outside whenever she pleased, and I would walk her when the weather was nice. But now if I wanted to keep a dog, I would have to walk her three or four times a day in all kinds of weather, pick up her poop, and try to keep her away from all the other dogs. So I choose not to do that anymore.

I used to clean up after my pets, clean up after my son, clean up after a couple of husbands and a long-time boyfriend. But now that I'm living alone, the only one I have to clean up after is me. I don't have to clean up after them anymore.

I used to love having the family over for Christmas. I spent weeks getting ready: shopping, wrapping, decorating, and putting up the tree. Then it was baking and cooking and setting up the table. I'd greet all the family members as they came in, join in the party while they were here, then clean up the mess once they were gone. But now the kids are all grown and the family has scattered, so I don't need to do that anymore.

Nowadays, my life has become simplified. I get up when I want, go to bed when I want, eat what I want and clean up when I feel like it. I paint, I write, and try to keep up with my Spanish. I read when I want, I watch what I want, and haven't set the alarm clock in years. Because I don't have to do that anymore.