

[Another eBookWholesaler Publication](#)



## **Organize Your Life**

By Claire McFee

Co-authors Deb Wilson & Julie McRitchie

**Proudly brought to you by**

**[Lewis Philips signature books](#)**

[Email](#)

### **Recommended Resources**

- [Web Site Hosting Service](#)
- [Internet Marketing](#)
- [Affiliate Program](#)

## **Please Read This **First****

### ***Terms of Use***

This Electronic book is Copyright © 2008. All rights are reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted by any means; electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without written permission from the copyright holder(s).

You must not distribute any part of this ebook in any way at all. Members of eBookwholesaler are the sole distributors and must abide by all the terms at <http://www.ebookwholesaler.net/terms.php>

### ***Disclaimer***

The advice contained in this material might not be suitable for everyone. The author obtained the information from sources believed to be reliable and from his own personal experience, but he neither implies nor intends any guarantee of accuracy.

The author, publisher and distributors never give legal, accounting, medical or any other type of professional advice. The reader must always seek those services from competent professionals that can review their own particular circumstances.

The author, publisher and distributors particularly disclaim any liability, loss, or risk taken by individuals who directly or indirectly act on the information contained herein. All readers must accept full responsibility for their use of this material.

All pictures used in this book are for illustrative purposes only. The people in the pictures are not connected with the book, author or publisher and no link or endorsement between any of them and the topic or content is implied, nor should any be assumed. The pictures are only licensed for use in this book and must not be used for any other purpose without prior written permission of the rights holder.

Images © 2008 Jupiter Images

## Contents

<b>Please Read This First.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<i>Terms of Use</i> .....	2
<i>Disclaimer</i> .....	2
<b>Contents .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>6</b>
Welcome and Congratulations!.....	7
Do You Rule Your Life, or Does it Rule You? .....	8
<b>Why this Book? .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<i>What this book is intended to do</i> .....	10
<b>Why be Organized? .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Who Can Do This? .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Where to Start? .....</b>	<b>15</b>
An Organizational Metaphor for You.....	15
How to Influence Your Motivation, Discipline and Procrastination .....	16
<i>Motivation</i> .....	16
<i>Discipline</i> .....	17
<i>Procrastination</i> .....	17
Turning Words into Actions .....	17
There's No Time Like the Present .....	18
<b>Goals and Strategies .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Why setting Goals can be Daunting.....</b>	<b>22</b>
Goal-setting Tips to Use any Time, any Place.....	22
<i>A recap of what we've learned</i> .....	24
How to Approach Setting Goals and Strategies.....	24
Being Realistic to Avoid Disappointment .....	26
<b>Remember the Main Objective: Yourself .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>A Record Keeping System .....</b>	<b>29</b>
Calendar/Diary/Planner/Organizer .....	30

List-making that Makes Sense .....	33
<b>Organizing the Areas of Your Life .....</b>	<b>36</b>
Home and Family .....	36
<b>Get the Family Onboard .....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Establishing the Home Routine .....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>You're about to Discover Your Space Limitations .....</b>	<b>46</b>
Taking Home Organization to the Next Level .....	47
<i>The Destination Usually Reveals Itself.....</i>	<i>48</i>
<i>What About the One-of-a-kind Oddities?.....</i>	<i>48</i>
Remember to Mind Your Maintenance. ....	49
<b>Take Advantage of those Little Moments .....</b>	<b>50</b>
It's a Wonderful Feeling .....	50
<b>Tricks and Tools .....</b>	<b>51</b>
<i>A Word on Sentimental Value .....</i>	<i>53</i>
<b>Putting Spring Cleaning in its Place .....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>The Classic Closet Conundrum.....</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>Health and Fitness .....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Work.....</b>	<b>61</b>
Approach your Boss .....	61
Disorganization and Job Satisfaction .....	63
<b>Home Businesses .....</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>Managing Interruptions .....</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>Finances .....</b>	<b>68</b>
Budget Plan.....	69
<b>Getting it Done .....</b>	<b>73</b>
Get it Done the First Time .....	73
Don't be Afraid to Ask for Help .....	74

Utilize your Downtime .....	75
<i>Give yourself a break</i> .....	75
<b>Customize Your Approach .....</b>	<b>76</b>
<b>The 'Just for Me' Section.....</b>	<b>77</b>
The Holidays: Friend or Foe?.....	77
<b>Overcome the Guilt Factor .....</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>Help Elderly Relatives De-clutter their Lives .....</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>About the Authors .....</b>	<b>81</b>
About Claire.....	81
About Deb.....	81
About Julie.....	82

## Introduction

Have you ever looked at your surroundings and asked yourself how they are affecting you? Have you ever thought that maybe your state of mind is somehow affected by the state of your home? Do you sometimes feel a burning desire to just get out of the house, because you can't stand being there? Do you look at your surroundings and feel overwhelmed at the amount of chaos you see? Do you often choose to simply leave the room, or shut a door, to avoid seeing it or dealing with it?

This is a far too common scenario.

If you know that something needs to be done but you don't know where or how to begin, you are just one of a great number of people who feel exactly the same way.

The great news is there is hope and ways to turn this around and regain control.



Our surroundings do not define us. However, they affect us enormously. Our state of mind can be directly associated with what is going on around us. Experts' say that 80% of household congestion - whether in drawers or closets, tables or desks, or even the whole

room - is the result of disorganization rather than insufficient space.

Additionally, organizing professionals say that getting rid of excess clutter would eliminate 40% of the housework in an average home.

A way to reduce housework? I'm in!

How about you?

If you live in a world where all is calm and serene, you will most likely project calmness. On the other hand, if your environment is typically chaotic, loud, and unsettled, you will more likely project irritability, agitation and restlessness.

Some people make this connection easily as they mature with life experience. Sadly, many don't ever make the association. They remain oblivious, while their chaotic environment contributes to their state of mind, and ultimately, their happiness.

The chaos people sometimes find themselves often gradually happens after marriage or after children are born, when we typically have more activity in the home and less time for ourselves.



We need to learn to go easy on ourselves during these sorts of life changes, as we are often under more stress.

No matter how much preparation you do, there are usually some challenges we need to contend with.

Major life changes can have severe effects on a person, from how they feel about themselves to how they interact with family and friends. That's why it's so

important to make that connection between your level of organization and the amount of control you really have on your own life and happiness.

### **Welcome and Congratulations!**

You've just made that very important first step; identifying that there is a connection between our internal and external environments and that you want to take the steps required to have a more positive effect on yours.

As with so many major life changes that we go through, realising there is an issue and deciding to do something about it is half the battle. We can spend decades knowing that we want certain things in life and, when we finally decide to do it (often years later), it's done in a matter of a few days, leaving us to wonder why we waited so long.

An apt quote here to press the point home about what a waste it is to over think and worry about things goes like this; "Worrying is like a rocking chair. It gives you something to do but doesn't get you anywhere."

Said another way - if you did nothing to change your situation by taking no action, no matter how much you 'thought' about doing it, you would be in the same rut.

How does that make you feel?

It is said that it is often when the pain of staying the same hurts more than the effort to make the changes necessary, is when we do something.

It is so sad that it has to come to this for many of us to take action.

Rock bottom is not a nice place to be, as you will know if you've been there. Read on to give yourself the proverbial kick up the you-know-where, to get off your you-know-what!

It's not that we're lazy or we don't know what we need for ourselves. It's more a case of being conditioned to accept things the way they are. Most of us go through life day after day, not knowing what it will bring and, unfortunately, many of us are okay with that.

Too many of us are victims of the universal wait-and-see mentality, which has invaded parts of our lives where we need to regain control.

Certainly, there are things we simply cannot predict or prepare for and having the ability to go with the flow is a healthy quality in many circumstances. But, this laid-back attitude can breed increasing chaos and bewilderment, both outwardly and inwardly.

### **Do You Rule Your Life, or Does it Rule You?**

So, you've decided enough is enough.

You're tired of being swept along by the current;

going wherever it takes you,

struggling to keep up with the juggling act,

not sure where you are headed.

You, rightly, want to create your own circumstances, see your destination clearly in front of you, to be able to Organize Your Life and finally be in control of your own path.



Good for you! I can help.

It's not for lack of desire that most people haven't been able to achieve a more settled and productive existence... it's for lack of guidance.

That is where I come in.

## Why this Book?

After offering advice to thousands of people on many areas of organizational improvement, I realized from the feedback of my readers that there is a need for a more complete, more rounded and all-encompassing product - a start-to-finish how-to guide to getting organized and staying that way.

### *What this book is intended to do.*

The success of what you get from this book is measured in the action you are prepared to take.

Once you finish reading it and you apply the suggestions and tips, it doesn't end there.

Long after you finish reading the book, your commitment needs to remain intact. Life is an ongoing journey full of twists and turns.

Do you want to have more say in where you are going and how you handle the challenges that will inevitably come your way? It's all about feeling more in control of your life -after all, it is yours!

This book is intended to equip you with the mental tools required to make positive changes in your life by being more organized. It is meant to introduce you to a new way of thinking and, therefore, a new way of 'doing'.

I will offer helpful suggestions, including specific examples. I will give you ideas, and the reasoning behind them.

I don't expect you to follow my instructions to the letter, as there should always be flexibility in any system to be able to tailor it to suit your personality and lifestyle.

I know you can be more organized without being ridiculously so. I, for example, will never have every single item in my house looking 'perfect' because that's just not me.

But, as a family, we find almost everything we need almost all of the time, which I'm more than happy with.

Being better organized than what you personally are now is the aim. You can always take it up a notch.

From personal experience I know it can change your life for the better.

Organizing your life leads to improving the quality of your life, and allows you to reap the rewards of all your efforts.

So let's get started!

## Section One

### Why be Organized?

Research tells us our number one irritant is clutter. Accumulation of our 'stuff' is a vicious cycle that has a huge price tag - physically and emotionally.

Let's start with the basics.

As humans, before we can truly get motivated and begin, we need some incentive. We have to ask ourselves what we are really doing this for in the first place.

You need to keep this at the forefront of your mind so that your motivation levels remain high.

You may already have your own list of reasons why you feel you will benefit from being more organized, but I'd like to offer you a little added inspiration.



**Save time.** Being organized and having a system in place will assure that everything is there, in its place, when you need it. For instance, an efficient system for handling paperwork and bills will eliminate the need for backtracking and re-reading documents repeatedly, or spending hours sifting through shoeboxes, drawers or coat pockets, looking for a single coffee stained, faded and crumpled receipt for a screwdriver that needs to be returned.

**Save \$\$\$.** Another huge and more noticeable saving is the financial saving derived from being organized. Never buy the same thing twice because you can't find it (or the receipts to return it), or because it was improperly stored and got damaged.

Never pay another late fee again, by having a scheduled bill-payment day. Being financially organized means budgeting which will help you to live within your means, rather than blindly accumulating debt.

**Save energy.** If you are organized, you will have more time and, therefore, more energy. You will not feel rushed all the time, frantically chasing deadlines, or making up for missed appointments.

You will have a well-earned sense of accomplishment, get more rest, and feel more energetic all day, every day.

**Save brainpower.** Implement routines in all aspects of your life. The nature of a routine is that you repeat the same pattern over and over again so that, eventually, you do it without even thinking about it.

This is the goal of getting organized. It means getting yourself into a pattern so that you can do most of your routine activities without expending any mental energy whatsoever. If you always pick up the mail on the way into the house after you park the car, it will start to happen automatically, almost like you're on autopilot.

You will not have to invest a moment of thought into this activity. This theory of routine can be applied to almost everything you do, in all areas of your life.

**The "me" factor.** A well justified 'selfish' reason. Spending less time and money on the things you have to do, means spending more time and money on the things you want to do. Replace obligation with recreation.

As you become more organized, the chaos, uncertainty and frustration that surrounds you will diminish significantly. You will start to benefit from a more positive attitude, a more promising outlook and a greater quality of life.

The greatest gift you can give your family, friends, and anyone you care about is a happier you!

## Section Two

### Who Can Do This?

Anyone can do this and, yes, that means you too.

Let's be realistic. Those of you who have a genuine desire to make a positive change in your life and become more organized will start off from a more stable launching pad but, really, there are no pre-requisites here.

In fact, anyone reading this book right now can do it, regardless of your level of conviction going into it.

In the previous Section I said that getting this book was the first step. We're smart people right? So, of course, we know that you only get out of something what you are willing to put in. Even so, I bet that the results of being shown how to organize your life will be much greater for all of you than you expected!

## Section Three

### Where to Start?

When we are faced with a huge task or project, we tend to visualize thousands of fragmented pieces in front of us, as we try to see the whole big picture.

This can be overwhelming but it doesn't need to be.

Getting started is easier than you think.

Our mind sometimes likes to scare us about all manner of things, if we let it. The trick is learning not to listen to the critical internal voice. Believe me, unhelpful thoughts are extremely draining.

To those of you saying to yourself "What voice? There's not such thing.", I say "That one!!"

Instead, focus your energy on breaking down the task at hand and taking the first step, then the second and the third ... and so on.

### An Organizational Metaphor for You

You know you have a mountain to climb & that it is a challenging task. How you look at it and how you approach it will determine your progress and ultimate success.

Naturally, we all want to visualize ourselves standing at the top of the mountain, waving proudly at our cheering fans, smiling brightly at the press cameras and taking credit for our accomplishment.

I want that too.

Believe me, you will get there.

However, it would be insane to attempt while you are unprepared, wouldn't it?

So, I'm going to help prepare you - both physically and mentally - for the task at hand. Otherwise, you'll exhaust yourself by taking the long way round or, worse, falling down and having to retrace your steps.

Don't look at your mountain as one huge leap, but as a series of small steps. Each step is an integral part of the journey to the top, and has something to be discovered and enjoyed along the way.

First, you need to accept that this will take many steps, executed one by one. So, before we start to climb, let's gather our tools, arm ourselves with the equipment we will need along the way and pack for a pleasant journey.

Apply this "mountain" metaphor to being able to organize your life

In this case, the equipment you will need is mental preparation. To make room for positive, inspiring, and productive thoughts, we first need to clear your mind of some of the negative clutter that may have been partially responsible for holding you back so far.

In my experience and discussions with my readers over the years, I've discovered a couple of common roadblocks that stand out.

### **How to Influence Your Motivation, Discipline and Procrastination**

I want to give these three words special mention here, because they seem to mean so much to so many people. These three words keep coming up, and always in the context of some sort of "reason" why someone has yet to start the process of getting organized.

Because we will be using these words often throughout the book, it is best to remove any negative connotation that they may have for you and replace it with a more positive association, so that when you hear them you react differently.

Ready?

#### ***Motivation***

A lot of people hear this word and think, "I don't have any", which can make them feel weighted down and guilty.

In truth, motivation means feeling enthusiastic about doing something, and having the desire.

It should make us feel excited to make a start and take action.



### ***Discipline***

A scary word for many, because it is usually associated with punishment from when we were younger.

It also refers to the prevention of wrongdoing, not the consequence. Being disciplined means avoiding a potential problem in the first place.

As adults, this is the definition that we need to think of when using this word. So in this book, it is directly related to motivation, not any of the other negative stuff, okay?

### ***Procrastination***

We all know it means - postponing and delaying things as long as possible, but that doesn't mean we are going to do anything about not procrastinating, does it?

As life keeps coming at us, whether we are ready or not, it's inevitable that we will sometimes avoid doing what we know we should.

The trick is to become aware of when you are doing this, so as to catch it early and turn it around.

The re-thinking the same thing over and over with "I must do this and I must do that", is way more time consuming than you realize. We need to retrain ourselves to 'just do it' and get on with it.

Life's too short!!

## **Turning Words into Actions**

We've already used the mountaintop metaphor as a little visual exercise to make a point.

Let's apply the mountain visual example to your immediate mission here.

**Visualize the end result:** Take the time to really identify what it is you want to achieve, and be realistic. Your big picture should be something that is attainable in your life, in your home. If you can conceive it, you can achieve (who said that? they were right.).

What is the top of the mountain for you?

- ? To have an extra day off each week?
- ? To be able to add an exercise routine to your schedule?

This is your **Motivation**.

**See yourself in the role:** Walk through it in your mind, over and over again. The clearer the picture is in your mind, the easier it will be to achieve.

By doing this exercise repeatedly, you can start to identify the steps you will need to take and the obstacles that may be present themselves.

The more you mentally prepare for your journey, the less likely you will be to run into roadblocks or unpleasant surprises. You will be better prepared to avoid errors, which would inevitably have negative consequences; like lost time or energy.

This is your **Discipline**.

**Be proactive:** This means being prepared to act on your ultimate goal. It means deliberately living in a way that fuels a positive outcome & having a 'can-do' attitude.

Taking the time to learn about your strengths and weakness and what makes you tick is the key to understanding your individual motivation and discipline and being able to go from there.

### **There's No Time Like the Present**

Whoever said that was a genius. A simple statement loaded with truth and potential.

Do you like having free time; time to just chill with family or friends, or even by yourself with a magazine or your favourite TV show. Bliss!

Free time is really only 'free' when we have mental clarity. Of course, it's impossible to have total mental clarity all the time, because there are too many things in life we can't control, but there are equally as many things we can control.

For example, If you've set aside a day's worth of tasks and taken time-out for yourself, you won't enjoy your free time nearly as much as you would if you had first completed those tasks, and then stepped away for some "me" time.

I want to get you into a new mindset. There are two ways to look at things: Here's an example:

Thinker One: "Oh, I have so much to do today, but I really just want to go shopping."

Thinker Two: "After I finish the most important things on my 'to-do' list, I think I will reward myself with a little window shopping!"

Which thinker are you?

If you are Thinker One, the dreams of blowing off your chores are going to overwhelm your proactive thoughts, and win-out - negating the relaxing free time you are supposed to be having. Now, you will not only have accomplished nothing today, but you will have doubled your task list for tomorrow and feel extra guilty, because you didn't even appreciate the time you gave yourself anyway.

Yikes. You can go to the shops, but you will be walking around with slouched shoulders carrying the burden of guilt and failure. And tomorrow, when you face the consequences of this decision and the overwhelming task in front of you, you may end up burying your head under the pillow instead. That is without mentioning the element of 'quality', which is likely to be compromised in your work now that you have to rush to catch up.

The domino effect kicks in very quickly, and fiercely. One bad decision carries a series of consequences.

However, let's turn this coin over and look at the shiny side

If you are Thinker Two, you have just given yourself the gentle little nudge needed to get started, and done your chores.

You will soon be walking with your head held high, happily walking along the aisles of your favourite shops, free of guilt, enjoying your well-deserved free time.

In addition, by sticking to your schedule, you will accomplish a much better result the first time around. You then go into the jobs you have to do with a much more positive attitude and approach them with more gusto.

When you look at it that way, it's really a very simple decision which way you should look at it, isn't it?

## Section four

### Goals and Strategies

This is where you want to be in this book. You now understand what motivates you & the discipline you need to get things done, and you can think proactively.

Now, the real work begins.

The mental preparation that you have acquired was equivalent to gathering up your mountain-climbing tools. But you can't start to climb... not quite yet, because you have no idea where you are going.

Yes we all agree on the destination, and we see a clear picture of the mountaintop. But we haven't figured out the road to getting there.

What we need now is a strategy; a series of specific short-term goals set out to systematically and progressively achieve a long-term goal.

So, let's talk about goals for a moment. It is extremely important to identify the goals that will get you to the end result. There is no place for a go-with-the-flow mentality here. The wait and see approach leads to a dead end. Yet, for some reason, people are often afraid to set goals.

## **Why setting Goals can be Daunting**

Goals, whether they are big or small, short-term or long-term, can be very intimidating.

Many people resist setting goals and opt instead for a more open-ended, flexible approach to doing things.

I believe the reason for this aversion to goal setting is that goals represent a promise that one makes to oneself about getting something done. As with any promise, there lies the potential for disappointment should one fail to achieve the goal, which can cause us to fear that happening and being disappointed with ourselves.

But, goals don't have to be scary or daunting. It's all in the approach, and we're going to talk about exactly how to set goals and achieve them, not fear them.

### **Goal-setting Tips to Use any Time, any Place**

Although our immediate objective is to help you organize your life, all of these tips can be applied to various aspects of your life individually.

The theory remains the same, whether you are looking to apply my strategy to;

- your office life
- your home life, or
- your exercise routine,

..... or all of the above.

Equip yourself with knowledge: Before you set out to list your goals and plan your strategy, arm yourself with knowledge.

Get informed about what it is you are doing. Learn about the possible pitfalls or roadblocks you may encounter.

Take a hint from someone who has done this before.

Use all the resources at your disposal, so that you know what you are getting into, so that there is less potential for any unwanted surprises.

Borrow inspiration from those who have succeeded. There are countless people out there who have already been there and done that.

The point is you don't need to reinvent the wheel.

Some of you are highly visual, others highly auditory and so on.

Tap into those mediums which are most beneficial for you to get as much information as you need to discover your true passion in life.

Clear out a workspace: Give yourself a place where you can think clearly and keep your ideas organized. Start with a system for keeping track of your plan of action.

Keep everything related to your "getting organized" project in one place.

Identify the steps: You will need to break down your main goal into achievable little steps; mini-goals.

Keep a clear path to that end vision in your mind. Walk it through over and over again, and write down all the steps along the way.

Put pen to paper for this. Your memory is already overloaded enough!

Draw a map: Visual aids are extremely useful. Make a chart or just a list of your main goal and all the smaller goals leading straight to it. This gives you a reference tool and a way to track your progress at a glance.

It will also prevent you from forgetting or skipping over important steps.

Leave yourself a note: Until you get into a routine, try leaving little reminders for yourself, like a post-it note on the fridge, or on the shower mirror.

You can't expect to change your ways overnight and, if these theories are very foreign to you, you will need to use every trick you can initially, until it all starts to become automatic.

Reward yourself: Remember that each of those little mini-goals represents an accomplishment in itself. You will not get to the top of your mountain if you don't successfully and systematically take each step as planned.

So, look at each of these milestones as an accomplishment, and give yourself a pat on the back.

Let's get back to the main goal here for a minute - organizing your life.

You need to create a picture in your mind by now of what that means to you. You need to clearly identify your 'Ultimate' long-term goal, and be able to see yourself in that environment.

Then, you can start to map out the road between where you are today and where you want to be in the future.

### ***A recap of what we've learned***

Before we continue to discuss how to implement strategies and goals, let's reiterate what we've talked about, so you have a firm grasp on how to proceed.

~ Your mission is your End Result, big picture, ultimate destination - the long-term goal.

~ Your strategy is the Map you will use to get there.

~ Your short-term goals are the steps along the road on that map.

Start with the Big Picture. Then, break it down to a strategy.

Then, break it down to achievable mini-steps.

Now move on...

### **How to Approach Setting Goals and Strategies**

By applying the tips we've talked about, you can start laying out a strategy for your mission to get organized.

However, remember that the success of your strategy rests in your approach. So while you are drawing out your map, indicating exactly what the steps are going to be, there are a few things to bear in mind and consider.



As organized as you may be, you cannot control everything and everyone around you, so there is an element of adaptability required here. In keeping your strategy achievable, consider the following points.

**Scheduling:** Sometimes we have set time frames dictated to us that can not be changed - (as much as we may wish we could change them!)

Whether you do or don't, it is good to get into the habit of setting an approximate deadline for yourself, so that you don't let anything drag on indefinitely - as tends to happen if we don't.

The timeframe obviously needs to be realistic for getting it done in amongst your other commitments. One way to do this is to break down the overall job into small sections and guesstimate how long it should take to complete each piece, then add them all together.

Then, add a week or two for good measure and you should have a pretty good guide to work by.

Similarly, when you have a set deadline to work to, break down the tasks and go from there; one step at a time.

You'll get there.

For instance, if you want to have your home office set up by Christmas.

- Organizing a fax line
- purchasing a workstation
- buying stationery
- building extra shelving etc

... will all need to be prioritised and worked out prior to begin to achieve the best results.

**Expect the unexpected:** Simply put, be prepared for anything at any time, and have a back-up plan. For example, you should always have a bit of "buffer time" in your schedule to allow for unforeseen delays, accidents or other interruptions in your workflow.

These shouldn't result in a total system breakdown. They should be nothing more than small bumps in the road with no long-term consequences that (most importantly) don't stress you out because you planned ahead for their likelihood.

If they don't happen, you can feel an even greater sense of achievement.

### **Being Realistic to Avoid Disappointment**

We've already talked about scheduling and being prepared for the unexpected.

The last thing I want to see any of you do is set yourselves up for disappointment. It really needs to be stressed how important it is to be realistic about what you are trying to do, and don't put yourself in a position where you can't possibly complete your task, or achieve your goals, and end up feeling like a failure.

Know and accept your own limitations: Don't try to be a superhero and accomplish things that you are physically or mentally incapable of doing.

Instead, know your limitations and apply that knowledge to your strategy. If you know you have a bad knee, then you can quickly scratch off doing those aerobics but, rather, do a low impact Yoga class instead.

Eliminating unrealistic possibilities frees up your focus for the things you can achieve. If you know that you are typically unproductive after the dinner hour, and you've been this way your whole life, for heaven's sake don't schedule anything after the dinner hour.

Use that knowledge to avoid placing unrealistic expectations on yourself. Know your limitations, factor them into the plan and work around them.

Don't buckle to the pressures of society: For example, New Year's Resolutions seem to come with a "Go big or go home" clause, don't they? There is a constant expectation of 'changing' or 'improving' ourselves just because the calendar is turning over a new page. To avoid the disappointment that usually prevails every February, after not having even made a start on over 90% of what you resolved to do in January, just apply

the same approach in your New Year's resolutions as you would with all your other projects.

Just because the year starts in January, doesn't mean your resolution has to. You can still vow to make a change in a given year, but the only thing which dictates January 1st is societal pressure. That is neither a motivator, nor a discipline - so let it go.

Don't cram: You may have five or six projects on your wish list for next year, or next month. It's great that you are being proactive and want to get so much done, but be realistic about how much you can achieve and try to spread your goals out evenly over a reasonable length of time.

Prioritise and isolate your missions: Each of your missions or long-term goals should have its own strategy or map laid out with each of their respective short-term goals clearly indicated.

Be careful you don't start to overlap your projects too much. Only you know how much you can handle, so be realistic and don't overload yourself.

Decide which of your long term goals needs to happen first, then second, etc. and plan your strategy according to those priorities.

## **Remember the Main Objective: Yourself**

With the new proactive attitude of yours, it's time to cover some important points in relation to '**You**' with a capital Y!:

Don't forget to factor yourself into the equation: The whole purpose of everything we talk about here and all these tips and strategies, is for you.

Let's not lose sight of the main objective, which is to organize your life so that you have a better quality of life and more free time for yourself and your family.

When you are planning your projects, remember to schedule in your "me" time. Social and family activities need to be accounted for in the overall plan. Otherwise they will fall by the wayside and you'll be right back where you started.

We're about to get into more specific areas of organization, and look at how to apply my methods to each individual area of your life.

## Section five

### A Record Keeping System

Let's address one thing right away. Being organized does not make you:

- × Boring
- × Too structured
- × The dreaded 'Anal' Personality type, or even
- × Too 'high-maintenance.'

In fact, it's usually quite the opposite.

Being organized and having a viable plan that you stick to can make you much more open to spontaneity in your life, because of all the time you have saved by being better organized in the first place.

Your mental capability for remembering things and keeping up with deadlines etc will be far greater. Therefore, the time you spend on yourself will be truly free of guilt or mental clutter & overwhelming loose-ends.

What the dis-organized majority fail to realize is that their, often frivolous, spontaneous time would be much more enjoyable, if only they could have it without compromise to their obligations.

That is the very essence of our goal here; to allow you the freedom to throw caution to the wind more often and for longer periods of time, but not at the cost of your job, health or relationships.

Agreeing to become organized does not render us militant, or rigid, or dorky in any way shape or form, so let's get on with the business of organizing your life.

Considering the average person receives 49,060 pieces of mail in their lifetime - one third of it junk mail - which all creates the need for action about it, time to read it and to respond to it, it's a no-brainer that we need to keep a record of your paperwork; what you need to do and what you have done.

It is absolutely essential in the mission to organize your life. Here's why:

- 1) You have countless details to keep track of and you don't want to risk forgetting anything.
- 2) You want to be able to track your progress.
- 3) You want to be able to check off your accomplishments as you go.
- 4) If you need to execute a change of plans on the go, you will have to anticipate the consequences, and modify the rest of the plan accordingly.
- 5) Keeping sight of the big picture.

Some people like to use charts and drawings for each project they take on. This is okay, as long as you also have a master central project management tool that includes everything you are working on, all in one place. That's the only way you can really schedule all your various activities and projects realistically, without any risk that you might double book yourself or burn out.

### **Calendar/Diary/Planner/Organizer**

- you know what we mean!!!

Let's begin with a blank canvas. But, in this case, our blank canvas takes the form of some sort of record-keeping tool like a calendar, agenda, booklet or a plain note pad.

You may decide for yourself what you like to use and what ultimately goes into it as long as you establish a system and stick with it. They come in all styles and sizes, and with various features.

Many have all sorts of templates built right in, like the appointment book, address book and a list section.

Others are single purpose.

You can craft one that is all your own, if there is a particular layout you require.

The important thing is to have some sort of Organizer and use it regularly.

Our Organizer has been designed with this in mind - a complete life organizer representing your life in lists all in one place

It also offers interactive download available on your computer, with access to articles and tips related to specific lists on [our website](#).

A lot of people associate Organizers strictly with work or business, but they are not so limited in their usefulness.

Your 'Life Organizer' can include everything, including dates to remember like your family & friend's birthdays and your day-to-day activities such as dental appointments and soccer practice.

It should include your projects and plans for getting organized.

Blocks of time need be set aside when they are assigned to the execution of each goal in the process.

This way, you will not only have realistic time-frames, but you won't risk losing track of what you are meant to do on any given day.

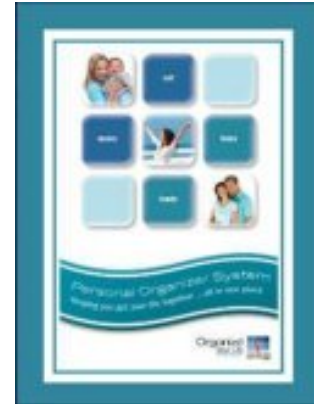
When you start a new project, and after you have determined the timeline, the entire roll-out of the project from start to finish can be inserted into your Organizer, reflecting the assigned date and time for each task.

Fill in everything you can in your Organizer straight away, and get into the habit of referring to it at the start of every day.

Using an Organizer will assure you always know where you are supposed to be and what you are supposed to be doing.

It will spare you the mental drain of constantly trying to keep track of how much you have left to do, and when and how to get things done.

It will keep you disciplined in your approach. You will be able to quickly reference your progress so that you always have a clear vision of where you are going and where you stand right now.



Being very particular about my own requirements, and also having committed my life to organizing everyone else's, I designed an organizer that I felt would be most efficient for the greatest number of users. It's been through a few modifications and revamps, based on feedback and learning as went along.

Hundreds of hours were spent creating it, and it covers every aspect of your life. It has web links and articles built right in, to help save your time searching the Net to find what you are looking for.

It is packed with features that you can tailor to your requirements. But, you need to find or create a system that works for you.



## **List-making that Makes Sense**

While it seems to the uninitiated that list making can lead to more clutter, lists are actually extremely helpful once you know how to create them and use them effectively.

The image of various half crumpled Post-it® notes hanging from fridge doors and table edges, or from the side of your computer screen is not what I mean when I suggest using lists.

Rather, the image should be of a user-friendly system that holds all your lists neatly in categories.

We all have a lot to manage in our lives/ Information is sometimes thrown at you randomly, indiscriminately and not always at the most convenient of moments.

Often, this information is something that you will need to retain and recall at a later date. For instance, your 8-year old mentions something he likes and you tell yourself; "mental note, get him this for his birthday". Then, a month later, when his birthday is a week away, you completely fail to recall what it was that he was going on about which, at the time, you thought would be an excellent birthday present that would score you umpteen parenting points.

Now you have to ask him what he wants, which really defeats the element of surprise. If only you'd written it down when it was fresh in your mind that day.

That is just one very minor example. There are many occurrences in your day-to-day life where lists would help facilitate things for you.

Keep different lists for different things, but keep them all in one place. If your master Organizer incorporates a notepad, that's great. But, if not, get a separate booklet for note-taking; one that you can simply buy refills for is ideal.

There are two types of lists; lists that get shorter and lists that get longer.

The former refers to lists of things you need to do or acquire. Those lists will get shorter as you cross things off. I call this an **Action List**.

The latter refers to lists that accumulate items, like a list of networking contacts or email addresses, or a list of your collection of books. I call this an **Information List**.

Both types of lists have the same basic purpose; to provide a quick and easy reference for you.

- ✓ They allow you to quickly locate something that you need.
- ✓ They let you know what you have or have not (done), and
- ✓ they keep you from doubling up on things you already have (done).

Many of your projects arise as direct result of one of your action lists. If you've made a list of minor home renovation projects, the next step is to develop the listed item into an actual project with a plan, a start and finish date, a strategy and goals... just like we've already learned.

Your Action List categories can be very high-level and broad, or very pointed and specific.

Some of the broader possible list categories might include:

- List of next year's self-improvement projects
- List of home cleaning projects to be completed
- Some of the more specific lists might include:
  - Christmas gift ideas for dad
  - Things to pack for camping trip
  - Grocery list

The value of list making is backed up by statistics.

It's worth remembering that statistics have shown that we are 80% more likely to achieve a task if we wrote it down on a list. It graduates our thinking from the "I should" mentality to "I will".

Lists are only helpful if you use them and keep them up-to-date.

In keeping with the theme, here is a list (!) of some of my favourite list-making categories:

- 1) **Items on loan:** List of items I've loaned out to friends or colleagues.
- 2) **Personal development:** My personal promises to myself.
- 3) **Back-up email addresses:** A written copy to help survive the inevitable computer crash.
- 4) **The classic to-do list**, which needs no further explanation.

Speaking of lists, the next Section lists your life categories, so that we can plan a strategy for organizing them one by one...

## Section 6

### Organizing the Areas of Your Life

Basically, your life can be sorted into four major categories:

- 1) Home and family
- 2) Health and fitness
- 3) Work
- 4) Finances

It's equally important to keep each of these areas of your life organized because they all spill over into one another. If your home affairs are not in order, your finances will surely suffer for it. If your health is not intact, your performance at work will risk compromise.

#### Home and Family

Start here.

Your home and family are the main focus because this is the area of your life that we most want to enhance. The whole purpose of this exercise is to improve your work, health and finances so that you can better enjoy your home and family.

Your home and family are the start and the end. They are at the heart of the matter.

No matter what your family consists of; one or ten of you, it is the first thing we need to focus on because, when you think about it, no matter how organized you are at work, you won't find that balance of peace and contentment that you so desperately need and deserve if your home life is in chaos.

So, start at home, get it together and see how easy it is to apply those same principles to every other aspect of your life.

One of the reasons our home life is so complex is that we have to contend with other personalities, which can have a dramatic effect on the atmosphere around us.

We don't all want the same thing at the same time; we have different priorities, different viewpoints and different opinions.

Co-existence requires a constant effort to remember each other's differences, but also gives us the opportunity to focus on how much the 'same' we all are too.

Our unique personalities largely dictate our behaviour and our reactions to things. We aren't all bothered to an equal degree by the coffee cup ring on the glass table, or by the stack of old magazines piled in the corner.

Because of these sensitive relationship dynamics, home is one area where you must proceed delicately and be very realistic about what you can expect to achieve.

Keep at the forefront of your mind that the only person you can truly change is yourself. This can then, in turn, change the behaviour of others indirectly, which is no doubt a real bonus and the best way it can come about anyway because you haven't tried to dictate what they should do.

Ideally, you want to get your family on board with your Organize Your Life Mission, but just pushing a new theory on them will generate resistance, so you need to use a little motivation and guidance.

Before you can make a convincing case to your significant others, here's some compelling evidence about what often happens to families who choose to remain dis-organized indefinitely.

**Health Problems.** Stress is a scientifically proven, direct derivative of chaos. It is well-known that stress is also a leading cause of countless health concerns, both major and minor.

Headaches, sleep deprivation, cancer, infections - all may be attributed to or aggravated by stress. Even drastic fluctuations in weight appear to be directly related to stress, as it affects both your eating patterns and your metabolism.

Simply put, reducing the chaos equals reducing the stress and its negative effect on our existence.

**Depression:** It's a health problem, yes, but I feel it's one deserving of its own independent category. Depression is a very serious condition that can go unnoticed until it reaches dangerous levels. It usually starts out as a feeling of having no control over our life. Not surprisingly, it often affects people who are victims of their own lack of organization.

**Relationship problems:** You can't be at ease with other people if you aren't at ease with yourself. And, how can you be at ease with yourself when you are surrounded with mental, physical and visual clutter and chaos?

When every direction you turn greets you with accumulated piles of rubbish, unfinished projects, unwanted belongings and unkempt surroundings you will eventually reach a mental boiling point where you want to just scream.

Who wants to be around you when you reach that point? I can't think of any one of my loved ones who would want to hang about with me when I'm in such a state. Your husband, kids, neighbours and co-workers should see more of the calm, positive, and happy you, and less of the restless, distracted, and cynical you.

**Caveat:** If you are one of the remarkable few who can totally shut out the clutter and completely relax, regardless of the state of your surroundings, then be assured that you are part of a small minority and your family members may not be.

So, whether it's you or someone else you care about that is suffering under the direct weight of your chaotic home, make the change for the sake of the relationships inside that household. If not for yourself, then the risk of contributing to someone else's misery should be enough to jolt you forward.

By the same token, your laid-back husband, lackadaisical teenager or irresponsible roommate may grasp the concept of the benefit he/she stands to derive from having a happier you to live with.

**Wasting Time:** If you get organized and implement a system for staying that way, you will save a lot of time over the course of your life.

**Example:** you never know where your daughter's swimsuit is. Every time she needs it, a ten-to-twenty minute search ensues before you finally find it, maybe under the couch, maybe under her bed, maybe in the dress-up trunk this time.

Aren't you tired of going through this every time that child needs her swimsuit? If the swimsuit had a place, and you had a system for putting things back in their place... I don't even need to finish that sentence do I?

But, for the record, she would have known where to go look for it, it would have been there and you would not have had to be distracted from whatever you were doing, period.

**Wasting Money:** One of these days, you won't be able to find the swimsuit at all. You'll look everywhere you can think of, but alas, you will give up and go buy a new one, only to find the other one a week later when looking for something completely unrelated.

These little mishaps cost you money. You might think just going out and buying a new swimsuit is the quickest and easiest solution but, in reality, you are, over time, spending a fortune on things you don't need.

**Overall Finances.** While we're on the subject, I fear that, if you currently have a chaotic home life, it may have spilt over into your ability to manage your finances, which is very risky indeed.

But, more on that topic a little later.

## Get the Family Onboard

Before you implement any major (or even minor) changes in the household, you want to get 'buy-in' from the rest of the family. If you just decide to go forth with a project on your own without including the family, you will surely face resistance and confusion along the way.



Your best chance at making this work is to include the family right from the planning stages. They may only participate with you to varying degrees, depending on their ages and personalities, and that's okay. The idea is to get them to understand what you are trying to do and, especially, to see the reasoning behind it.

With the younger set, it's just a matter of presenting the concept to them in a language that they can relate to. Try the following tips for getting the younger ones enthusiastic about getting organized:

- ✓ **More time for them:** With the very little ones, leave emotions out of it. Abstract concepts like "I'll be happier" or "I'll be less stressed" don't resonate well with small children, and can be more frightening than anything else. Instead, give tangible examples of how you will have more free time for things like bike riding or going to the park if you don't have to spend so much time cleaning the house.
- ✓ **Make it an event:** Like with "movie night", or "Friday night fish sticks", or any other regular weekly event that your family does together, introduce specific getting-organized activities in that positive light. The young ones will come to count on it, expect it and anticipate it once it becomes routine.
- ✓ **Tag team theory:** You know your family best, and maybe





you guys can decide this together. The idea here is to either have assigned chores for each person each week or to at least implement a system for making sure everyone is included. You can rotate the assignments to maintain fairness or draw straws to decide who gets to do what.

- ✓ **The good old reward system:** Although I agree that a "happier you" should be all the reward they need, your children may need just a little bit more enticement. This old tried and true approach still works. I know a woman whose 9-year-old daughter became so enthusiastic about the reward system, she created a pamphlet of services she provides and the associated fees for each. It includes things like "wash 1 window, 50 cents". The rewards don't have to be monetary. The point is for you all to understand that everyone will benefit, that there is something in it for everyone.
- ✓ **Lead by example.** A child is a product of his environment. He will mimic what he learns from you. When you finish your coffee, immediately go and place the cup in the dishwasher or sink. Explain what you are doing as you go. If you are throwing out old appliances that were cluttering up the basement for years, explain that because you don't use it, it's best to free up the space to make room for new things that you want. This example can easily translate to toys, old books, old tools, etc.
- ✓ **Everything in its place.** Make it easy for them to catch on to the system. When you arrive home with a new purchase, whether it is as big as a couch or as small as a pack of stamps, immediately assign it a home; the stamps should have a stamp spot. Typically, it makes sense to keep like items together, so that one can logically deduce where something might be (the stamps are probably somewhere near the envelopes, which are

probably somewhere near the stationery, which is likely in the desk drawer).

- ✓ **Proceed gradually.** Resistance to change is a natural reaction. Depending how far removed your new habits will be from your old habits, you need to allow for a period of adjustment, a learning curve, while everyone digests what is happening. Each family member will adapt at his own pace. The key is consistency and patience. Just continue along steadily. Be the leader. They will gradually and inevitably come onboard, eventually.
- ✓ **Keep your promises to your family and yourself.** If you've told your youngster that you would have more free time for bike riding, you should incorporate the weekly bike ride into your agenda. If you've told your hubby that you believe your relationship will benefit as a result of working together, then you best remember to light the occasional candle, or offer the odd foot massage. And, if you've promised yourself a reward, then don't forget to follow through. Whether it as simple as a chai tea or latté, you've earned it.

## Establishing the Home Routine

Before I can let you start to tackle any major home projects, we must first talk about how to set the stage for productivity.

As we've already discussed, everything starts here at home, so the home routine is really the launching pad for all other parts of getting organized.

Once you set a routine in place at home, you will not only be happier, have more energy and more free time, but you will have a much nicer place to come home to after a long day's work.

Your home will become more of a haven that you look forward to returning to, rather than another dreaded entity of chaos and disorganization that you wish you could shut out.

Getting your home to that state of beauty and peacefulness is a lot easier than you may think.

You can start now with just a few simple changes to your current habits. What I'm recommending is to start an everyday routine. It applies regardless of what is scheduled that day. This is where it all begins, and the complexity or elaborateness of your day's agenda, or even if you have nothing at all pressing that day, doesn't matter.

If you can't put a few simple routine elements in place, you probably won't be able to coordinate any major clean-up missions, let alone maintain them after completion.

These are some very simple but extremely effective routines that you will benefit from if you learn to do them automatically every day.

- ✓ **Dress Smartly.** When you get up in the morning, after you've had your coffee and breakfast, join the living and get groomed and dressed for your day, even if you aren't going anywhere. This is the most powerful boost you can give yourself every day. Prepare to be productive by dressing the part. A dash of lipstick can do wonders for you and those looking at you so apply it!

- ✓ **Make your bed.** This does three things. It graduates your thinking from the relaxed, lazy mentality of night to the motivated, eager mentality of day. It also sets in motion the daily routine of tidiness in your home, and it reinforces the thinking that, once you've finished using something, you put it in its place until the next time you need. Symbolic, yes, and very effective.
- ✓ **Have a clean kitchen sink.** A clean kitchen is the start of a clean home. No matter how brilliant the rest of your house may look, an untidy kitchen will overshadow the rest of the home.

Do these three simple things daily as they represent the quintessential basis of your new way of 'thinking' and 'doing'. They are an exercise in, not only doing, but in maintaining your new environment.

Unlike many of your getting-organized projects which will have a start and an end, these will be ongoing, daily activities, over and over again for the rest of your life.

Because of this, they represent the perfect base of discipline and the ongoing commitment that you must be prepared and equipped to make.

This is not intended to frighten you. Au contraire, once you get into the habit of getting dressed, making the bed and then tidying up the kitchen, you will quickly see that those ten or fifteen minutes (seriously!) have an enormous positive impact on where your day goes from there.

Other benefits may include family members following your lead. Can you picture your husband getting up to rinse his coffee mug and place it in the dishwasher? Maybe not right away if he doesn't typically do that but eventually, maybe.

The point is that by doing these things yourself, you stand a chance of your example rubbing off on the others.

You will soon start to see your home in a different light. Your own standards of comfort will rise, as you will long for that feeling of being in control which comes with an organized home.



Just those few small details can completely change how you see your home and how you feel there.

Now, I want you to make a list of some additional minor daily home maintenance activities that you think will make your home more inviting, more soothing and more conducive to a controlled lifestyle.

For some, it may be changing the cat litter, for others maybe it's opening the living room drapes. However simple or minute it may seem, if it has a positive effect on your overall psyche and on how you view your home, do it. Do it regularly.

As you progress, day by day, and these initial tips start to become routine and effortless, you will find yourself gradually adding more and more things to your own unique list. This is because those first few changes will give you a new perspective, clear up your vision and you will more easily notice things that bother you. They will stand out and crystallize, whereas previously it all seemed like one big blur of chaos.

But now, by pinpointing each little thing you want to change, you will be able to do so.

Go with it. Make the adjustments as you discover them.

For instance, a Monopoly® game half-shoved under the sofa now irritates you whereas, before, it just sort of blended in with the rest of the mess. Now that you have actually identified it as an irritant, find it a home right away. Assign it an appropriate spot, inform the others and then vow to maintain it.

## You're about to Discover Your Space Limitations

Inevitably, for some of you, one painful reality is about to reveal itself. You have more stuff than you have space for. In fact, it is a sad statistic that the average home has not 1 or 2, but 3 cluttered rooms per household.

That's a sad indictment on us, isn't it?

A huge part of this trend is simply due to not letting go of things as we accumulate more.

We can't hoard our cake and eat it too.

As your list of irritants at home gets longer and you proceed to address them one by one, you are likely to discover that giving everything a home requires that you have available space for everything.

Your things need to be put away when not in use, and they need to be easily accessible when needed.

If and when you start to find yourself getting discouraged, or using space limitation as an excuse not to put things in their proper place, you have two options:

- 1) Efficient storage:** It could simply be a question of acquiring a few storage bins and putting away the things that you really don't need to access very frequently. If that's the case, be sure to store your items by category. For instance, surplus kitchen tools like extra mugs, small appliances that you think you may want to keep for the cottage should be stored together. Label your bins clearly and on all sides. Also, try and use stackable bins for efficient use of space.
- 2) Lighten your load:** If your space simply does not allow for storage as described above, you will have to start going through your stuff and getting rid of things you don't use. We often have duplicates of things without even being aware of it. Do you really need two woks or two blenders? Does your daughter need three skipping ropes? Does your husband need to keep all

the back issues of Sports Illustrated, from six years ago? And you: I know your intentions were in the right place when you bought that exercise equipment, but when was the last time you used it?

I do not recommend that you keep things "just in case" of future use. These items accumulate fast and can take over your living space. If you can't remember why you were keeping something, or you can't give a legitimate justification for keeping it, it may be time to let it go.

### **Taking Home Organization to the Next Level**

As you become more comfortable with your home routine, and you start to think differently about when and where to keep things, you may find that you are establishing little mini-systems all on your own.

This is fantastic progress! I want to share with you some of the more advanced home organization systems that make the home experience even more pleasant every day.

Once you have finally determined the appropriate spot for the thousands of items that occupy your home, you can take it even one step further by applying the same principle, but on a smaller scale.

**Example:** The whole family agrees that anything hair-related belongs in the bottom two drawers of the bathroom vanity cabinet. This may be a huge improvement in your home already, if you previously had to go hunting through your son's room looking for the blue brush while the hair dryer was buried under a pile of clothes in your daughter's room and you couldn't even find the bobby pins you're sure you bought two months ago.

However, simply throwing everything into those two drawers only begins to solve the problem. Consider breaking down the elements even more. Picture this: You open the top drawer and it contains several small plastic dishes, each housing their own unique category of objects; one for bobby pins, one for elastics, one for clips and one for brushes. The second drawer holds the larger items like the hair dryer and straightening iron, the rollers, and maybe the gel.

Wow! Every day; bobby pins are in the same place.

It works like a charm. You need them, you find them. They are in the bobby pin spot.

I love it! You will love it too, guaranteed.

You will save so much time, energy and frustration not having to search for ages for a ridiculous little bobby pin.

You will save money by not repeatedly buying packs of bobby pins only to misplace them again and again.

This more advanced organization system can be implemented in every room of the house, especially where there are lots of little things. The home office is another perfect example, with things like paper clips, staples, pens, etc. These shouldn't all just be thrown into the desk drawer. They should each have a spot in the desk drawer.

### ***The Destination Usually Reveals Itself***

Deciding where will be the permanent residence for a given item should be fairly obvious and stress-free.

A good rule of thumb is to put it close to where it is most often needed. Car keys should have a spot near the front door or the garage door, whichever you usually use to get to the car.

Depending on your logic, your sunglasses might be kept in your bedroom with your accessories, or they may be kept with the rest of the family's sunglasses in the sunglasses spot near the front door because you are likely to be looking for them just before you exit the house, aren't you?

You decide.

### ***What About the One-of-a-kind Oddities?***

When you end up with several little one-of-a-kind odd items that have no like items to be stored with, you can just have a miscellaneous box, bin or drawer (referred to for years as the "junk drawer").



Just be careful not to abuse its use. This should be a last resort destination for odd items that truly don't seem to fit any other grouping.

Otherwise it will quickly get out of control.

### **Remember to Mind Your Maintenance.**

All of your bins and containers will need regular maintenance. You should go through them periodically and pluck out those items that have overstayed their welcome.

If you frequently replace your fancy hair clips with more modern selections, why hang on to the dated ones? Think of it this way; by frequently discarding the things you really don't use anymore, you'll be making room for new stuff!

## Take Advantage of those Little Moments

If you are fortunate enough to have some free moments throughout the day when you could be maintaining your organized home without using much energy or brain power while doing other stuff, take advantage while you're on a roll!

If you're watching television, commercial breaks are a great time to go and rinse that cup and place it in the dishwasher, or go through your sewing pile and do some mending.

Every little 60-second task that you do right now means more free time later. Best of all, you can make accumulate more usable chunks of you-time.

### It's a Wonderful Feeling



In no time, it will all become routine. You won't even have to keep reminding yourself to put things back in their place. One of the reasons for this is that, soon after your system is in motion, things left out of place will start to stand out and you will feel a need to put them away and maintain that feeling that you are in control and that everything is as it should be.

It's a wonderful feeling, and it is very satisfying to look at your surroundings and feel a sense of pride, and contentment - a long-overdue replacement to that dizzying feeling of hopelessness.

## Tricks and Tools

We've talked about strategies and goal setting, we've talked about planning and completing large projects and we've talked about establishing ongoing maintenance habits for the home which can be applied outside of the home as well.

We've covered the broad strokes of motivation, discipline and procrastination.

We've also had a glimpse of what our home life can be like if we get ourselves organized and stay that way.

With all of this, you may already have a plan of action for yourself. I would not be surprised and I applaud those of you who do.

Here are some extra tips to help keep things realistic and do-able, and to get you started if you like to have things broken right down.

**Decide where to start:** It is best to tackle one room, one cupboard, one shelf at a time so that you confront it in manageable 'chunks.' Think of your options and decide which room/cupboard/shelf is the most logical place for you to start. If you feel that tackling your family room first will free up some much needed space by putting stuff away, then start there.

**Start in your zone:** You will be better prepared to make decisions about your own stuff rather than your kids' or husband' Avoid the frustration of discovering things you weren't expecting or stressing over whether to keep this or toss that.

With your own things, there'll be no surprises and no excuses for keeping things you don't need. Also, they should be participating when it's their rooms/stuff.

**Start small.** You may want to start with a closet rather than an entire room, or a drawer rather than an entire cabinet. That's okay, as long as you complete the task.

**Set a date:** Decide on a realistic day and also try to estimate how much you can get done in that one day. Don't overload yourself.

Even seasoned veterans can't organize an entire family room in one day. If you've ever watched any of those home clean-up programs on TV, you'll see that even teams of professionals need at least two days to get just one room done.

So, don't back yourself into a corner before you even start. Be realistic, but stick to your plan.

**Gather your 'tools':** Figure out what you will need and have it ready; boxes, bins, garbage bags, work gloves, etc. so that you will be ready to work continuously and not have to constantly step out to get this and that.

**Know what you will do with your 'stuff':** Decide in advance that anything that you will not be keeping will either be thrown out or given away to charity. Then have separate bags for each of those things.

Do not allow yourself the option of simply storing something in case you decide later that you still need it. If you're in doubt about whether or not to keep something, remember the rule we talked about. You either know why you are keeping it or you have a legitimate justification -otherwise, it goes.

**Reassign items:** Of the things that you decide you must keep, some will stay right where they are and others will seem clearly out of place and need to be reassigned to a more appropriate spot with like items.

Have a plan in place to fit these things into their new habitat.

**Follow through:** If you were determined to do this when you put it in your calendar and, at that time, you were happy with the idea of throwing stuff out or giving it away, then find that focus and hold onto it until you've dropped off the bags at the local shelter.

**Use positive self-talk:** Until you've done this a few times and truly experienced its uplifting effects, you need to keep reassuring yourself that you are doing the right thing.

It's hard to break old patterns, and it's even harder to let go of things we think we love, so give yourself the little pep talks whenever you need them and keep going!

### *A Word on Sentimental Value*

I must admit that the 'sentimental value' card is a tough one to argue with, but it is an excuse that too many use way too often to hold onto almost every single 'thing' they bought or have been given.

I've probably played that hand myself once or twice in the past but not anymore!

While it is true and undeniable that some things hold a profound sentimental meaning to us, I submit that we are all guilty of abusing this. Perhaps it's time you asked yourself, "Do I really believe this is special enough to keep forever when, for example, a photo of it instead may suffice?"

There is an important distinction to be made between an object that is of true sentimental value, and one that is merely reflective of a memory. It is you who must decide what means more to you, the object or the memory it calls to mind.

If, for example, your grandmother gave you a studded brooch and you hope to pass it along to your daughter, even though it has little monetary value, then you have a legitimate argument for sentimental value. However, I have to ask whether you are ever planning to have the smelly cabinet in the basement with one missing leg, a broken hinge, dangling door and peeling veneer, which you claim has sentimental value, repaired and put it to any kind of use?

Or, are you simply going to let it continue to deteriorate?

It's your call, but I think the same logic applies here as elsewhere: If you aren't using it and can't offer a legitimate reason, why on earth are you keeping it?

## Putting Spring Cleaning in its Place

The concept of spring-cleaning tends to be a bit overwhelming and intimidating because it comes with the weight of expectation and enormity. Seeing it coming for months in advance gives it an ominous effect too, like doomsday pressing down on you more and more as the start of Spring approaches.

Not at all motivating!

In reality, spring-cleaning is no different than any other project you've taken on so far. In fact, I wouldn't tell you to do a single thing differently.

You've already learned all the techniques, tips, and strategies to get it done. You're there and you're ready. Just go ahead and approach spring-cleaning the same way that you have everything else so far.

Think about it:

- ✓ You need a plan, a strategy.
- ✓ You need to break it down into smaller achievable goals.
- ✓ You need to schedule each step in your trusty Organizer, pick a start date to get going, with an end date in mind.
- ✓ Then, you need to make lists of required supplies, etc.

It's all the same principles being applied to a project with a fancy title, that's all.

So, rather than letting yourself get worked up or stressed about the idea of Spring Cleaning, just put it in a different category right now.

Call it, "Organizing a series of rooms, one at a time". Call it, "Improving the overall home - one drawer, cabinet, or closet at a time".

Whatever works for you is fine, just eliminate the aspect of Spring Cleaning that makes it daunting in your mind and put it in a category where you can get your head around it and see the benefits that it promises to bring.

Remember that spring-cleaning is, in fact, a celebration of spring's arrival. The desire to revamp our nests is a natural reaction we have after months of

hibernating. It's pretty hard to ignore the dust that has accumulated in the preceding months when the sun starts to shine on it in all its full glory!!

And finally, there actually exists a very exciting, very empowering opportunity here. Having practiced and perfected your new organization habits in bits and pieces for a period of time, you should be very excited about the idea of combining the whole and finally taking on a real start-finish, strategy-setting, goal-setting, planning and scheduling, execution mission.

With this newfound perspective, you'll never look at spring-cleaning the same way again!

In fact, you'll probably never look at any cleaning or organizing project the same way again, which is the whole point.

We've identified many of the major roadblocks in home organization, and we agree that these principles are universal, not just to be applied strictly at home but in every aspect of your life.

We are soon going to look at how to apply the new techniques you learned at home and transfer them to the other categories of your life, including work, health & fitness and your finances.

But first, there is one last culprit in home disorganization that merits its own category and needs specific focus.

## The Classic Closet Conundrum

Oh my, I can already feel the resistance from you, dear reader. The closet is often the area in the home that people least want to deal with.

This is for two reasons:

- 1) We are strangely attached to our clothing and accessories.
- 2) It's too easy to ignore it by shutting the door!

Let's look more closely at reason one for a moment. Over the years we go through many identities, many incarnations if you like. As we grow and mature, we are continually evolving as individuals and frequently reinventing ourselves.

Short of walking around wearing a banner that announces our latest identity, the only way we can convey our individuality is through our visual presentation; what we wear.

So, it's no wonder that our clothes mean so much to us. They're a part of who we are or have been. They're like a piece of our identity. And, it seems the more dated and far removed our clothing become from our current identity, the more reluctant we are to let go of them, lest we dismiss an entire era of our life.

Are you all smiling knowingly as you read this? It's so true. As embarrassing as some of our old getups may look, and how ill-fitting they would be if we were to put them on again, we seem to want to hang on to them for nostalgic reasons (perhaps that we might go back to those times again).

Keeping decades worth of clothes, with no plan of passing any on as the years go, by is a recipe for an accumulative closet disaster that takes on a life of its own.

Now, let's look at the problems with this scenario. You're probably thinking I'm going to list Space as the number one reason to clean out your closet but, in fact, I have an even more compelling case to make ...



You risk becoming a blur: By hanging onto clothing you don't wear anymore, you bury your current identity in among the styles gone by.

You make it very difficult for your current style to stand out and you risk missing out on some very interesting, unique ensembles that may reveal themselves if only your individual pieces were more easily visible.

You will love your wardrobe again. Once you have organized your closet and categorized your clothing and accessories to look like the inside of mini fashion boutique, your clothing will suddenly take on a whole new appeal to you.

What you previously saw as a basic, boring staple item can reveal its true potential as you start to be able to picture it as part of an ensemble with various pieces.

It's impossible to do this if you don't eliminate the stuff that doesn't belong.

And yes, space of course: Being able to find something the first time you look will save you a lot of time and frustration.

Also, being able to see everything that you have will help you more easily plan and match your outfits. It's a real shame when you completely forget about a piece you own because it was buried so far down that you hadn't come upon it in months and then, when you do find it, it's either out of style or no longer fits.

It's always frustrating when you knew you had it all along and looked for it many times, but couldn't find it.

As Murphy's Law would have it, this will always happen with a favourite piece or accessory.

Now, I'm not immune to this nostalgic desire to keep clothing that holds lovely memories, and I've had to make adjustments along the way to accommodate some 'special' items, without completely compromising the efficiency of my closet space.

For those of you like me, with daughters, there is good reason to keep a few special 'era' pieces to pass on when the time comes.

Just don't go overboard. Remember to store them carefully and separately because it's likely to be a pretty long time before that time comes along.

If you have the space elsewhere in your home, assign a spot for those pieces of clothing that you truly believe you may want to wear again in future, but which are just taking up space needlessly right now.

Sometimes, things do come back into fashion after a decade-long hiatus, but you will need to be really honest about this. I suggest inviting your most brutally honest friend or relative to direct this exercise for you and, if he or she says it goes, then it goes.

Another thing that has really improved my entire closet/wardrobe experience is the set-up. You can customize this however you like but, for me, I find using matching hangers has helped the overall look inside my closet. Also, line up your coat hangers so they are all facing the same direction on the rod and distribute your clothing in some sort of pattern. Some of you may want to keep ensembles hung together like they do in the boutiques, while others may want to colour-coordinate the items.

I also keep my entire leggings, tights, and stockings in their natural state of wear (vertical) as it really helps me visualize ensembles.

I'll let you take this category and go with it. Your closet is an area that you can actually have some fun with when you get around to organizing it, because it is probably the most personal of all your projects<sup>4</sup>.

You will like your clothes so much more when you present them to yourself in this new light. So have fun with it, and enjoy your new wardrobe!

Okay, we've done a pretty thorough job of covering home organization and you have a lot to keep you busy over the coming weeks, if not months! The best part of this is that you are probably already applying the theories at work to some extent, and you can see how they cross over to finance and health habits too.

I want to look at these subjects more closely, although we won't need to go quite as much in depth as we have with your home affairs.

## Health and Fitness

If you've been following the regime thus far, you're probably feeling better and healthier already; more vibrant, more energized - even pumped.

That's excellent! That was precisely the intention, wasn't it?

Now that you are more organized at home and at work, you have all this free time and extra energy. Whatever will you do with it?

I'm not here to put pressure on anyone to embrace an active lifestyle. To be fair, if you've never been an active person, or never had the desire to follow any kind of fitness regime, I'm not going to tell you that you have to start now.

Some people are naturally drawn to the outdoors, feel most comfortable in running shorts, and look rather at ease doused in sweat, tennis racket in hand.

That's not for everyone and I appreciate that. My intention is not to alter people's essences here.

Whether you are an outdoor type or not, regularly walking in the fresh air is something that is achievable for us and should be a minimum aim to maintain bone density, general fitness level and improved lung capacity etc.

I strongly believe we all have a responsibility to the society we live in to take care of ourselves as we age so that any reasonable; preventable issue is addressed so that we all have less to pay for with an overwhelmed health care system and aged care facilities.

Too many of us rely on synthetic drugs to solve our problems when good old fashioned common sense would have prevented or reduced the effects. Lets use the brain we were given to get back to basics when it comes to this and be responsible for shaping our own destiny.

I know I have been rather heavy-handed here and, of course, there are always exceptions to the rule, but the growing statistics regarding the above call for it!

Alas, I digress.

There are many of you out there who fit more into the more artistic, spiritual type rather than 'physical' being. If that's the case for you, then that is where your health and fitness finds you.

For some, it may be gardening while, for others, it may be painting or Yoga & Meditation.

The words health and fitness cover the spirit and soul as well as the body. So, interpret health and fitness as it applies to you.

Having clarified that, I submit that regardless of how you define it for yourself, the point is that you now have more time, more energy and more motivation to commit for your own betterment.

This is really all about getting back in touch with the real you. This is you doing something for yourself, every day or every week.

## Work



Taking your newly acquired organizational techniques to the office is a great idea, but the key here is to be adaptable. I can't let you risk stepping on any corporate toes or bypassing any long-established corporate policies.

There is a good chance that your workplace already has a system and, unless there are some major flaws that impede your productivity, I do not recommend you suddenly imposing changes, lest you offend your managers in doing so.

If you are an employee, keep this in mind that you need to go through the appropriate channels for change to occur.

There is often a lot of scope to be able to alter your own routine to increase your efficiency. Depending on the size and scope of the company you work for, as well as your ranking, there are many possible approaches to improving the organizational structure of the place.

But, again, be very careful. Only make changes if they are absolutely necessary to your efficiency, and be sure to discuss these changes with your boss before you apply them, because they may have consequences that you hadn't taken into consideration.

Sometimes things are as they are for a reason, so get informed.

If the system at work is working, leave it alone, even if it's not how you would do things. Learn to be adaptable, because being organized can come in many ways, not just Claire's way!

### Approach your Boss

Many places of employment are open to hearing staff ideas on how they might make the workspace more time-effective for their staff as it usually results in better profitability.

If the systems at work are all good, but you are continually late arriving, you may need to make some changes to your home routine to ensure you keep your job or, at least, don't run out of good reasons for why you are late.

The best and safest assurance is prepare these items night before;

- 1) Clothes,
- 2) lunch,
- 3) briefcase/ bag,
- 4) car (park it so that it is facing the right way with enough fuel).
- 5) set alarm clock,
- 6) change for parking etc.

Have a list of your priorities ready for each day.

If you have to pay bills in your lunch-break, be sure that all forms and details are in your bag.

**Alarm Clock Tip** - if you abuse the good old 'snooze' button, put your alarm somewhere that you have to get out of bed to turn it off. It will make you get up! Sometimes one must be cruel to be kind, even to yourself!

**Create Systems:** Allocate definite places where things are kept, what you do with your emails, how you manage the in tray, out tray, mailing etc.

**Traveling sales person:** If you're on the road as part of your job, create systems for where things are kept so they don't get misplaced or left behind:

- ✓ Your plan of travel
- ✓ List of ongoing jobs that can be done on the road
- ✓ Phone calls
- ✓ Stuff to be picked up and dropped off
- ✓ Parking money
- ✓ Hands free fitting for mobile phone (if legal in your area)

## **Disorganization and Job Satisfaction**

Personal disorganization at work can be a symptom of a bigger picture issue relating to Job satisfaction. This can also detract from your effectiveness and enjoyment of each day, when it keeps you from lunch breaks and even stops you being home in time for dinner.

Consider the following points may help you to decide whether you need to look at making some changes in your work routines:

- ? Do you find performance targets difficult to achieve?
- ? Do you have a low level of job satisfaction, feeling like you just chase your tail all day?
- ? Are you often late to work?

If it isn't an option to change jobs and you want to make this job work for you and your employer, you may need to assess how you can be more effective in the time that you are at work.

Some points to consider include:

- ? Your desk - layout and materials
- ? Your briefcase
- ? Your filing system
- ? Your time management - avoid double handling things.
- ? How often you move away from your desk
- ? Be aware how often you are interrupted, by whom and also why
- ? What is your layout is of your office, classroom, shop etc.

## Home Businesses

A growing number of people are starting businesses from home, which has many benefits.

But, it is all too easy to slip into a pattern of work overtaking the home front, if you are not careful.

This is another whole book, but some basic tips to follow include:

- ✓ Allocate specific times to 'work time' in your home office or just the kitchen table (if that's where you do your business). Give equal emphasis to allocating your household time or it's all too easy for the work to consume your home life.
- ✓ Your share of the housework isn't going to do itself, so it has to be scheduled in as well as quality time with your children and partner if you have them.
- ✓ When starting a new business - especially if it is your own unique business idea - it can be really exciting. While getting it off the ground, there is a temptation to get 'lost' in your work and neglect the rest of your life!! Keep in mind that this could happen to you and address it as soon as you feel it starting to happen before the consequences come back to bite you!
- ✓ Decide on the system you will use to file your paperwork and stick to it. You might use a filing cabinet or folders (stick to the same size and colours so they look uniform and not a garish rainbow of stuff on a shelf). If you use a variety of methods, such as a step file; magazine folders, an in/out file tray, filing cabinets and folders, it may become too hard to manage, besides looking abysmal. You might combine one or two systems to good effect as long as they do not cross over.
- ✓ Doing a once-over every week is one of the best habits you can get into to keep on top of the mound of paperwork you have to



contend with. Do not let it pile up for longer than that, as it will inevitably affect your productivity.

This also applies to general household paperwork, whether you work from home or not. Keeping your household records organized is a big job in itself that you need to keep on top of, if you don't want it to become a problem. **FACT:** people waste minutes that become hours every year searching for bits of paper. Would you prefer to spend that time reading a good book or having a relaxing bath? I know what my answer is and I do it regularly now -you can too!

## Managing Interruptions

This is a key to a successful workday, no matter what you do.

Here's some tips for this area:

**Phone Calls:** Allocate time in the morning and in the after noon to just make and return calls and stick to it. Having calls to make hanging over you can block a lot of peoples' energy flow, especially creative types

Getting these out of the way early is a good idea. "Eat the frog first thing in the morning" so that anything else is easy thereafter!

**Meetings:** try to schedule the ones where you need to think the most earlier in the day and the ones where you just have go with the flow later in the day. If you have control of meetings and when they are - late morning is good, leaving the early morning for you to be most productive on what is most important.

**Emails:** These can be a real issue if you don't keep them in check. Only return emails in 'blocks' twice a day. You may decide a good time for you is after you have made your phone calls.

If you are in a leadership role or have responsibility to improve the actual business, ensure you spend quality uninterrupted time on that.

Try to keep good periods of time to work "on" the business rather than "in" it. Ensure that some of that time is spent outside the company where you will be able to view the company from a different perspective.

If, for example, you work in retail sales or in production, there are ways that you can keep your job alive for yourself.

Set goals about being more productive. This can assist you in having a more enjoyable time at work, be seen as someone on the team to take on a leadership role within the company or to get a great character/work recommendation to take to other places of employment.

You will probably find you won't have to do too much to appear more committed than the next person. Most horses races are won by the horse that finishes only a few inches ahead of the pack!

Here's some tips to use your lunch break productively while at work:

- ✓ Have your hair cut during your lunch break
- ✓ Buy birthday cards and gifts
- ✓ Pay bills
- ✓ Do something on your own for pleasure
- ✓ Meet a friend who works close by.

## Finances

Throughout your reading so far, you've seen a few examples of where your finances are directly affected by your level, or lack of, organization.

These little glimpses may have prompted you to act already, and you may be on your way to improved financial management and significant accumulated savings.

Small amounts of money that are disregarded can add up significantly over time. For instance, add up the sum of following scenarios;

You are inadvertently double-charged for a single \$5 item. You typically don't look at receipts, let alone save them, so you will never even notice this.

Your bank charged you an overdraft fee of \$20 last month, even though you pay \$10 per month for overdraft protection. You don't typically balance your account, so you don't even notice this error.

You give your teenager \$6 dollars every day for her lunch at school, but her lunch never costs more than \$4. But, you've never asked her for any change, and she has never offered you any. At the end of the school year, you find only about \$1 in change in the bottom of her school bag...

You have a new \$200 dress in your closet with the tag still on it that you bought for your cousin's outdoor wedding, but you ended up wearing pants because it was raining. You don't have the receipt, so you have to keep the dress even though you can't imagine ever needing it.

Yikes! What a huge waste of money. It's not as if the only way to save serious money is by doing things like only using one sheet of toilet paper per use or to use every tea bag twice.

You can save a substantial amount with more user-friendly methods such as turning electricity off at the power point and buying at factory-direct stores.

## Budget Plan

Are you someone who tells everyone, in a shocked tone, that your phone bill, rates, car insurance and power bill all come in the one week and that is why you ask for an advance from the boss or your parents?

The reality - this will happen every year for you and the shock is really a symptom of your not planning better, then wondering where did that year go.

Review your file of your last 12 months' expenses. Note down where your money went; when each bill is due and how much it was, so there are no new surprises but allow for inevitable increases as either inflation or usage goes up.

Here is a broad list to help you address your regular expenses

- \$ Bills and utilities - water, power, rates, phone & Internet,
- \$ Health - health cover, dental, alternative treatments, vitamins, doctor, chemist
- \$ Accommodation costs rent, mortgage, insurance building / contents, maintenance
- \$ Licenses and include expiration dates - i.e. passport, drivers and fishing, first aid renewal
- \$ Education - school fees, excursions, camps, sport, books, uniforms etc.
- \$ Transport - public transport tickets, fuel, car insurance, registration, roadside assist, car wash, car maintenance - service and major works.
- \$ Holidays - accommodation, entertainment, transport, food
- \$ Entertainment - movies, concerts, CDs, magazines, computer games, dining out.
- \$ Christmas - gifts, food, entertainment, postage
- \$ Gifts - birthdays, anniversaries, flowers,

- \$ Clothing, allow for seasonal change,
- \$ Food - butcher, supermarket, fruit and veg, alcohol, bakers, take away
- \$ Charity

Once you have all of them noted down, it is easier to cut and paste them into a computer spreadsheet. Then, sort the list by weekly, monthly, quarterly and annual costs.

Then, average out what they cost per pay period. That is the minimum amount which you need to set aside for these regular living costs.

Have a special account just your your bills if you are worried about not controlling your spending.

Once you have done that, you may realize that you are going to be financially strained at times.

If so, you need to look more closely at what you are spending your money on and whether all your expenses and impulse buys are really necessary.

Even if you have a surplus each month, I recommend that you look at where your money is going, because I'm sure you will agree wasting your hard earned money on unnecessary fees, or discretionary spending is not really showing great respect for your efforts and time earning it.

Respect for your money is paramount and learning how to keep tabs on it equally important.

Go through the exercise with more than one bank or broker and ask them how fees, interest etc on your home or car loans could be improved. You need to be fully informed of all aspects of your loans and how the fees and structure, etc is affecting you.

Shop around and stay alert to utility company offers, taking special note of the fine print. Your needs may have changed from the last time you looked at deals based on usage or commonly called phone numbers, etc.

Check all your insurances. You might be able to get a better deal by bundling your house and car insurances. Ask about increasing your excess to lower your premium.

Review the deals available which might make your landline, mobile and Internet costs improve.

The solution? Devise a system for keeping track of your finances.

Here are the three major exercises you absolutely must get into the habit of doing.

**Check & Save Receipts:** Always check your receipts. The amount of times I've been overcharged on items that were supposed to be on special sale prices but the price hadn't been changed on the scanner at the cash register is ridiculous.

Don't think that, "they will think it is silly that I am quibbling over such small change". There's two very good reasons for pointing out any inconsistency in your charges - the most obvious is the savings, which can easily get to the hundreds of dollars.

But, I also believe it is just as important to bringing any store to account because the amount of money they are skimming, accidentally or otherwise, from trusting customers may amount to thousands of dollars, which is not legally theirs – it's your hard eared money!

They already make enough profits off us!

**File Receipts:** Sort them either by date or by category of purchase (clothing, toys, car maintenance) and get into the habit of checking them.

**Balance your account:** You should be aware of, and in agreement with, every dollar that is debited from your account. Be conscientious about who has access (automatic monthly debit payments). Set aside a 30-minute block of time - I like doing it while enjoying my Saturday morning cup of tea - once a month to look at your bank statement – and tick items off as you go.

**Budget:** Assign a certain limit to each category of spending, based on your income, and stick to your budget.

Don't forget to allow as far as possible, something for emergencies and unforeseen stuff, and some of those expenses we tend to forget about like taxes, which only come along once a year, but can really sink us if we didn't allow enough for it.

Whence you start keeping track of how much you spend, and waste, you will be shocked at your previous carelessness and how much less your lifestyle should really be costing you.

Even the advanced organizational wizards among us still need an occasional reality check in this department. It's funny but, when you can assign an actual dollar amount to your loss, it takes on a whole new urgency to rectify the situation, doesn't it?

Don't admonish yourself when you realize just how much you have wasted. There's not point in that. What's done is done. The only thing you can do anything about is your actions and results from here on in.

Remember, take one step at a time, one goal at a time. Don't allow yourself to be overwhelmed.

If you need to, go back to an earlier Section to review how to go about the major changes you want to make.

The good news is that you've read most of what it takes to organize your life. We've covered every aspect of your life.

Next, we will explore the execution of your organizing project and explore the best way to proceed.

There may always be circumstances that can be obstacles, so I want to address these straight away, leaving you with more ammunition and fewer excuses.



## Section 7

### Getting it Done

We're down to the nitty-gritty now.

This section gives you some actual how-to tips on getting the job done once you've taken care of the preliminaries.

Presumably, you have:

- Created your list of the major projects that need doing,
- Prioritised your projects,
- Devised a strategy with a breakdown of specific goals and milestones, and
- Are ready to actually commence the project.

Regardless of which project or partial project this may be, just follow these simple guidelines and suggestions and you should be well on your way to checking things off your to-do list in no time.

My first rule of execution is this:

#### Get it Done the First Time

When it comes to day-to-day household maintenance, like putting dirty dishes in the dishwasher, or hanging a wet towel on a rod, and putting shoes in the closet, the best approach is to do it immediately.

When you are done using the cup, towel, or shoes, immediately put them back in their assigned place.

There are two reasons:

- 1) Leaving it for later means repeatedly seeing it and reminding yourself it needs doing, which is mentally draining, and
- 2) These little moments accumulate fast and, by dinner time, you could find yourself surrounded with un-necessary clutter and disarray. If the towel is on the floor, don't let yourself have to

see it or think about it more than once; just pick the darn thing up now, and deal with it, then move on.

When it comes to a larger project, the same logic applies. If you've carefully planned and scheduled a project and today is the day it is to commence, you better have a very good reason for any further delay.

**Keep yourself accountable.** Whatever portion of the project was intended to be completed each day should get done. Otherwise, you will lose momentum.

That is why being realistic about what you can get done is important.

Do you realise just how much energy you waste by thinking the same thoughts over and over again? Are you starting to comprehend the waste of your time this is and how different it could be if this wasn't the case?!

Getting things done the first time helps you to steadily and continually improve the enjoyable benefits of your organized home.

### **Don't be Afraid to Ask for Help**

There is no rule that says you have to tackle all or any of this on your own. If you know you have more to do than one person can possibly achieve, then ask someone to come and help you.

Work it into the master plan.

You can keep it in the family, if you like, and work to a plan where everyone has assigned jobs (i.e. dad does all the heavy lifting).

You can also take it one step outside the home and find a friend who is planning an overhaul as well. The two of you can help each other out. This will help to keep you going, and make it more of a fun event.

- If your family resists your efforts to get organized, my advice to you is to proceed with your own mission; lead by example and use gentle persuasion to gradually get the others onboard.

You can help train their thinking at first by doing the preliminary stuff for them, like the planning and scheduling,

and listing each of their jobs for them. With any luck, over time, they will realize the benefits and take their own cues.

### **Utilize your Downtime**

When I pick my children up from school, I usually get there early to get a parking spot in the pick-up zone. Rather than sit quietly in my car for 10 minutes waiting for the bell, I take the opportunity to collect the empty paper coffee cups, snack wrappers and loose change that has gathered all around the car, and I get rid of them; junk goes in the bin, loose change goes in my purse. I quickly have a tidy car, with no time wasted.

You can also use these few minutes to delete old phone messages, make appointments, return calls or adjust the preset stations on your car radio.

### ***Give yourself a break***

When scheduling, try to allow for coffee and snack breaks of course, but also just give yourself a little ten or fifteen minutes here and there just to rest your body and your mind. Take this time to recharge and refocus. You should know your own limitations, and your maximum level of productivity; take that into consideration from the start and along the way.

## **Customize Your Approach**

If anything I have suggested at any point in this book goes against your personal principles or values, or just doesn't gel with your personality (that's just not me!), feel free to make modifications to better suit you or your specific circumstances.

This is all about getting it done, not just doing what Claire says.

Speaking of doing things your way, I have a special Section reserved just for you.

## Section 8

### The 'Just for Me' Section

Here, I've isolated a few specific topics to help keep you sane through irregular circumstances, special occasion, and various other periods in your life that require the same mental focus and organizational strategies as everything else we've learned.

This is intended to help you keep a clear perspective, no matter what life throws at you, so that you can continue to enjoy the pleasures of stress-free living with an organized life.

#### The Holidays: Friend or Foe?

Christmas and all its glory: Many of us place too much pressure on ourselves to present the perfect Christmas scenario to our family and friends. This can cause unnecessary stress and leave you feeling defeated, especially if all doesn't go off without a hitch as you would like.

Take a step back and rediscover the true meaning of Christmas. It's not about turning out a picture-perfect roasted turkey worthy of a culinary magazine cover. It's about sharing and caring, with family and friends.

**The inevitable New Year's pitfall:** Having touched on the waste of time that New Year's Resolutions are, here's what I do instead.

January should be a fairly quiet, restful month, after a long year of achievements and general business. Instead of falling for the classic disappointment trap that most New Year's resolutions bring, vow to change your approach this time. Start the year off in first gear and accelerate gradually.

Set some goals beginning in February.

Why didn't anyone else think of that!!

## **Overcome the Guilt Factor**

Sometimes, it really needs to be all about you; time to yourself, a nice soy latté, feet on the coffee table and a good magazine.

There is absolutely nothing wrong with this.

You should not feel guilty when you let yourself slack off now and again, especially if you've stayed true to your intentions and accomplished all of your goals for the week.

You must remember that the point of changing your ways and getting your life organized was so that you would have these moments for yourself - and you should have more and more of them as you get older.

Organizing your life is the first step to creating this new lifestyle of yours.

The next is to be more conscious of actually living it - in the present.

This will take some time to adjust to but, if you've set aside some well-deserved time for yourself, be prepared to tell your kids "no" every now and then when they are interrupting you for something. Ask someone else to let the dog out for a change and simply ignore the phone.

I truly want everything that you have read throughout this book to result in positive, healthy changes in your life, for the sake of yourself and those who love you.

Speaking of loved ones, we have one last topic to discuss before I let you loose with the newfound freedom that being organized brings.

Have you ever thought about this?

### **Help Elderly Relatives De-clutter their Lives**

I wanted to tell you all about something I observed over the last few years of my grandmother's life before she passed away. I think it may help those of you who have parents that may be reaching the same age and who need a lot of extra help around the house.

If you are not at the applicable stage of life yet, it may still help to keep in mind for the future, and help you keep your own clutter to a minimum so

that your children don't have to contend with all your possessions as you grow older and unable to handle them.

An awful lot of items are accumulated over a lifetime that obviously need to be sorted through at some point.

Even though it's sad to think about your parents passing away, it's much nicer to have the chance do this job together.

My aunty helped my Nan go through all her possessions, drawer-by-drawer, room-by-room, over time. Upon reflection, after Nan passed away, she observed that it was a real time of bonding for the two of them, and a time of reflection and sharing of many long-forgotten memories.

Life is one big, amazing cycle. Embracing these moments can cement special memories in you psyche forever. So, perhaps it is time for you to gently broach the subject with your parents, and help them tackle the massive job they may have been avoiding.

You can make it an enjoyable experience for everyone, rather than a sad one.

## Conclusion

Sadly, this brings us to the end of our road together, but the journey doesn't end here.

I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate you all on your achievements up to now.

Undoubtedly, many of you have had to break down some major barriers and face some difficult realities. There was probably a fair bit of soul-searching and self-evaluation that went along with it all as well.

It's all part of growing and evolving though, isn't it?

I just hope that, among the reality checks and challenges that you have had to overcome, there have been moments of triumph and pride.

There is still work to be done, as you know. Organizing your life is a tall order, and it's not just a one-time achievement; it's a series of thousands of ongoing achievements - some little, some huge - and it is ongoing.

You have to see getting and staying organized as a new way of life.

Remember that it's the journey, not the destination.

I wish you all the power in the world in continuing your great work. You're equipped with the motivation and discipline now.

You have learned the techniques for achieving your goals, and I have confidence that you will succeed.

Success can be measured in different ways. If you make even a slight improvement, that is a success - no matter how small.

Keep this book handy. Refer to it whenever you need to sharpen your focus. Print it out and highlight the sections that you want to be able to re-read.

Thanks for putting your trust in me, and remember - This is all about you.

When you become more organized, you will have more free time, more physical and mental energy, and therefore, a much-improved quality of life.

Now go, and Organize Your Life!



## **About the Authors**

### **About Claire...**

Claire identified a need for herself to be more organized due to the direct correlation between her peace of mind and the level of organization on the home-front. Realizing that she wasn't a naturally organized person, she decided to make a proactive commitment to improving her state of mind by improving her surroundings.

Since achieving a more organized life for herself and her family, she has eagerly set out to share her knowledge with the world, because she loves to help people and feels that she has something to contribute.

Her message is well received and gets attention at all levels of media. She has been a guest on television talk-shows. Her writings have been featured in national publications, including the Herald Sun and The Age, as well as mainstream magazines like House & Garden, Cosmo, Marie Claire and Practical Parenting, to name just a few.

Claire was recently a Finalist at the Melbourne Section of the International Marketing Awards presented by Dianna Ferrari business creator John Kirkhope.

Claire believes that tackling the draining forces in her life (house and head clutter) has been instrumental in the success of "Organize Your Life".

### **About Deb...**

Deb is used to adapting to new environments, having moved no less than nine times.

Mom of a pigeon pair, she is used to juggling career and family.

She has worked since the kids were very young. She actively applies her organizational techniques to both home and work, doing a terrific job of maintaining more than sanity, but also the all-round health and well-being for herself and all those she cares about.

She is always expanding her professional scope and has recently added property development and real estate to her portfolio of business interests.

She brings an energy and enthusiasm to Organize Your life, and is very excited about helping others to excel.

### **About Julie...**

Julie brings a family focus to Organize Your Life, as well as the ability to create a feeling of team and harmony in the home through simple, evolving, age-appropriate systems... well, most of the time.

With four children of her own, all within a four-year span, Julie knows all about the need to be organized and stay sane.

With the kids growing up now, Julie is enjoying the opportunity to advance her business skills and shift her focus back to her professional dreams.

She turned a childhood dream into reality by running her own florist business, and now wants to venture further with other endeavours, including "Organize Your Life".

Julie is proud of her achievements and looks forward to sharing her wisdom with her children as they pursue their own dreams.

Come join our family at Organize Your Life -we can help guide you through the chaos to reach the other side: [www.organiseyourlife.com.au](http://www.organiseyourlife.com.au)

[Another eBookWholesaler Publication](#)