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Declutter Your Home and Your Life

By

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About the Author

Julie Mannering is an interior designer. Not only does she design beautiful spaces, she makes the most of those spaces for her clients.

She has learned a lot about organization over the years and has put all her knowledge to good use!

She knows that an unorganized life can be a stressful life. Even in the smallest of spaces, Julie knows how to maximize the space to make for a cozy, warm, organized home.

She knows that once you read her book, you'll be energized about organizing your space too, whether that be your home, your workplace, your office, your garage, or your closet!

She feels an "organized life is a necessity for a clear mind". It certainly does help when you look around you and see serenity in the form of organization.

With the right tools, you too can be organized. Just take it one chunk at a time!

Chapter 1 ~ Introduction

When you have things organized you feel more in control of your life. You know where to find things and you will greatly appreciate how nice everything looks. Instead of hunting through a pile of paperwork, you'll know exactly where to find what you are looking for. No longer will you be searching through a pile of clothes to find that one shirt you are looking for. If you are like most people today, you feel that you have too little time and too much to do. As a result, you often end up not getting the things done that are needed to be done. And even little things can grow into a mountain of work that you feel you can never get through. The truth is, it doesn't take as long as you think to get every area of your life organized. One piece at a time soon leads to massive progress. Planning is key to getting started and getting more done than you ever expected. This book will teach you how to organize every aspect of your life - from your home, your work and even your life. It will also teach you some valuable tips and teaching secrets that you can pass on to your children so that they can learn the value of organization as well. You will learn valuable lessons on organization that you can use to keep your life in order and avoid feeling overwhelmed all of the time.

It will also teach you how you can stay organized even when things occur that throw you off your routine. We are not robots, we're humans. And as everyone knows, we have things that come up that are unpredictable that can throw us off our kilter. You want to be organized, but you do not want to be so rigid in that you cannot handle a break in the routine without completely losing control of your organized life. The first step in wrapping your mind around the organizational challenge is to make a plan. How to begin? Think about the reasons you want to get organized. Is it because you want to save time, money, or spend more time with family? Do you want to organize your home or your office or your closets, or perhaps your garage? That's a great dumping ground for stuff if ever there was one! Spring cleaning, fall cleanup, the new year, or start of the school year are all great times to get organized. A big deadline at work may spur you to

organize at the office. Knowing the family is coming for Thanksgiving can get you organizing at home. If you're moving, you need to get organized from top to bottom.

One of the most frequent complaints I hear is, "I don't have time to get organized!" But the less time you have, the more you stand to benefit from organization, so break down the time barrier with some easy techniques for managing your organizing time.

Looking at the whole picture of what you need to organize can be so overwhelming that you don't get started at all. Or maybe you do, but then you quit in an hour because there's still so much left to do. When you don't have the time or concentration to complete the whole job, simply break up tasks into bite-size pieces that you can reasonably accomplish. Choose one file drawer at a time, and soon you can have the whole lot done. Start with a single kitchen cabinet and do the second one tomorrow or next week.

Chapter 2 ~ Getting Started



A good first step in decluttering is to eliminate what isn't of value. First deal with all the excess stuff in your life to which you're emotionally attached - those birthday cards from your late Grandmother, photos of your

first dog, or the ticket stub from your first rock concert. Separate the emotional clutter from practical clutter. Create a "Memory Box." Here's where a storage bin with a flip-top lid can be put to good use, but any box with a lid will do. Every time you find something that evokes "Aw," before your eyes start tearing, toss it in the Memory Box. When the memory box gets full, you'll have to deal with that, too, but for a beginning, just getting all the sentimental clutter in one spot is a major achievement.

Another step-in de-cluttering is to keep only what has monetary value. If you've run out of closet and drawer space because you own 300 T-shirts, line them up on the bed or other large surface according to value, least to most expensive. Find the "happy medium," keep the more valuable half and eliminate the rest. If you look honestly at the least expensive half, you'll admit the low-end group probably couldn't even be given away, let alone sold at a garage sale. Live with the best you can afford, if you want your life to be the best it can be.

The traditional sorting tool is a three-step decision: Toss-Keep-Sell/Donate. This is a tried-and-true method that many have used with great success. But for the chronically, certifiably, clutter-challenged, the process can be simplified further to require fewer decisions. If you're working alone and

aren't fortunate enough to have a TV crew knock on your door with a team of makeover/takeover people...if you're a lone clutter-buster facing your private mountain of collectible clutterbles, a simpler method can be more efficient. Trash or treasure? You keep the treasures and trash the rest.

Chapter 3 ~ Identifying and Dealing with Trash



There are three types of trash. The first type is anything you don't want, regardless of its real or imagined value. Question yourself until you're able to make a decision on an item. Do I love this? Do I really want this in my life? Would I care if this burned in a fire? Would I pack this on a trip for

a week? Does it need repair? Is it dirty? If even a slight negative feeling comes up during questioning, it means the thing is trash. Anything you don't like, even in the slightest, is the stuff that goes. Anything you genuinely treasure, the stuff that makes you feel warm and cozy, the sweater that makes you smile, that's what stays. This process of elimination has a dual benefit. It cleans out your living space while eliminating negativity in your head and surroundings.

The second type of trash is real trash, anything broken, stained, dirty, ripped or cracked. It's junk. If something needs repair and you've neglected to fix it, you've learned to live without it for perhaps six months that it's been on your "to-do" list. Chances are you've already replaced it; it's unusable; it's trash. If you're plagued with guilt over tossing the old coffeemaker that's missing a carafe, put it outside near the trash cans, where it belongs, with a note: "Still works." The dumpster divers will love you.

Third, you have to deal with trash you think might be treasure to someone else. Then again, maybe not. Donating is tricky. When asked what "Goodwill" will accept, a candid worker has replied: "If you don't want it, we don't want it." No one does anyone a favor by donating unusable junk,

your ripped, broken, dirty old stuff. It's mean-spirited to expect other people to want or use your junk. Only donate functional, useable items. An old transistor radio that barely gets reception is only valuable to a collector or repairman for parts, not to someone who needs a radio. Junk by any other name is still junk. In many cases, you will have to take a deep breath, close your eyes, wish your junk a fond farewell, thank it for serving you...and toss it.

Selling what you no longer need at a garage sale, online auction or with a newspaper or bulletin board ad, is another option. But be aware it's probably not going to yield a fortune. First, you have to find a buyer and, second, you have to get a fair price. To successfully sell an item, you need to know what it's worth in the current market. Seldom is your precious cargo worth as much as you think. Everyone in the second-hand, "used" market is looking for a bargain. Be prepared to get 'something' for the things you sell, but rarely will the proceeds buy a new car. You'll have to decide if the time and effort to sell something is worth it in the long run. Often the most efficient way to get rid of useable items is to donate them.

Left with only things you truly treasure, you've probably eliminated half the clutter you had when you began. Now, you're ready to organize, which will be easier than you think. Organizing is putting things where they belong. "A place for everything, and everything in its place." The process will take planning and perhaps several organizational aids, such as "those containers" but eventually things will almost organize themselves. Eliminating clutter means living with open, cleared spaces and surfaces. Creating that environment will free not only your countertops and closet floor. Living clutter-free will open your life and clear the way for what lies ahead to enter your life without tripping and falling on its face.

Chapter 4 ~ Start Decluttering



You will need to decide which area to start with. Which rooms in your house gets on your nerves, or which closet or kitchen cabinets etc. You don't have to start with the biggest project. You just need to start. Whatever the case, you'll also have to be prepared to declutter.

You'll want to go through your things and throw away or donate things you don't need or use any longer. The easiest way to get rid of clutter in your home is to decide what you want to keep and why. Obviously, things that have sentimental value or those that are collectible are kept. Clothes that you wear are kept. Other things, however, such as the kids toys that they no longer play with because they're now teenagers, clothes that you haven't worn in years and cannot wear even if you wanted to as well as knick knacks, old videos, music and books can be given to many different charities.

Take your time when you are getting rid of clutter. If it seems daunting, give yourself an hour to work on the project and then stop until the next day. Even if you spend a half an hour a day working on what to keep and what to give away or toss, you will start making headway. You do not have to feel as though you need to get rid of clutter all in one day.

In our house, books and magazines make up a great deal of clutter. Once every month, I go through the books that are keepers and those that I will never read again and send them to the Goodwill. Once a year I go through movies and music that we have hanging about and also donate these items to charity. We are a family that reads quite a bit, listens to music and also

accumulates many movies over the course of a year. While some of these items we keep for future use, others are given to charity.

People with little children have to be especially vigilant when it comes to toys, stuffed animals and clothes as children outgrow these quickly. Instead of letting all of these items pile up and clutter up closets and playrooms, it is much better to give those that are in good shape to organizations that can sell them for a low price to people who will be grateful to have them. This is a good way for you to teach your children a little bit about compassion and how to not want to hoard everything that they receive. Of course, there are some things that are sentimental to your children that they will not want to get rid of and those should be kept.

To put it simply, clutter is stuff that makes your house look like a mess and consists of items that you do not need and may have accumulated over the years. When you are ready to let go, make sure that you give them to someone who may be able to use them. The items that you keep should be stored in a place where they are unobtrusive and do not make the house look cluttered. You can look for traditional storage for these items or get creative.

Once you get rid of the clutter and have, as they used to say, “a place for everything and everything in its place,” you will not only find it easier to clean your home, but you will feel more organized. You will know where to find things when you need them and not have to worry about inadvertently throwing something out by mistake.

Chapter 5 ~ Space and Closets



When you start thinking about getting organized, the first thing you need to do is evaluate your space. What do you think you could change to improve the space or make it bigger, aside from throwing things out? Could you benefit from more shelves? Or perhaps you need more containers?

Get prepared and start thinking which type of containers you will need to purchase. They can be very inexpensive ones from the Dollar Stores, and they will work just as well to get things started.

Containers are useful in just about any room you have. They are a great way to organize shelves, cabinets, closets etc. Baskets are decorative and useful too.

Cleaning materials

You'll most likely want to clean as you go along, dusting shelves, wiping out cupboards etc. So, stock up on cloths and cleaning materials and get ready to get organized!

Closets

The best way to clean out your closets for organization is to make sure that you are using all of the space in your closet. If you have a basement, you can put up shelves and use containers for storage. If you have a small home, you

may not have a lot of closet space and have to trim down what you decide to keep.

There are closet organizers that can help you keep your closets not only more organized, but also give you more use of the space. When you look at the inside of an empty closet, you see that there is a lot more space than a traditional closet allots for. The shelves at the top, for example, are often used to toss up different items like sweaters and shirts.

The poles hang clothes. Closet organizers can make more use of this space by installing shelves and even baskets in your closets so that they look neater. However, you still have to clean out these spaces on a periodic basis otherwise you will find that the closet is filled with clutter, no matter how you hide it in drawers and baskets.

Cleaning out a traditional closet should take you two hours if you've done it within the last year. Or, it could take up to four hours or more if you've not been able to get to it. I have found that the easiest way to do this is to toss everything out of the closet and put it on the bed. Make sure that the closet is completely empty. Then start going through the items that you want and those that you no longer use. If you have clothes that you have not worn for two years, guess what? You're probably not going to wear them again. The exception would be evening clothes that are still in style, still fit you and you might be able to wear again if you are invited to a wedding or a fancy occasion. Sentimental items should also be kept as always.

Get rid of shoes that you no longer wear, have holes in them or are missing a mate. Once you are finished with your clothes and have sorted out what you want and what you want to get rid of, use the two-bag method to separate the good from the trash and then dispose of them accordingly.

You can do the same thing with any closet in your home. Once you have cleared out the mess, you can then put the items that you are keeping back

in your closet. In my home, I do this twice a year, usually when the weather changes.

There are containers that you can use to store seasonal items if you live in a four-season climate. Unfortunately, I do not have any room to store these containers, so I make do by separating the current season with the out of season clothes so that they are easier to find. The important thing when you are cleaning out closets is to get rid of the stuff that you are no longer using and do not plan to use again.

The same goes for the utility room. Go through it once in a while and get rid of things that you no longer need. Again, I have found that the easiest way to get rid of clutter and junk in the closets is to empty them and then put everything back into them, discarding things that you no longer want or will use. It makes it easier to find things that you really do need when you need them.

In addition to cleaning out closets, also go through your drawers. I do this twice a year as well on a rotational basis. Pick a room and clean out a couple of drawers per month while doing the house cleaning; these drawers are typically in our bathroom and kitchen. They can get out of hand in a hurry, and everyone has a junk drawer, don't they? I firmly believe in the power of a junk drawer. Everyone should have one! It's a great catch-all and it's the only place in my house that I allow any mess, and once a year we go through it and clean it out. You can of course not have one! It's up to you. Lose change, keys, junk, it all gets swept in there.

It's important to remember that everyone's life gets out of control at times, and time won't always be available as often as you need it. If you are in a position to delegate chores, or need help re-organizing, ask for help. Keeping family members on track with keeping your house tidy is very important, so make sure they understand what you expect of them to keep your house running smoothly.

Chapter 6 ~ The Pantry and Kitchen Cupboards



The pantry is important to keep organized. It's one of my least favorite projects for some reason, but I recently re-organized it and it felt so good! Apart from the general monthly organizing and re-arranging, I got on my step ladder and cleaned out things on the top shelves, things I rarely use. I freed up a lot of space and figured out how to maximize my space. I do use plastic baskets to hold bottles and condiments like vinegar etc.

Organizing your house is more than just getting rid of the things that can be seen by the person visiting, but also the things that are hidden away in closets that are jammed with items that you haven't worn in years or things you no longer need or can use. The hidden parts of the home must also be organized in order for you to have a truly organized home. By doing this, you make more room for when you acquire new things and you also feel better when you need to open your closets or drawers as everything is much more neatly displayed. It gives you a more relaxed feeling, not to mention much more space and a greater ability to find items that you may want to wear or use with much greater ease.

I also find that people tend to collect a lot of kitchen gadgets, Tupperware, mixing bowls, and just overall more than they ever use. Losing the lids to the plastic ware is as common in our house as losing matching socks. And nobody likes opening a cupboard and everything falls right out! This cupboard is re-organized quite frequently due to the irritation factor.

If your pans tend to be in piles, purchase a pan organizer that you can slide out anytime you want to grab a pan. These are sold at most stores like Home Depot or Lowes. I am so glad we installed them in our home as they really make life easier.

Chapter 7 ~ Paperwork, Office



Planning when to organize your rooms and closets after the initial complete organization has been done will make your life easier in the future. Make a schedule, use a planner, and a “to-do list”. Without a to-do list my life would be completely out of control. I may not

get everything done that’s on it every day, but the rest gets transferred to the next day and on it goes.

One room that always irritates me when it hasn’t been kept up with is my home office. This room has a mind of its own.

Paperwork is one of the biggest headaches to keep straight. I’ve found some good organizational tips to keep ahead of the game with this one.

If you haven’t already started cleaning out your office, or the table in which all your paperwork sits, then you’ll have to start from scratch, but it will be worth it! Go through every single piece of paper and see what it is. Having an unorganized office can be a recipe for disaster in the business world. It can be very easy for things to get out of control and for your performance to begin to suffer. It is important to get things in your control and organized in your office as soon as possible.

Start by organizing your paperwork. Use file holders and make sure that your cabinets are all in order. Use labels and file paperwork accordingly. This is the first step toward Start organizing your office by making piles in order of importance. The paperwork you need to get to right away, a trash pile, and a pile to be filed or kept somewhere else. Then file everything you

can and use the dividers in your drawers, so things are not all in piles. Label everything you can possibly label to make your life easier. Donate books you don't read or need. Free up space. Label everything you think you will possibly need so you can find it quickly.

Try to clean off your desk, whether you are at home or work, or even have or need a desk. Try to make sure you're productively putting things away as you use them.

You have to also organize your time when you are in the office. Your time is one of your greatest assets at work. Many people find that they waste a great deal of time when it comes to work because they allow others to dictate their time instead of making their own time count. You need to prioritize the work that you have to do and get done first before other work. If you work in any type of average office, there is always some sort of emergency arising or fire that needs to be put out. You often will have to stop working on a project to take care of these emergencies. This does not mean that you cannot be organized. To the contrary, you need to be organized so that you can effectively prioritize your work and get the job done. You also have to be able to be flexible in your organization.

One way to do this is to map out your day so that you have a goal set of what you plan to do for the day. Leave some time open so that in case an emergency arises, you can take care of it. Have a list in front of you for what you plan to do each day and check off the projects as you finish them. Each day should begin with goals that will enable you to do your work. Keeping a list of these goals is one of the most effective ways to organize your time in the office.

Leave out personal phone calls or at the very least, keep them to a minimum. People tend to waste time in the office talking to other employees or talking on the phone with friends and family. This not only throws you off kilter with regard to your organization, but it can also catch the eyes of the boss. If your employer sees that you are idle for a good part

of the day, or wasting time talking, they may feel that you are not necessary to the staff. These days, it pays to be as productive as ever when it comes to work.

If you are in the position of calling for meetings, make sure that they are short and to the point. Prepare ahead of time by using software like Power Point and printing up information so that everyone can be informed to your point and then keep the information for later use.

Be sure to take your lunch and breaks as scheduled. Some people have the idea that they should work through their lunch that they will be more productive. This is not true. People who skip their lunch often get less done because they get burned out. You need to take a break once in a while for lunch and coffee so that you can be more effective at work.

Keep up to date with the latest computer technology that can also help you stay more organized. There are many office programs available that you can use for this purpose. I worked at an office once where one woman got promoted continually because she kept the company up to date on all of the latest software that better organized the office. She ended up carving out her own position by simply keeping abreast of technology, learning it and then teaching it to others.

Make sure that you keep your computer free from dust and use a tool that will keep the keyboard clean. Keep coffee and drinks away from the computer so that you do not end up spilling it on the keyboard and harming your computer.

By keeping your office papers organized, using the right organizational tools and making sure that you make the most of your time when you are in the office, you will find that you are much more productive. Keeping a list of goals and writing them down, preferably using one of the many online tools or apps available, is one way that you can make sure that you are doing

your job each day. Remember to be flexible enough so that you can help with emergency situations that arise during working hours.

Make use of your computer or smartphone to keep a calendar with a list of what you have to do each day and set yourself reminders of your daily activities and appointments. You can also print up schedules to hang on the refrigerator, menus for the week, chore assignments and even plan a party using these tools. You should be sure to make use of this technology in order to stay organized.

Organizing your life is more than just being able to keep a clean house and keep things in order. It also involves planning. For example, you can keep a grocery list online or use an app and check the items that you need when you go shopping. If you go grocery shopping without a list, you not only end up spending more money than you would usually spend, but you also spend more time rummaging around the store. You can also go online and get quick and easy recipes, for free to help with meal planning.

If you have a business, you can do your payroll and organize your finances on programs that will help you figure your income taxes and business taxes due. Whether for business or personal use, keep track of your expenses and income throughout the year on your computer or smartphone.

Take advantage of online calendars to remember birthdays and special occasions so that you can send cards. There are websites that will send cards to those on your list automatically, mailing them for you and thus saving you even more time.

Chapter 8 ~ The Importance of Routines



Organization also involves developing routines when it comes to cleaning out clutter, closets, drawers as well as cleaning your home. You are better off to have a schedule or some sort of date in mind when it comes to cleaning or your work will never be done. If you get into a habit of cleaning and organizing on a regular basis, your home will

not only look cleaner, but you will feel more relaxed.

My mother still has the same routine when it comes to cleaning that she has used since she first got married. She dusts on a certain day, cleans the bathrooms on a certain day, cleans the kitchen on a certain day, etc. This is the way that things were usually done years ago when women had more time to devote to their homes.

Whether you are cleaning by yourself or with a partner, you should develop a routine as to when you do your cleaning. You can take one job a day to make it easier, or you can clean your entire house from top to bottom in one day. I use the one-day routine with Saturday being cleaning day.

I can get my entire house cleaned to the point where it looks pretty presentable within three to four hours. I start by cleaning the kitchen, and the bathrooms. Then I dust everywhere, tidy, and vacuum. Then I take the mop out and clean the floors. I use a cleaning caddy that I take from room to room, so I am not traipsing across the house multiple times.

I ignore my kids' rooms because they are now old enough to do this themselves. Both of them know that they have to wash their sheets and clean their rooms in order to be comfortable. Both of them realize that they would rather live in a clean room than a pigsty. I have given them the tools and the knowledge of how to take care of themselves. I am often sorely tempted to clean my daughter's room as she often leaves her room like a tornado whipped through it, but as this would not be teaching her anything, I bite my lip and simply close the door.

The main thing is that I have a routine. I know just how to get started and when it is over.

By developing this routine and doing it every Saturday, it gives me a great satisfaction when it is all over, the house is clean for a while and I know that next Saturday, I will do it again. If I just cleaned whenever I felt that the house needed it, I could be cleaning all of the time and my work would never be done. The routine gives me a sense of accomplishment and also allows me to relax and not worry about cleaning again until the next week, unless something happens to interrupt the routine - like someone spilling something on the floor. I will clean the toilet every couple of days and mop the kitchen floor during the week, and I make the bed every day, but the rest of it is for Saturday.

The big jobs like windows need cleaning every few months and I set aside a Sunday to get that done about 3 times a year. Aside from the patio doors which get cleaned every week.

Routines are not just about cleaning your house, they are a way for you to maintain order and organization in your own life. In addition to cleaning, I also have a cooking routine. I plan out my meals when I go to the grocery store and cook something usually every night for us to eat. There are many, many recipes that are nutritious and can be made in ten minutes or less that you can use when it comes to cooking. Once in a while, take a night off and order a pizza or carry out. But by organizing your menu for the week

and having an idea of what to cook, you not only save time, but save money. Eating out all of the time can be expensive and who wants to fret over what they are going to eat for dinner every night?

In addition to helping you with the house, routines will also help you when it comes to raising your children. Little kids thrive on routine. You know how important it is for babies to be fed regularly and changed. Babies thrive on routine as it gives them a sense of security. The same goes for children. I raised my kids with a routine when it came to bedtime. I was never very strict when it came to mapping out each second of their lives and never really wanted them to live in an environment where they had no time to just play or be kids. I encouraged sports and other activities and dutifully drove them to where they had to go. We ended up building the routine of our family around these programs that threw us off kilter when it came to dinners at times. However, I knew my kids were getting a routine at school and would get back into the routine when they were ready for bed.

My brother has little children who go to bed whenever they want. There is a great deal of commotion in that house when it comes to the kids going to bed because they never want to go. As a result, the kids are often up until all hours with no sort of bedtime routine at all.

One of the things that I am very proud of is that I never had any trouble putting my kids to bed and getting them to go to sleep.

This was so simple and took an hour at most each night, but once they were in bed, I then had my time to myself, without hearing whining and crying or having to yell upstairs for them to go to sleep. I simply followed an easy routine that made them go to sleep and also enabled them to have plenty of rest for school the next day.

I set a bedtime early on. Before bed, they would each take their showers and then proceed to have cookies and milk. This was something that they

looked forward to every night. After cookies and milk time, I took them up to bed and we would go into one of the kids' bedrooms for a story. We alternated between rooms for this purpose. I then proceeded to read to them a story every night. When they were little and their attention spans were short, I would read quickly, sometimes just thumbing through the book and explaining pictures. As they got older, I began to read other books to them. Then I would tuck them into their beds, give them a kiss goodnight and they would go to sleep. I did this roughly at the same time every night, altering only the books and I never had any trouble with them going to bed or even arguing that they didn't want to go to bed. Never underestimate the power of routine when it comes to children and how much easier it can make their life and yours. This routine not only made my kids sleep well at night and not have to make me threaten them to go to bed, but it also made them enjoy reading and as a result of getting enough sleep and learning to appreciate books, they both did well in school.

People with dogs also know the value of routine. If you have a dog, the secret to getting it housebroken and becoming a well-behaved dog is routine. Dogs, like children, thrive on routine. Cats don't care as they are in a world of their own, although it does matter to them that you regularly feed them, change their water and clean their litter box.

Kids and dogs, however, are not the only things that thrive on routine. Adults also feel a sense of comfort at enjoying routines. It does make them have a more organized life as well as a healthier life. If you go to bed the same time each night and wake in the morning at the same time, it is better for your body. If you watch a certain program on TV before you go to bed, you will feel as though you have something to look forward to each night. Most of us all have an innate desire for some sort of structure in our lives.

Routines, however, are not etched in stone. There are times when routines are broken. This happens now and then, and you should not get anxious about it. Simply fall back into the routine when whatever situation that drove you out of the routine has calmed down. For example, my bedtime

routine for my kids was broken on many occasions such as holidays, parties, overnight trips and vacations. While you want to establish a routine that will make everyone feel more secure and yourself more organized, you also do not want to feel like you are running a boot camp. Becoming so rigid in your routine that you cannot alter it now and then will not make anyone feel more relaxed as you will be so worried about the routine that you skip things that break into your schedule.

Remember earlier when I talked about the Saturday cleaning schedule? Well, there have been times when I have been out of town or had something to do on a Saturday where I couldn't adhere to the schedule. So, what did I do? I just did the same thing on Sunday. One time, I skipped cleaning for an entire week because I was out of town and the house didn't fall apart.

So, while the secret of good organization is routine, it should not be one that is so rigid that it defeats the purpose and actually causes anxiety. Learn to try to stick with a routine as much as possible, but do not worry if something happens to upset the schedule.

Just go with the flow and get back into the groove when you can. The routine should be a tool you use to stay organized, not a prison that confines you to a rigid schedule.

Chapter 9 ~ Paper/Pictures



Papers and pictures need special care and once lost, are difficult if not impossible to replace. For this reason, I feel compelled to devote an entire chapter on this subject. I have lost many important

papers over my lifetime due to not being organized. Many of these documents were able to be replaced, such as birth certificates, social security cards and marriage certificates. But this also caused me a great deal of stress and I had to pay for them to be replaced.

Some papers are lost for good because they were not recorded instruments and merely letters of agreement. Some things I wanted to keep and are gone because I errantly threw them away or lost them somehow. I can give you a list of the many papers that I lost due to disorganization, but I think you get the idea.

Pictures are usually irreplaceable. At least the older ones that were not downloaded to a computer and are not on some flash drive. Pictures are often all we have of a memory, except what is in our minds. Who doesn't like looking through old photographs and reminiscing?

The secret to making sure that you do not lose pictures and papers is to keep them in a place where you know where they are and, if possible, in the case of pictures, in some sort of album. If you have always wanted to make a scrapbook and have a bunch of loose pictures laying around all over the place, gather them up and put them in boxes that are labeled and store

them for future use. You can purchase boxes that are made for this purpose or just shoeboxes. Make sure that the boxes are clearly labeled and that the pictures are all stored in a dry, dark place.

One item that may help you organize both pictures and papers is a portable filing cabinet. You can purchase these at any office supply store and get folders as well as file separators to help you organize everything. This way, at least you know where everything is, and you can get to it when you need it.

Case in point - a few years ago, my ex-husband was taking my kids on a cruise and needed their birth certificates. I looked in the mess of papers that contained all my “important documents” that were jumbled together and easily found my daughter’s birth certificate, but not my son’s. I couldn’t find it at all. To make matters even more fun, the day that he told me that they needed the birth certificates was Christmas Eve. They were leaving Christmas night for the cruise. And the courthouse was closing early on Christmas Eve.

Fortunately, he didn’t wait an hour to tell me about the needed birth certificate and we rushed to the courthouse and were able to get a birth certificate for my son so that he could go on this cruise. It all worked out, but it had the potential for disaster. Especially since I later found my son’s birth certificate in a drawer in the kitchen. The day after Christmas, I went to the office supply store to get organizers for important papers. The other day my daughter needed her social security card for a new job, and I was able to go right into the file and pull it out for her. Had I not had this, she might have not been able to get the job.

Many of my older pictures are in photo albums, but I still have many loose pictures that I mean to put in photo albums. But although I keep putting this project off, I still have the photos organized by the approximate years, vacation settings or holiday settings in a file box. I have another file box for pictures that were handed down to me that belonged to my grandparents.

They are easy to get to because they are all stored in one place and organized.

For digital photos it is a good idea to create folders and subfolders and label them by years or vacation settings. However, it would be a stretch to say they're stored safely. You are exactly one natural disaster, angry ex incident, or ill-timed coffee spill away from being back at square one. Or worse, from even losing what you started with. So it is worth thinking about backups. It is worth investing in an external hard drive as well as having a backup in the Cloud, backups can be automated pretty easily.

If you take videos of your children or family, you also want to make sure that they are clearly labeled so that they are not accidentally tossed out. One of the most heartbreaking things that I can think of is the fact that my daughter and her friends made a movie with our old video camera one time. It was cute at the time and I stored it with our other videos but did not label it. I'm sure that it was tossed out accidentally as it is nowhere to be found. And that little video cannot be recreated - it was a moment in time that I would enjoy seeing now that she is grown, and it's gone.

So be sure to properly care for and store photos, videos and important papers in a safe place where you can have easy access to them and be able to retrieve them when you want them. At the time you get back a bunch of pictures, you will most likely look at them and put them on a counter where they will eventually move to a drawer and then possibly lost. You may not think of them at the time, but someday, you will want to see those photos to remember that event.

There are numerous ways to get organized when it comes to documents and photos. The best way is to use a waterproof file case where you can have everything at your fingertips whenever you need it. It can take you a while to sort through your papers and pictures to organize them, but it will be time well spent.

Chapter 10 ~ Gadgets that Help



There are many gadgets that you can purchase to help you better organize your home. These can stretch space and make it easier for you to keep things in a place where you can find them. Here is a list of some of the gadgets that you can use to help better organize your home:

Cleaning caddy

Closet organizers

Kitchen cabinet organizers

Shoe organizers

Vacuum sealed bags

Hooks

Lazy Susan

Storage furniture

Tool kits

File organizers

Computer apps

Stackable shelves

Laundry separation device

A cleaning caddy can hold all of your cleaning products and make it easier for you to find everything when you need to clean instead of having to haul out individual bottles and sprays. You can store everything in this caddy and save time as well as space in your utility closet with this handy gadget that is available at most stores that sell buckets and other cleaning goods.

Closet organizers can be installed on your own and are available in most home improvement stores. If you do not have a closet organizer and cannot afford to make this investment, you can purchase stackable hangers that will give you more room in your closet.

Shoe racks are an old organizing tool that not only keep your shoes all lined up and looking neat, but also keep them from being damaged. You can also purchase shoe organizers that allow you to stack your shoes in a box that is covered with a clear plastic cover that slips under the bed.

Vacuum sealed bags can allow you to put all of your clothes into a bag and then seal it so that the air is removed. These are waterproof and compact the clothes so that you take up a great deal less space and can be used to store seasonal clothes as well as for packing suitcases.

Hooks can be placed on the interior of closets that can allow you to hang up certain items like cleaning brushes, mops and even tools. You can purchase stick on hooks at just about any hardware or home improvement store.

A Lazy Susan is an old organizing tool that used to be standard with some kitchen cabinets. You can still have this type of cabinet installed in your home today as it usually goes in the corner of the kitchen cabinets. The interior of the cabinet spins around, giving you easy access to everything

and also making the most of your cabinet space. You can purchase these items in some home improvement and other stores that can go into your cabinet to make the most of your space, make your cabinets more organized and give you easy access to items.

Storage furniture comes in all shapes and sizes. I have a cedar chest that I use as a coffee table. The more storage space you have in your home, the easier it is to keep things organized. You can use cabinets for storing collectibles that you can use for display. Make all of your furniture count so that you have enough storage in your home. The main reason people find that their house is unorganized is because they do not have anywhere to put their items. By increasing your storage space, you then increase your ability to get organized.

Tool kits are an easy way to keep your tools all in one place. Even if you do not have a lot of tools, you most likely have hammers, pliers and screwdrivers that you use for certain chores. By having a tool kit or toolbox you can not only store these items much easier, but you can find them when you are ready to use them.

File organizers have been discussed previously in this book as a way that you can store photos and papers. You can purchase these at any office supply store. You can easily find anything you are looking for when it is properly filed. You can also use these items to store bills and receipts.

Computer apps can be used to store your financial information and allow you to be organized when it comes to your money. It can also help you prepare your taxes and keep track of all of your bills and other expenses. When it comes to being organized, you also need to make sure that your finances are organized as well.

Stackable shelves can be put in a playroom or basement for storage of toys and even seasonal items. There are bins that you can use with these shelves

as well. This can make it easier for you to keep a playroom or basement much neater and will also keep the things off of the floor. One of the things that many people worry about when it comes to clutter is kids' toys.

However, kids grow up soon enough and will no longer want these toys. Do your best when it comes to organizing them but never feel that kids' toys make your home a mess - it is never a bad thing to have a home in which children play. Still, you can make it neater by using these stackable shelves.

Laundry separation devices can be an easy way to store clothes that are ready for washing. One of the best types you can get is one with washable hanging nets. These are relatively inexpensive and can help you keep clothes sorted by color or type that are ready for the wash. Instead of just leaving clothes in baskets, you can take them to the laundry area and wash as needed as they are all separated.

There are many more organizing tools that can help you keep your home organized. Space saving devices are also space saving items that you can use to keep organized as well as have extra room. You may want to consider a pull-down ironing board or a table-top ironing board for pressing clothes. You can find many different tools to help keep you organized by going to a home improvement store or even shopping for them online.

Chapter 11 ~ Tips for Saving Time



Part of being organized is making sure that your time is organized. You will feel less under stress if you use some time saving tips to help you throughout the day. Here are 10 tips on saving time that you can use every day in order to save time:

1. Make school lunches the night before

Instead of rushing around in the morning, trying to get everyone ready for school and work, make school lunches the night before and put them in the refrigerator. Label them in bags and they are ready to go the next morning.

2. Lay your clothes out the evening before

Another way to save time every day is to pick out your clothes that you are going to wear the night before and have them ready for you in the morning. This can save you time in the morning as you do not have to waste time in a groggy state trying to figure out what to wear.

3. Do errands on your lunch hour

Instead of just sitting in the lunchroom, take the time to do some errands and get some things that you need for home. This can save you a trip to the store after work and will help you stay organized and will also help you to get exercise.

4. Send packages Priority Mail

You can have Priority Mail boxes delivered to your home from the post office and have any package picked up right at your home. You should have these boxes, which are free, available at your home so that whenever you have to mail a package. It can save you time in going to the post office.

5. Fill up your gas tank when you need gas

Instead of having to stop all of the time at the gas station for gas, fill up your tank. This saves you time and is much more of an organized way to keep track of how much gas you use each week. Since you are likely to use up the gas anyway, you might as well fill it up and save countless trips to the gas station.

6. Put an extension cord on your vacuum cleaner

This is a simple tip that can save you time in moving the cord of the vacuum cleaner when you are vacuuming. You can get to all of the rooms at once and minimize changing the cord into different sockets, thus saving you time.

7. Wake up 15 minutes early to exercise

Not only will you feel more energized, but this can also save you time in going to the gym. If you like to go to the gym, this is another thing that you can do on your lunch hour if you can find one close to where you work.

8. Make a Meal Plan for the Week

Order online and save time. Most places are now offering in-store shopping done for you and you can either pick it up or have it delivered. Make easy freezer meals, such as casseroles on the weekend to save time during the week.

9. Put things back

Make sure you put things back right after you use them so that you will be sure to find them next time you need to use them and also it will save having to sort things out later.

10. Have dinner out once a week

Once a week, treat yourself and your family to carry out foods. This will save you time and give you a break from the kitchen. We always called this “Fast Food Fridays.” It was a nice way to start the weekend without having to cook dinner and everyone enjoyed the different foods. Each week, someone in the family got to pick the carry out of choice.

There are other time saving tips you can use. For example, if you have to go downstairs to do laundry, do not go empty handed when you come up. Bring up something that you need and condense your trips. This can help you save yourself many trips up and down the steps.

Saving time makes you much more organized. This can be the first step in getting organized. As you continue to organize your time, you will come up with other time saving tips for yourself as well.

Chapter 12 ~ Organizing Money



Paying monthly bills by direct debit not only saves you time but also makes sure that you are not missing any payments. Nowadays all banking can be done by smartphone, there is no need to have to visit a branch and even checks can be scanned in.

Make time to keep track of your bank balances. Make sure that you have the money that you think you have in your bank account. When you get automatic payments to your bank account, the money is available right away and cashless payments and transfers also appear straight away on your bank statement.

Make time to create your budget. Be proactive in making your budget instead of “getting around to it.” Block out a specific date and time before the month begins to figure out how much you want to spend on groceries, debt payments and trips to the movies. Add some fun to it—brew your favorite tea or eat some ice cream while you set your spending plan.

Pay off and cut up credit cards. Paying with a debit card means you pay for—and own—an item immediately. Paying with a credit card means you pay off an item over time. You may also pay interest and have to keep track of monthly statements (which doesn’t help with organization). Don’t let the credit cloud hang over your head! Cut up your cards and pay them off. You’ll breathe—and budget—a lot easier.

Autodrafting your savings will make saving much easier! Set up autodrafts that automatically deduct money from your account on the same day each month for things like Christmas savings, a car fund or retirement. It makes saving a lot simpler when the work is done for you.

Chapter 13 ~ Digital Declutter



Look at your phone and clean that up too. Delete apps you don't use, organize your home screen. Take social timewasters off your phone. Make yourself a promise to put the phone down more so you can do other things. Commit to reading a book a month. Commit to making a new recipe per week. Enrich your life!

Open your mail daily and deal with it in a timely manner. Clean out your inbox as often as possible. It feels so good to have your emails cleaned out and dealt with.

Give yourself a digital clean-up. Delete files that are clogging up your PC. Take a look at your computer and move things to the recycle bin, free up your mind! Looking at an organized desktop will help you feel positive about your day!

Digital photography seems like such an elegant solution to the old problem of those boxes full of photos we used to see in our grandparents' closets. The reality of it is, we've replaced those piles of scattered prints with unnamed digital folders and jumbles of semi-cloud-synced albums from every smartphone we've ever owned.

It's so easy to end up with photos saved all over the place – cloud storage, folders spread out all over your computer desktop, external hard drives, thumb drives, photo streams, etc. Organizing all those images can become pretty overwhelming, and it only becomes more so the longer you wait.

Fortunately, there are some simple steps you can take to organize and manage your photo saving workflow and keep it under control.

Name and date your photos, this will make them much easier to find. Photos can easily get duplicated on our phones and computers so don't be afraid to delete duplicates. Immediately after every trip or occasion when you have taken photos go through them and "cull" at least half, only keeping the best, after all, how often will you look at them again?

If your laptop or desktop is running low on storage, Windows's built-in Disk Cleanup tool can find and wipe unneeded files – just search for it in the Start menu. Macs have a similar feature for saving space and clearing out clutter. Old, innocuous-looking files can gobble up huge amounts of space on your laptop, such as backups that are no longer needed, or big downloads that you'd forgotten about.

Enormous attachments can clog up your inbox but it's easy to sort emails by size. To make it easier to organise your inbox in future, you can create filters that automatically tag large messages for review. To do this, create a search that finds all the emails you're interested in, then click the More button, select "Create filter" and click "Create filter with this search".

Get off unwanted mailing lists. Email services weed out a lot of spam, but you probably still get dozens of promotional messages and newsletters every day. For a quieter life, it's best to get off those mailing lists altogether. So unsubscribe from any emails that you delete without reading, every email should show an 'unsubscribe' link at the bottom.

Chapter 14 ~ Keep Your Children Organized



When you have kids, you want them to stay organized as well. You should teach them the value of being organized early on.

One way to do this is to be organized yourself. Teach them to do tasks that they can handle so that they not only develop a sense of self-esteem, but do not end up losing papers and having some teacher write on their report cards that they are very unorganized. I am happy to say that neither of my kids ever got this report. Give them the proper tools that they need for organization. Most schools will give a list of supplies and want you to get file folders and spiral notebooks for each class. Get them in different colors and label them so that your child understands how much easier it is for them to get their homework done and keep track of it with these tools. You can also get them a planner to make sure that they write their assignments down. These are tools that most schools are offering to students today to teach them the value of organization. The old “dog ate my homework” is not a good excuse. Although that being said, our dog did mangle my son’s homework one time. But it was still useable.

Teach them, when they are old enough, how to keep their rooms tidy. The importance of washing their sheets every week and why. Have them put their laundry into the proper bins when they are old enough to do this and when they get older, have them do their own laundry. You may feel as though you are being cruel to make them do these chores, but just the opposite is true. If you do everything for them, how are they supposed to know how to organize themselves. When you go on a trip, have them watch you as you pack for them when they are young. This teaches them what is needed to go on a trip. I did this with both of my kids. I would pack for them when they were young, started teaching them how to pack as they got

older and then had them pack for themselves when they were about 10 years old.

As my children grew older, I taught them to be more organized. They learned how to do chores, the importance of taking out the garbage every day and doing dishes. They learned how to do their own laundry and the importance of why these things had to be done.

Teach your kids the value of organizing their money. You can teach them the budget system. One system that I used was to give them their allowance in cash and some envelopes. I had them mark each envelope with what they planned to use the money on. They deposited a few dollars at a time in these envelopes and when they had enough money, could do as planned. This taught them the value of saving for something as well as budgeting their money. It helped them when they opened their checking accounts.

You should start teaching your kids organization tools as soon as they are old enough to understand the concept. Do not try to force them to do things that they are not yet old enough to do as this will only frustrate them. But give them a good example and show them how as well as teach them why they are doing something. As they get older, give them leeway to do things themselves. If they forget something, do not berate them. Use it as a learning tool.

Use these tips in this book to not only help you organize your life, but also to pass on your organization to others, such as your children and even co-workers, yourself. By being organized, everyone feels better about their life and also has a bit more security and control over their life which sometimes seems as though it is out of control. Do not allow yourself or anyone in your family to feel as though they are a hamster spinning on a wheel. Learn to organize your life, home and work with the easy lessons learned in this book.

Chapter 15 ~ Attracting What You Want and Decluttering Your Mind



In case you are constantly bombarded with negative thoughts such as feelings of anxiety, stress, nervousness, jealousy and even inferiority, you will start observing

negative reality in your life. This is because as stated by the Law of Attraction your thought process is the magnet which attracts subsequent reality into your life. If your thought process is positive with positive feelings such as love, peace and joy, you will find positive reality in your life. Negative thought process can attract negative reality which could often lead to depression.

Clear The Clutter

To experience the effectiveness of the Law of Attraction and to bring positivity into your life, you must be able to clear the clutter from your mind to allow positive thoughts to grow. For this you must understand that any thought when provided attention will multiply into more thoughts. Thus, if you think positively, the positive thoughts will multiply resulting in you attracting positivity into your life. The fuel for any thought process both negative and positive is providing attention to the thought process.

You can use this principle to remove the negative thoughts from your mind especially before you start to feel overwhelmed by the negative thought process. Do not provide any attention to it if the negative thought arises in your mind and instead divert your attention into a positive activity. The negative thoughts will starve due to the lack of attention and soon you will find that your mind is filled with positive thoughts which will bring

positivity into your life. Lack of attention to any thought process will reduce the momentum of the thought process and diverting your attention from the negative thoughts will create huge spaces between the negative thoughts so that they do not have any power over your life.

Positive thoughts are creative forces, and they arise from abundance and love. Your being has abundant capacity to generate positive and creative thoughts which when active can help you clear your mind from the clutter of negative thoughts to transform your mind with conditioned thinking. Initially it might be difficult to starve the negative thought process because each negative thought will seek attention by its very nature. You must try and divert your mind to starve the negative thought of attention and momentum. Even though it might feel uncomfortable, sometimes even fearful you must avoid paying attention to the negative thoughts.

Even if you feel panicked you must remove your attention from you thought process and start doing something positive to allow positive thoughts to multiply in your mind and completely uproot the negative thought process. The most natural way to clear your mind of all the clutter is to allow your awareness to relax. You must open your focus rather than narrowing it which will help positive thoughts multiply.

Being Very Clear About What You Want

The Law of Attraction provides one of the most powerful ways of achieving success and your heart's desires. But for the Law of Attraction to work in an effective manner it is extremely important to have a clear and consistent intention.

By having a clear and consistent intention a vibration match will be possible which means that you will be able to generate energetic harmony. An inconsistent and unclear intention will not allow you to generate a vibration match which can cancel your request to the universe.

For example if you wish to lose body fat by saying that you wish to become thin yet order French fries at a restaurant, you will not be able to generate a vibration match causing a cancellation of your request to the universe. Not only is this an inconsistent and unclear intention, your actions do not support your intention which results in the misuse of the Law of Attraction.

If your intention is to cook fresh fish from a Lake, you cannot sit on a couch and use the Law of Attraction by saying that you want some fresh fish to cook. Instead, you must get a fishing pole and start fishing in the lake. Your actions will provide a vibration match for your intention allowing the universe to see that you clearly wish to get fresh fish from the lake to cook. Only then the universe will get the fish to notice the bait and you can start getting fresh fish to cook.

The basic essence of the Law of Attraction is to have clear and consistent intentions for the Law of Attraction to be effective. The more concrete and vivid your intention is the more quickly you will be able to achieve the outcome. For your intention to be vivid and concrete you must be able to see yourself in the outcome and you must try and make the outcome happen through your actions. While acting on your intentions you must ensure that you clear your mind of all negative thoughts and remain focused on what you wish to achieve. There must be no doubt in your mind as to what you wish to manifest.

The imagery that you create about the outcome you desire must mimic real-life as much as possible. Thus, if you wish to eat a chocolate cake you must be able to see the cake, smell the cake and ultimately taste the cake in the mental image. You must also imagine yourself holding the fork as you cut into the cake and bring it close to your mouth. If you can include all your five senses you will be able to create a more vivid intention which will help you achieve the outcome much faster. You must also repeat this mental image in your mind frequently to increase the speed of achieving the outcome.

In closing, remember you have the power inside you to achieve anything you wish to do. Remember to put friends and family first, keep in touch with all your loved ones, and know that you are a strong person!

Chapter 16 ~ Resources and Recommendations



There are many planners available on the market for almost anything you can think of. I still like my pen and paper, but electronic planning is an excellent way to keep you organized.

One of the most popular online planners is:

<https://todoist.com/features> it has a free option as well as some paid options. I really like this one. You can easily add in things to be done, organize by priority, and the day it needs to be done. You can also delegate to other people. You can categorize for Home, Work, etc. A really nice feature. It works across all your devices to make it easily accessible.

ZenDay is a great app for iOS and Android users alike. Are you someone who needs an overview of all your daily to-dos before you can begin plugging away? Then ZenDay is the app for you. With a calming, flowing timeline, you can zero in on your first task, but also see what you need to focus on next. The app also has a color-coding feature, which turns nearly overdue items a different color, which helps you zero in on priority items and get caught up at a glance.

A calendar and to-do list in one, [Any.do](#) is ideal for those who need a comprehensive tool that covers tasks ranging from buying a birthday gift to finishing a work presentation. It's like the virtual version of crossing off every item on your paper to-do list.

Any.do is ideal for viewing both your month at a glance and a closer, day-to-day list of action items. The app's dual view shows your calendar at the

top, then a scrolling list below of to-dos, events, and even overdue tasks. Tap on an event, and a new window with the location, time, invitees, and other details of the event pop up. Minimize, and you're back to the main screen.

The app is also compatible with your other calendars – Google Calendar, iCloud, and Outlook. It is available on the Google Play Store, the Apple App Store, Amazon Alexa, and Google Chrome.

[Cozi.com](https://cozi.com) – Cozi is free (with a premium version option). The only thing I use this for is grocery lists, but I have yet to find an app that does grocery lists as well as it does. It's super easy to switch between stores, add new items, check them off, and I like that you can put headings in your lists as well. Also, it syncs across devices for multiple users.

<https://evernote.com/> is also super useful and very popular.

We hope you will enjoy your new more organized life!