KW FreeSkool
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"Organizing isn't about being overly disciplined. It's about being structured just enough so that you can find anything within three minutes."

- Deb Allert

GET ORGANIZED

Week 3: Organizing your stuff

Philosophy

- Organizing is about identifying what's important to you and making it more accessible.   - Julie Morgenstern

- Not "one-size-fits-all" – there's no "right" system, just the right system for you.
  - "Outside in" vs "inside out"

- "Organize to the point where you bring serenity into your life. That's rarely achieved by perfectionism."   - Deb Allert

The Organizing Process

Julie Morgenstern

- Analyze
- Strategize
- Attack
  - **S**ort
  - **P**urge
  - **A**ssign a home
  - **C**ontainerize
  - **E**qualize

Marilyn Bohn

- Searchlight
- Spotlight
- Green Light

Regina Leeds

- Eliminate
- Categorize
- Organize

Workshop Structure

- Week 2 Recap
- Analyze your current situation
  - Group discussion
- Strategize
  - Explore 'attack' phase in detail
  - Filing/paper management
- Attack
  - Work time

Week 2: Organize your space

- Analyze
    - Common causes of clutter
    - What isn't working & why?
- Strategize
    - Kindergarten model of organizing
    - Define zones, map out your space
- Attack
    - Tips for organizing each room/space

Review: Causes of Clutter

Technical errors

- Items have no home
- Confusing system
- Inconvenient storage
- Out of sight, out of mind
- Organizing is boring

External realities

- Limited space
- Uncooperative partners
- In transition
- Unrealistic workload

Psychological Barriers

- Need for abundance
- Need for chaos to 'conquer'
- Unclear goals
- Need to retreat
- Need for distraction
- Dislike the space
- Sentimental attachment
- Need for perfection
- Fear of losing creativity

Analyze

1. What's working?

2. What's not working?

3. What items, areas, or activities are most essential / important to you?

   - 80/20 rule: pinpoint the 20% you use regularly.

4. Why do you want to get organized?

5. What's causing the problems? What hasn't worked in the past?

Strategize

1. Review: Kindergarten Model
2. Review: the strategizing process
3. The "attack" phase
4. Tips & techniques for paper management

Review: the model

Kindergarten model of organizing:

1. Room divided into activity zones.
2. Easy to focus on one activity at a time.
3. Items stored at their point of use.
4. Everything has a home & it's fun to put things away.
5. Visual menu of everything that's important.

My key points:

- Group like items.
- Put things where you use them.
- Make it appealing.

Review: the process

A. Define Zones

Activity Zones | Supplies | Storage Unit

B. Map out the space

1. Plan around your natural **habits**.
2. Think about the **relationship** between activities.
3. Categorize spaces: **premium** (daily use), **secondary** (weekly use), **semi-storage** (seasonal), and **hard-core storage**.

Attack

1. **S**ort
2. **P**urge
3. **A**ssign a home
4. **C**ontainerize
5. **E**qualize

"Organize to the point where you bring serenity into your life. That's rarely achieved by perfectionism."
- Deb Allert

Attack: Sort

- Identify what you have and place it into categories.
- When things are scattered, you can't quantify what you have.

You'll need

- 4 boxes: garbage, recycling, donations, 'belongs somewhere else'.
- Lots of clear space to lay things out in categories.
- Paper & pen/marker for notes and/or category labels if you want them.

Attack: Sort

The "keep?" test

- Pick up each thing and ask:

  - Do I **use** this?

  - Do I **love** this?

  - Do I **need** this? (be careful about this one!)

  - What **category** does this belong in?

Attack: Sort

Categorize

- Place each item in the appropriate box if you're getting rid of it or it belongs elsewhere.
- Otherwise, categorize it.
- Don't spend time on decisions at this stage.

While sorting, focus on:

- *Identifying what's important to you*
  - Based on your analysis
  - What you currently use/love/need
- *Grouping similar items*
  - Place things together based on how *you* associate things
  - Fewer categories = easier to maintain

Attack: Purge (de-cluttering)

Review & "keep-test" everything you've sorted.

- Do I **use** this?
- Do I **love** this?
- Do I **need** this?

Not sure? Ask more questions:

- Can you actually foresee needing it?
- Can you borrow it from someone else?
- Is it inexpensive and easy to replace?
- Is it unique?

Hesitant? Two options:

1. Organize what you've got & pare down later.
2. 'Maybe' pile.

Attack: Purge (de-cluttering)

Other purging ideas/notes

- **The 2-week (or month) challenge**
- **The "second pass"**
- Health & beauty products: Toss anything older than 1-2 years.
- Food: Toss anything expired. Donate non-perishables you're not going to use.
- Books: Make a "read by ___" shelf.
- Clothes: Make a "wear by __" pile.

Sentimental Clutter

Sentimental Clutter

☐ Take a picture.

☐ Save the best – toss the rest.

☐ Give things a loving new home/life by giving them away.

☐ Give yourself permission to let go.

☐ Bring what's left into your day-to-day life: use it or display it.

Attack: Assign a home

Decide exactly where to keep everything.

- Remember the Kindergarten model: group like items together right where you use them.

- Make sure it will be *intuitive* for you to both find things and put them away.

- Choose one rule for consistency.

- Be creative!

Attack: Assign a home

Keep in mind:
- Appropriate sizing.
- Single function storage
  - Don't mix categories within a storage unit.
- Logical sequencing
  - Follow your own associations.
- Accessibility and safety.
- Premium, secondary, semi-storage, and hard-core storage spaces.
  - Premium spaces ideally at eye level/within easy reach.

Attack: Containerize

- Improves retrieval and return of items.
- Helps limit accumulation.
- Can be the most fun & creative part of organizing.

Select appropriate containers
- Aesthetics
- Visibility (if desired)
- Sturdiness: If they don't hold up, you'll stop using them
- Manageability/accessibility: Easy to handle/get into.
- Size

- Think outside the *box*.
  - Hang, stack, use unconventional containers.
- Label (if desired)

Attack: Equalize

- Make regular maintenance routine.
  - Tidying will never take long now that things have a place to go.
- Evaluate regularly until you're happy with things.
- Adjust when needs, possessions, or priorities change.
- "One in, one (or two!) out" rule.
- Keep track of what you have.

Staying motivated

- Post your goals
- Note your progress
- Reward yourself along the way.
- Take before/after shots.
- Make it fun: race a timer or CD.
- Remember what you're gaining – space, time, mindfulness, etc.

Paper management

Piles happen for two main reasons:

- You don't have the right files set up.
- You have files but don't put things away.

Three steps:

1. Inbox
2. Active files
3. Archived files

Paper: Filing Systems

Generally, three levels:

- Types - distinguished by location and/or colour.
- Broad categories – ideally one hanging folder.
- Specific categories – individual files in a hanging folder.

- Categorize/title files based on *retrieval* – where will you *look* for it?

- Colour-coding by *type* of file can be helpful, and/or by broad category.

- The usual rules apply:
  - Don't over-categorize.
  - Don't have conflicting categories.
  - One category per unit (file).

Paper: Inbox

- Choose a reasonably sized box, folder, or basket.
- Put everything in the basket as it comes in – except junk.
- Keep everything you need for processing nearby: recycling bin, chequebook, stamps, envelopes…
- Sort regularly (weekly recommended).
  - "Touch it once" – once you pick it up, deal with it or put it where it belongs.
  - If it takes less than a couple of minutes, deal with it.
  - If you don't have a file for something, make one.
  - Try this: sort items into categories, then deal with one category at a time.

Paper: Sorting

Questions to ask:

- Do I want it? Do I need it?
- Will it add something new?
- Is it significant for my purposes?
- Do I foresee a use for it?
- Is it timely? Is it quality?
- Is it accurate and reliable?
- Is it easy to understand?
- Can I obtain it elsewhere? (e.g. online)

Paper: Bills, receipts, etc

Bills

- Keep in one place. Sort to facilitate payments.
  - E.g. 1st/15th of the month, or "pay this week/next week".
- Switch to online/automatic payments if possible.
- Move to archive files immediately after processing.

Receipts

- Get receipts for all purchases to verify later.
- Sort receipts and record expenses. Discard 'non-returnables'.
- File 'returnables' in an active file. Sort monthly and discard expired.
- Archive receipts for large purchases, with warranty information. Sort yearly.

Information-based: magazines, handouts, newsletters, other resources

- Keep only the relevant pages, and file them.
- Cancel anything you're not reading regularly.
- *Try this*: keep resources & product manuals in binders with plastic sleeves.

Paper: Active files

- Keep current files accessible
  - Make it as easy to file as to pile.
  - Open file box for a one-step process.
  - Portable so you can work where you want.
- Categorize based on use
- Always keep a 'current taxes' file.
- *Try this*: hang to-do items with binder clips.

Paper: Archives

- Only keep documents as long as you need to
  - Use expiration dates to easily identify when to discard.
- If you can reprint a valid statement, no need for a paper copy.
- Financial records: keep until reconciled with annual statements, then keep those for 7 years.
  - Tax returns   Forever
  - Supporting material   7 years
  - Bills/bank statements   1 year (until annual)
  - Annual statements   7 years
  - Pay stubs   1 year (until T4)
  - Tuition bills   1 year (until T2202A)

Paper: Archives cont'd

Digital Archives

- Scan anything you want to keep for info but don't need original copy.
- Scan original copies before sending them anywhere (e.g. health claim receipts).

Important Documents

- Keep most important in a single accordion file or box that you can grab in an emergency.
- May bridge active/archive categories.

Work time: attack

If you brought stuff to sort, sort it!

- See what categories emerge
- Think of what other ones you'll need
- Paper clips provided

Alternate activities

- Work on Analyze or Strategize phase
- Make a plan of attack
- Look through resources/books

Debrief

- Did you accomplish anything today?
- What strategies are you going to try?
- What areas do you want to focus on?

Free organizing help!

2 or more workshops = 2 hours of help

Details/Restrictions:

- Less than half an hour from my home on the GRT bus system.
- The hours can be consultation or hands-on, spent on either time, money, or stuff/space.
- Roommates can combine hours.

In return:

- Feedback, before/after shots, testimonial, permission to talk about the experience or use examples in my work.

Prep for other sessions

Next week:

- Bring your computer if you can

Week 5: Money:

- Keep track of your spending

Resources

www.RealSimple.com | **www.OnlineOrganizing.com** | **www.unclutterer.com**

www.operationorganization.com | **www.apartmenttherapy.com**

Simplicity Series at: world.edu/author/rebecca-sargent/

http://www.realsimple.com/home-organizing/organizing/tips-techniques/storage-ideas-small-spaces-00100000067344/index.html

Solutions to common stumbling blocks:
http://www.realsimple.com/home-organizing/organizing/declutter-your-home-00100000068526/index.html

Getting rid of sentimental clutter:
http://www.realsimple.com/home-organizing/organizing/sentimental-clutter-00100000072894/index.html

Unclutterer's standards for keeping/purging books:
http://unclutterer.com/2011/04/12/keeping-book-clutter-off-the-bookshelf/

http://www.realsimple.com/home-organizing/5-steps-to-simpler-record-keeping-10000000688976/index.html

http://www.learnvest.com/2010/11/medical-records-and-credit-card-accounts-store-your-personal-info-in-one-place

http://www.realsimple.com/home-organizing/organizing/streamline-your-supplies-00000000052054/