

**Inside the Mind of an Professional Organizer - By Jessi Bushman aka “Organizer Jessi”
Relationships & Combining Households**

Love is in the air! Relationships inspire a new beginning by bringing 2 people together. This includes new experiences, fine-tuning your lifestyles and most important, learning to compromise with one another. With everything positive happening in your newly combined life, its easy to overlook the **stuff** you bring into your relationship. This applies to new romances or those who would like to re-evaluate their current living situation.

Regardless of your age and relationship longevity, its amazing how quickly our stuff can accumulate and take over, not only our physical space, but also our mental clarity.

I would like to introduce you to “Organizer Jessi's 5 Principles of Organization” (R.S.S.A.F.) **Role, Space, Stuff, Accessibility & Flexibility**. My thought process when organizing any space begins by evaluating your stuff and taking your possessions to the next level.

By working with your partner, (or a Household Organizer), you can approach spaces, Room-to-Room, Day-to-Day. Start by identifying the **Role** of a room. Evaluate the **Space** you have to store your **Stuff** and the **Accessibility** you need to retrieve it. Keep in mind, your **Flexibility** is key for successful placement, as I can guarantee future customization and relocation will happen.

The **Flexibility** aspect is where many people get stuck. As we age, our desire for items change, as well as our need for things. We typically fall into old routines, do things out of habit and retain items based on “what if” or “quilt” scenarios. Keeping an open mind will help you let go, eliminate chaos, and provide better **Accessibility** for possessions you truly use.

One of the biggest challenges couples face when combining households is making sense of how to downsize and merge. This is know as Space Planning. If you are not a visual person, this can become overwhelming - deciding what stays, what goes and where to place your combined possessions. Who's existing home will being occupied? Are you moving someplace new? Are children involved and more commonly, are parents a part of the equation? This process can be quite enjoyable, with the correct mindset, planning and approach.

Here are a few examples when downsizing and combining homes:

Furniture – by far the “biggest” component within a household. A living room overwhelmed with 4 couches is awesome...but I'm assuming your college days are behind you. Downsizing

furniture is the first and most important step when combining homes. Appearance, comfort and function are ideal features to begin with. Remember **R.S.S.A.F.** when space planning. If a furniture piece doesn't make the final cut in a specific room, compromise and prioritize your effort to find a better suited spot for the piece. If you can't make sense of a new location, its probably time for it to go.

The Kitchen - start by evaluating overall condition of items, quantity of similar products, matching sets and functionality. Some things are seasonal, generational, use specific or geared towards children. When was the last time you actually used these pieces? Its possible, such items can be set aside for long-term storage, graciously donated or prepared to sell. Take this approach for every item in your kitchen. When packing, people tend to also overlook perishable expiration dates. In the long run, you end up spending more time and money moving and packing, all to realize your not using items or have the needed space. When combining households, or moving in general, I see a lot of unpacked boxes sitting in storage for a duration of time. Eliminating excess is something I want you to achieve **before** starting your new life together!

The Closet - wardrobes are overwhelming in their own right, but learning to share can become a challenge based on the space you have to work with. We all know, we have more than we actually need. Iowa is unique because we have 4 seasons to consider, sometime alternating options all in one week! Focus on what you are currently wearing – size, style, occasion and how an item makes you feel overall. I suggest creating an on-going donation pile. If you put something on and don't necessarily feel your best in it, move on! Be realistic, accepted your true size and move past any guilt about how much money you spent on something. This mindset will also help you when purchasing new apparel. Remember, the goal is to combine your items, not banish your partners belongings elsewhere!

Finding someone to share your life with is a wonderful experience. I'm excited for those starting a new journey or re-igniting a on-going relationship. Removing items that ultimately cause stress allows you to focus on your life together and creating memories.

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