



# Organizational Disorder

by Christie Judson

**E**at less, exercise more, get organized. If you're like most people, you're constantly trying to work on those three goals. Achieving the first two goals is pretty straightforward: institute a moratorium on drive-thrus and dust off the treadmill – again. However, when it comes to “conquering the clutter,” most of us aren't sure where to begin.

Of course, it's no wonder: the thought of organizing a linen closet that has lost its way or (gasp) tackling the “junk” drawer – a shambolic catch-all of random odds and ends ranging from out-of-date grocery coupons to dried up superglue, MIA Scrabble pieces and an arsenal of loose screws and rubber bands – is enough to send most of us packing (and not in a handy Rubbermaid kind of way).

Yet, while the job of getting organized may seem like a daunting challenge, according to Janis Nylund, professional organizer and

owner of Orderly Concepts & Solutions in South Surrey, there are important health benefits and practical rewards to living or working in an efficient and well-planned environment.

“In addition to providing peace of mind and enhanced function, aesthetic and safety, good organization helps to reduce stress, boost productivity and save people significant amounts of time and money,” said Nylund. “Disorganized, cluttered spaces and inefficient systems in the home or office can often lead to panic, confusion, lack of focus and a perpetual feeling of being overwhelmed.”

While she says most people are aware when they have “lost control,” telltale signs of chronic disorganization include frequently being late or running out of time, missing important dates and events, frequently misplacing items, not being able to relax and buying duplicate items of things you already own.

“Having too many things and a lack of logical systems or dedicated spaces for specific items and simple day-to-day functions, such as opening the mail, creates clutter and distraction. You can have stuff stuck in the basement and just knowing it is there creates mental clutter. Some of my clients have too much stuff in their bedrooms and complain of not getting a decent night's sleep.”

While she says closets, garages, kitchens, basements and offices tend to be the most common spaces in need of reorganization, Nylund always recommends that her clients start with the areas that are causing them the most stress, costing them money or leading to problems such as missed deadlines or bill payments.

“If you are going at it alone, start on something easy, such as a closet or desk. Take everything out so that you can separate the items into categories or like-item piles.



"Once you see everything you have, you can make better decisions on what to keep or toss."

In terms of storage solutions and organizing systems, Nylund prefers anything that doesn't take an extra step. "In other words, I prefer a drawer system over a lid system – especially for kids," said Nylund. "Lids get lost, whereas a drawer is built-in and requires one direct movement for accessing and retrieving."

"Sterilite drawers are one of my favourites for closets, playrooms, laundry rooms, pantries and garages. They come in a variety of sizes, stack nicely and are aesthetically pleasing. When organizing a child's space, such as a bedroom or playroom, I recommend staying away from multi-coloured containers. Children grow older in no time and those colours will become too primary for them. Plus, too many colours can make the room appear more cluttered."

The organization specialist, who is often hired alongside interior designers and

architects at the start of a renovation or new home construction project, says custom-fit built-ins are a great option for homeowners and professionals who want to get the most out of their space by incorporating highly functional organization systems that reflect their particular needs and lifestyle.

"Everyone has a different organizing style.

The majority of my clients are visual, meaning they need to see an item or system (basket, desktop filer or sticky note) out in the open. Others prefer everything to be neatly tucked away. Basically, it comes down to liking the system you use. If it fits with your organizing style, you will use it!"

#### Quick Organization Tips:

- Make organization part of your interior decor. Purchase decorative boxes and storage solutions that pull double duty as furnishings and accessories.
- Think systematically: create an "assembly line" for everyday chores and actions.
- When working on a small space, use an egg timer to help keep you from losing focus and spending too much time on one particular task.
- Limit your collections by focusing on what is important and regularly letting go of unused items.

*Disorganized, cluttered spaces and inefficient systems... lead to panic, confusion, lack of focus...*

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# Get the whole family on board with organization

by Christie Judson

Linda Chu, owner of Out of Chaos and founder of the B.C. Lower Mainland Chapter of Professional Organizers in Canada, says establishing organizational systems in the home not only helps reduce family stress and anxiety, but teaches children lifelong skills that will help them learn to be self-sufficient, organized adults.

To get a handle on busy schedules, while establishing important household routines, Chu offers the following simple family-friendly tips:

## Create a Drop Zone

Install labelled wall pockets in a common "drop" area (kitchen, mud room, family room) to help organize school notices, homework, artwork, etc.

Help kids get into the habit of organizing their papers

and emptying their backpacks (including lunch containers and water bottles) as soon as they come home from school.

## Calendar Essentials

Rather than juggling multiple calendars for mom, dad and kids, use one master calendar to minimize the risk of missed events and appointments.

Whether you are using an electronic or printed calendar, be sure to highlight each family member's calendar entry with a different colour, as it will make planning easier and save time in the long run.

Before the new week begins, have a brief family meeting to gather important dates to enter into the master calendar. Make the "meetings" into a fun family games night or incorporate a tradition of hot cocoa and popcorn.

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