

Home Organization Labels to Make With Cricut

ABBI KIRSTEN • TRANSCRIPT

Staying organized can feel impossible and overwhelming at times. Even when I get things organized into a system in my home, I often find myself searching through containers to remember where I put everything. In this tutorial, I will show you how to stay organized with printable labels.

I will be featuring the Print then Cut process with my Cricut machine, but I also have some other tips and tricks, including how you can do this even if you do not own Cricut machine.

TAKING YOUR ORGANIZATION TO A NEW LEVEL

Using labels to organize your storage will save you loads of time. With one quick glance, labels will help you easily remember what is in any storage container, no matter what room in your home you are working in.

Hey there, my friend. I'm Abbi, creator and owner at Abbi Kirsten Collections, and I teach others how to unlock their creative potential and craft confidently, no matter their skill levels. I'm so excited to be sharing this DIY label tutorial with you today. It's going to take your organization to a fresh new level.

YOUR SUPPLIES

Let's talk about the supplies you need for these printable labels. Now, I am going to be featuring a cutting machine in this tutorial, but there is no reason you can't still enjoy these even if you do not have a cutting machine. You'll just need to do something very simple like maybe get a circle punch and you can punch these out for yourself using like a press able punch from a craft store. Or use a pair of scissors to cut them out with as well. There's no reason you still can't enjoy them.

But I am featuring everything here with a Cricut perspective because that's what my community heavily uses and I wanted to show that whole process. So I'm using a full size Cricut machine here, the Cricut Maker Three specifically. You can use any of the full size models. So whether it's an Explorer, Explorer Two, original Maker, Maker Three, any of the full size models are going to work with a Print then Cut process. The only one that won't is the Cricut Joy machine. But I am going to give you some tips, tricks and workaround options for that as we get further into this tutorial.

The other supplies you're going to need is something like a printable vinyl or a sticker paper. So I am using this premium vinyl sticker paper here. It's by this Luxoton brand and they make it in glossy, matte, even holographic. It's really great on the quick dry for the ink. It's waterproof. So I really enjoy this brand.

But you can also use Cricut's printable vinyl as well. I have used that many times also and I've been very happy with it. So those are the two brands I would recommend. I'm going to be featuring this one in my tutorial and it is going to be... I'm using a glossy

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option here.

Because we're using a Cricut machine of course we'll need to have a Cricut mat on hand to place our sticker paper onto. I like to also use a Brayer tool to press the material to the mat so you'll see me feature that.

And then of course, you're going to need to have an inkjet printer to print out your actual designs. Okay, again, if you're not going this route though, you could always just cut these by hand. But either way, you would still need to have a printer to print out these designs.

STEP BY STEP TUTORIAL

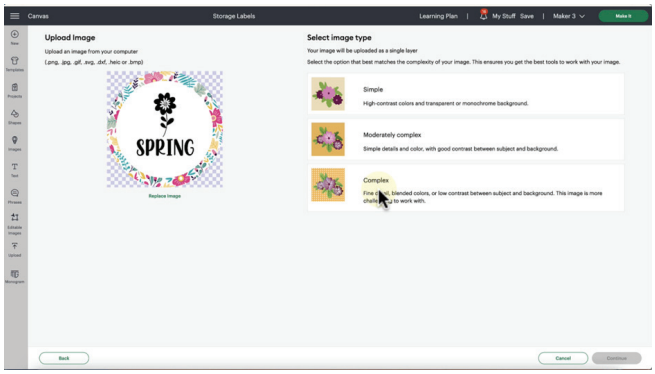
So here we are in Design Space here. Now you can follow suit if you're using a different type of cutting machine other than me. I am using a Print then Cut process here, so in my example, I'm using my Cricut Maker Three.

So to get started, you'll want to open up a new canvas. Obviously, when you log into Design Space, you'll be thrown onto the home page. And then you'll want to open New Project, which will take you to the Design Space canvas, which is where I am here.

Now, to actually upload one of these designs, you want to visit the Upload button here in the design panel on your left hand side. Then you want to click on Upload Image and then I'm going to drag and drop my file here. Or you can click Browse and then find it on your computer wherever you save these templates to.

So for me, here are some of the labels that I have and I have lots of different themes. There's seasonal, there's kids' toys, there's kitchen, there's bath, there's garage. There's lots of different options. I'm just going to take this spring one here as an example, something I would use to label some of my spring decor.

All I did was drag and drop it over here into Design Space once I had clicked on that Upload Image button. And you're going to get a preview here and you want to make sure you always select Complex because if we select any of these other options, it's going to strip away details to our design and we don't want that. So click on Complex and then click Continue.



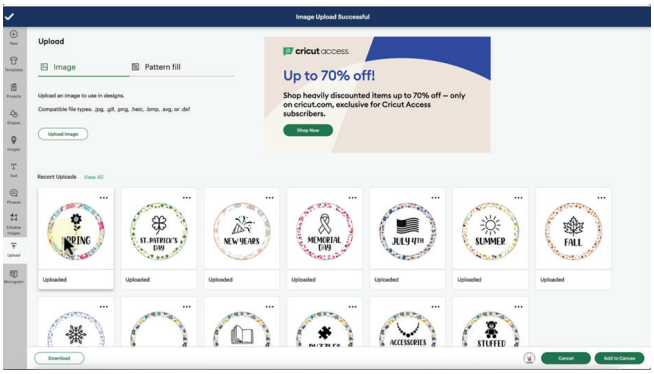
Now, because of the way I've set up my files, there's nothing you need to do to them. There's no cleanup, there's no extra legwork when it comes to this step. But if you happen to be using a different image, you may need to explore these tools if you wish to remove the background of something.

For example, currently I have the Select Tool selected and if I were to come over here and click on this white background of the label, we can see how that disappears. Now this is of course not something we would want to do, but that's an example of how you could remove a background if it was coming in as like a solid white background instead of a transparent background like mine did here.

I'm going to click Undo there. So just take note of those tools in case that's applicable

to you. But if you're using my example files here, you don't have to do any setup. You'll just hit Apply and Continue.

Then it's going to ask you, do you want to save this as a Cut Image, meaning just the basic silhouette, which we do not because that's just a circle. Or do we want to save it as a Print Then Cut, which captures all those pretty colors that we'll be printing out in ink on our printer. So I'm going to click on that option and click Upload and it's going to drop it here under Recent Uploads.



So I'm going to select that and then add it to my canvas. So once we bring this into our canvas, it'll probably load at some random size. When you're dealing with things like PNG pixel based images, which is what we're looking at here, they often don't come in at a set size very easily.

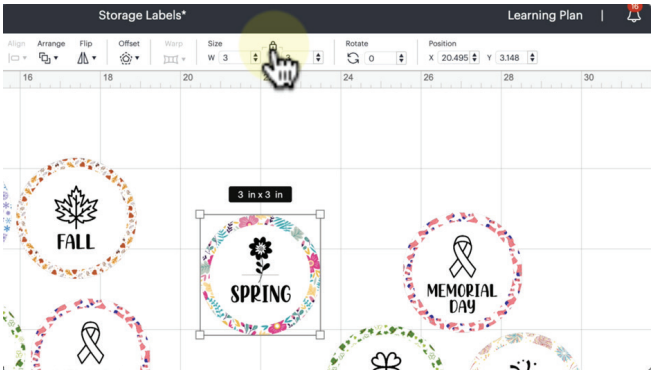
It's just the way the software and the images talk to each other. But there's a super easy way you can fix this. It takes almost no time at all. You can go ahead and take this, make sure this is selected. Now you can come to any one of these corners and you can click or drag up or down very easily. But I like to select it and then just set it to three inches.



So there's three inch labels. Now, if you're someone who wants four inch labels or two inch labels, you decide. But I'm going to set mine to three and hit enter. And now it's going to readjust that size. So that the height and the width of our circle here is three inch circumference of the circle.

I also want to show you that if you select more than one item to bring in here at a time, so I'm going to do that and click Add to Canvas. Here are these three that we just brought in. And to save myself a little bit of time, you could have these three selected. You could go up to that Align and Distribute Tool and click center. Now, all three of them are still there, but they're stacked on top of each other. And with those three still selected, we could put our cursor up here in the width and height, and then add three to readjust. And now we have readjusted all three of those simultaneously because we stacked them and then we adjusted the height all at once.

Do take note when you are making size adjustments with your labels, you want to make sure that this little lock icon here, it should be turned on like it should be locked.



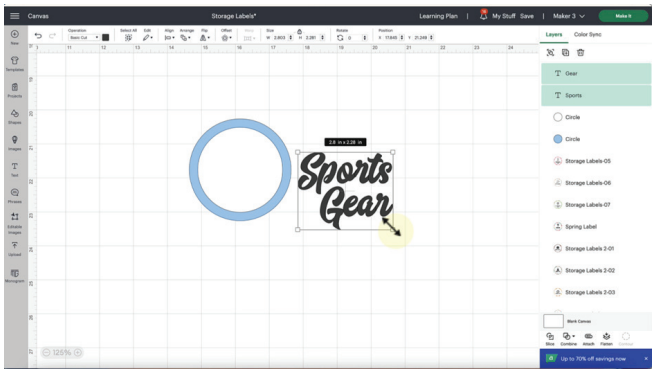
You don't want it to look unlocked like that because if you do, it's going to stretch and change proportions. So if I were to put four inches in the width, now it's going to stretch it instead of holding those proportions relative to each other.

Now, what happens if you decide. Abbi I don't like any of these designs, or it doesn't have the word I want, or I just want to do something different. I'm going to show you two options you have for that. I'm going to come down here a bit so I have some clean space to work on.

MAKING YOUR OWN SIMPLE LABELS

The first option is you can make a very simple label here just using the shapes tool, okay? So you can grab the free circle shape, set it to whatever size you want. So I'll do three, and let's say I want to change this to a light blue. We'll just say light blue for now, and then I could duplicate this so we could right click and duplicate. And then I could change this circle to two inches. Let's do 2.5. There we go, 2.5. And let's change this to white. We could create our own simple label like this. We could click and drag over this. We could center it so that those circles are perfectly centered.

And then you could type out your own text. So you could come over to the text tool here and put your cursor in. And let's say we want to give this a label of, I'll just say sports gear just as an example. Okay, so there's our example. And we could change the font, of course. So you could use a system font. You could use a Cricut font if you want to pay for that, or you have the access. I'm just going to use one of these system fonts that I have installed on my computer so they appear under my system tab. And I selected that. So this is just an example here. And there's a little bit of space happening here. So I think I'm actually going to Ungroup to Lines and I'm just going to kind of tuck it a little bit more like that and shrink it down. And then we could bring it over here.



And then to finalize this, because I still want this to be a Print then Cut process, meaning printing it out on our printer in ink and then cutting around it, we would want to make sure we select all three of these. And use the Flatten tool here at the bottom of the layers panel, which is going to flatten this result so that it just cuts the silhouette and it actually prints blue ink and a black or dark gray ink that we're seeing here, would come out of our printer. So that's one approach to a very easy and simple way you can make labels to stay organized in your home here in Design Space.

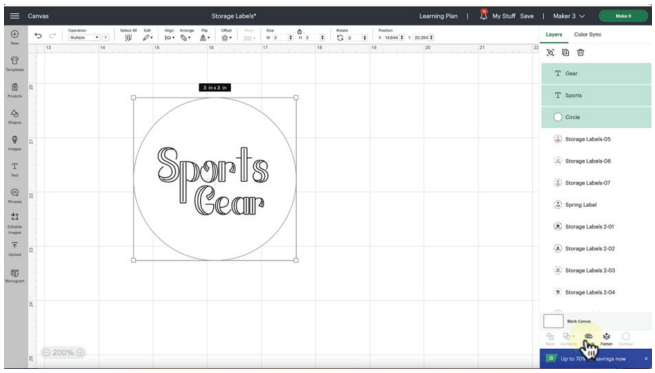
USING A CRICUT PEN

There's also another option, so I'm going

to undo that real quick. And if we take a look here, if we click on our text, this is a basic Cut operation right now because I changed it back from Print then Cut to its original. But let's actually ungroup this and I'm going to go back into the fonts there, when I select one of those. I'm going to click on one of these and I'm going to go back to the font selections. I'm going to go over to Cricut font here in this example. And I'm going to filter by writing fonts. So if you'd rather have your Cricut write with a pen, you could, you could have it just cut sort of the silhouette of this and then write with a pen. And that's a great option. If you do not have the capability of doing Print then Cut with like, say, a Cricut Joy machine. Okay?

So you could still make labels that way. For example, here, I'm just going to grab this one. All right. So, for example, this could be a writing font that we do. It's kind of a fancy font here. And there's lots of different writing fonts that they offer. But what we could do instead is we could just eliminate actually one of these [circles], maybe the white one here. And then we have this writing font that if we were to do this all on a Cricut joy machine, you could load this, load the smart label material, load a printable vinyl onto the mat or whatever, and then it will still cut this circle, but it'll write with a pen and you'll be able to still produce a label that way.

So that's a little workaround if you don't have a full size Cricut machine like I'm working with. Just make sure before you go to the cut screen, you click and drag over this text and this base and you use the attach tool.



Because if you don't attach this, it's going to separate the writing from the base of this circle here. And as a result, you're not going to get the end result you want with the writing being in the center of the circle for your label.

PERSONALIZING ABBI'S LABELS

Okay, now there's one other option for those of you who are going the Print then Cut route when you want to get a little bit more personalized with maybe what you're typing out here. I'm going to give you an example of that now. So I'm going to go to the Upload button again, click Upload image, and this time I'm going to pull in this blank option. So I have lots of different label options, but I also include a blank with every single one. So if you want, you can upload the blank and then write whatever you want there to be on the label there.

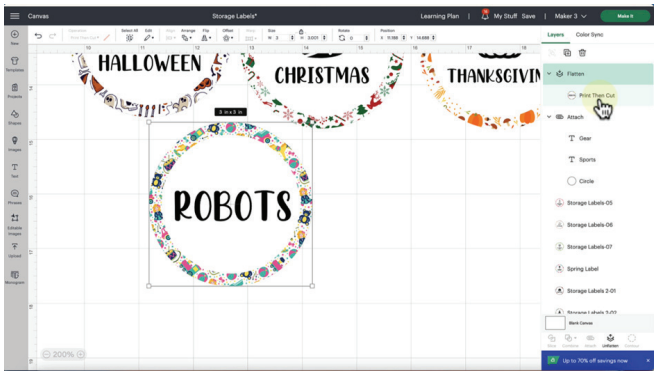
Now it's not going to include the cute little icons that I did incorporate in the original designs. You're welcome to find other graphics to incorporate and upload to Design Space if you like having that little cute graphic.

But as a means to just be able to personalize the text on it and still use that Print then Cut label, we could resize this just as before. Then we can grab our text tool and it's defaulting here to the text we

just used. I'm going to change this back to regular, and under operation, I'm going to change it back to Basic just so I can see what I'm working with. And then I'm going to go to my system fonts. And if you want to know the name of the font that I'm using, it's called Hash Browns and it is a free one online that you can find. So if you want to use the same font to complement the other labels, go ahead and do that.

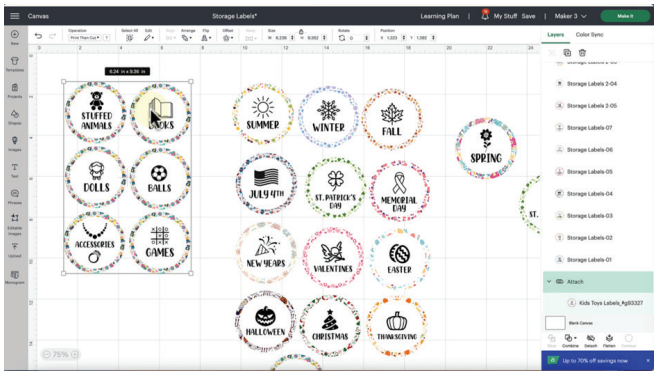
And then we could give this a different name. So maybe I want to do one for like robots for my son. He loves robots. So I'm going to do that because I wanted to personalize that. We could change the color to a straight black up here. And if you want to get more advanced with your color system, you can click on Advanced there and alter that. But I'm just going to keep it simple with black. So you could do that and just have, like, robots, and still use that cute little label that way.

The key here, again is to make sure that if you add an element like this . . . So the base here is our Print then Cut. Look in our Layers panel, we see we have the base, we see we have text. And if I click on the base, it reads Print and Cut under Operations over here. But if I click on the text, it reads Basic Cut. We need to make sure this entire thing is a Print then Cut if you're going to go this route. So you want to make sure you select the base and the text that you added to it and come over to that flattened tool and combine it so that now we have one flattened result, that text that we customized plus that label that we brought in.



Okay, so that's one other look at how you can use these labels or customize them to your preference. Now if you want to discover some little icons and things like that, check out Cricut's Image Library, check free clip art sites online where you can just bring in these cutesy little icons to complement what you're doing here if you do go to the personalization route.

Now once you do that, there's really nothing else you need to do. You can get fancy if you want to arrange these in a certain way, depending on the size of your labels. This one here has got six obviously in it here and it's already set to a good scale. It's going to come about as close as it can to filling an eight and a half by eleven sheet, which is what most printable vinyl or sticker papers are going to come in.



So even though Cricut can do bigger Print then Cut than this, because you will not traditionally find a lot of options for printable vinyl and sticker paper that are

bigger, you're probably still going to need to stick within that eight and a half by eleven size reference.

SAVE AND PREVIEW

So make sure that you're saving your project too. Because once you've personalized these, if you ever need to reprint them or you just have imported them and have set them up, you want to make sure you save. You can click Save As and give a name and then hit Save and you can just return to the project without ever needing to do any other customizations or setups or resizing in the future.

I'm just going to update my progress here with my Save and I'm going to go to the Cut screen. Now click Make It. And here is our preview.

MAKE SURE YOU'RE CALIBRATED

Okay, and let me note here that if you have never calibrated your Cricut machine before and Print then Cut is brand new to you, please make sure you go through the calibration process so you get the most accurate cut. I do have a tutorial on Abbi Kirsten Collections. If you just use the keyword calibration, you'll find it in a nutshell. You need to go to this hamburger menu and hit calibration and then walk through the process that Cricut prompts you to get the proper calibration. But I do have a different tutorial on that.

All right, so here is our preview. We see we've got some sheets happening here. Keep in mind your waste, okay? So like, for example here, I'm wasting a lot of paper. It would make a lot more sense for me to go back and add more of these to maximize this paper use, even if I'm just going to save them for future use than to just waste this. Okay? So do be mindful of that.

This one here, this is the one we did that had the writing on it. So it's putting it on a separate mat because the process is separate. We're not printing this. We are having our Cricut write it and then cut around it. So that would be an example for the Joy use. Or you could do this with a full size machine too, if you prefer that look. That's always an option for you.

So I'm going to click on Continue. See, we got our seasonal ones there. I'm going to click continue. It's going to connect to your Cricut machine. So whether you're connected via Bluetooth and you already have that set up, or you need to plug into your Cricut machine with the USB, just make sure that you're connected to that.

SENDING TO PRINTER

You want to hit Send to printer. Make sure your printer is connected. So whatever model you might be using, it just needs to be an inkjet printer that can print these colors for you and can handle something like a printable vinyl or a sticker paper. Most printers can. There's very few that won't be able to handle something like a printable vinyl. It's not overly thick paper, so just be mindful of that.

If you want to set any particular system settings for your printer, you do want to make sure System dialog is toggled on. Because what this is going to do is it'll give you a secondary pop-up once you hit Print, so that you can actually set more specifications, like where the paper is feeding from, the quality of the print, et cetera. So take note of that if that's you and you want to set that. And then refer to your printer manual and guide for those

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particular setup instructions and settings.

It's also very important that you keep the add bleed on. So the add bleed adds a little bit of extra printed color all the way around the edges. So that once cut out, it's edge to edge color. And we don't have this awkward white border going around our pretty design. So in 99% of the cases, you do want to leave this add bleed alone. So just leave it ticked on as it is.

You can go ahead and hit print when you're ready. Now, if you selected the system dialog option, you do want to make sure you minimize this. Usually you have to find it behind Design Space. And then you'll see your particular printer settings here, whether it be what paper you're choosing, where it's feeding from, the quality of the print that you want to select. Everybody's print box is going to look a little different. But once you set those specifications, you can go ahead and hit print, and it's going to print it out, and I'm going to print mine now.

MOVING TO THE CRICUT

And then I will see you at my Cricut machine so we can get these cut out. Okay, so here are some sheets that I already have printed off through my inkjet printer. We had to print through Design Space. Super important if you're following me with a Cricut machine. Otherwise you will not have these registration marks, which means your Cricut can't read where to cut on the paper. Okay, so make sure you're using Cricut machine, you print through Design Space so you have these black registration marks.

I'm going to go ahead and just line this up to the top corner of my mat. You can use the standard green mat. You can also use the light blue light grip mat. And then I'm going to use my brayer tool here just to press the material to the mat. It helps it get nice and flattened to help minimize any possibility of tearing or anything like that.

SELECT MATERIAL

Then I need to select my material in Design Space. Okay, so the next part you're going to need to do after you load your printable sticker paper or printable vinyl onto your Cricut mat, you do need to set your base material in Design Space. There's two that I recommend, and if you're not confident, then I do recommend doing a test cut where you don't have a full sheet happening. Maybe you just do like a simple circle in Design Space and do a simple test cut to see how your particular sticker paper or vinyl is behaving with that particular setting.

So there's two that I recommend. First is the printable vinyl setting. So you would click browse all material and just type in printable vinyl. You'll see it right here once you type that in. This one is great in most cases for a lot of sticker papers and also works well with Cricut brand printable vinyl.

What you do want to note with this is certain sticker brands . . . I use a Luxoton brand that I like, and with that one, I find that if I select the printable vinyl, I do need to, under pressure here, select less because a lot of times it'll start cutting through the carrier sheet.

Now, if you want it cutting through the carrier sheet, that's fine. But I like to where it's a kiss cut to where it's lifting away from the liner, but the liner is still intact. Okay, that's how I like my labels to be. So if that's you, I recommend printable vinyl setting and then try it on less and maybe perform a couple of test cuts on a spare sheet before

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you start printing things out in ink.

Another setting you can do is they do have a sticker paper setting also. So if you type in the word sticker, there is a sticker white paper here that I would recommend trying as well. As a whole, printable vinyl is the way that I tend to go.

Now, if you're someone who wants to have your labels all separate, not still on the carrier sheet that you're peeling away from, but actually separated from one another in, like, a stack, then you're going to want to be able to cut through both the sticker paper or printable vinyl and the liner, which means you're probably going to want to select something like a medium cardstock setting so that it actually cuts through both of those layers.

READY, SET, GO

So now that that material has been set, I'm going to go ahead and press the mat under the rollers. Press that double arrow flashing button to load our mat. It's going to take a second to just scan the length of our mat. Once Cricut scans the length of our mat, it's going to flash that Play or Cricut C icon, which is the Go button basically to proceed with the cut. So go ahead and press that.

And Cricut is going to scan these registration marks first before it starts cutting so it knows where to cut on the mat. So that's the importance of printing through Design Space when you're cutting on Cricut.

All right, so our cut is done, and I'm going to press that double arrow flashing button to release the mat. I like to flip my mat over in this case and peel the mat away from the material just to help minimize the curling. And now we have our labels.

FINISHED LABELS

Now this is an example of a kiss cut. So everything is still on the carrier sheet, but you'll be able to peel away the actual labels. So if I come in here, I can peel these away just like that. And now I can go and place these on my containers or anything that I want to organize and keep easily labeled so I can see it quickly and visually, which is really important.

You can also place these back on the carrier sheet if you keep them. So if you pick it up and then you need to put it back down, that's helpful. Then you can also do these where you cut them out individually if that's how you prefer.

So here's a look at how these labels turned out. When I used a medium cardstock setting with this vinyl sticker paper, this allows me to actually cut through that liner. So if that's the approach you want to go for, then just make sure you adjust that setting.

NO CRICUT? NO PROBLEM

Now, if you're someone who does not have a Cricut machine, you can go ahead and just print these out via your printer and then use something like a circle punch to punch these out. So I have these set to three inches, and I'm using a three inch circle punch here, and I'm just lining it up. And then I press it down and it still gives me that nice, round, clean edge. And I don't have to cut by hand with scissors and then end up with something that's less than an ideal cut. And they still work great for around the house. And all you need to do is run to your craft store and get a very simple craft punch.

You're going to be able to find these seasonal labels that you saw in this video

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in both the color option and I have a simple black and white option. You can get these for free for a limited time in the Abbi Kirsten Collections Craft Vault. There's going to be more info with this video on how you can get that.

Now, if you want the entire collection of all the labels I have created for various rooms of your home, various items, various seasons, et cetera, then make sure you join the Abbi Kirsten Collections Premium Membership. You would get access to all of these labels, both color printable cute versions as well as the simple black and white versions.

There are also hundreds of other premium templates available in the Abbi Kirsten Collections Premium Membership that you will get access to instantly as well. Thanks so much for watching, my friend. I'll see you there. Bye for now.

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How to Get Organized When You Don't Have the Organizing Gene

ABBY LAWSON • TRANSCRIPT

Hi there. Thank you so much for joining me today to talk about a topic that is near and dear to my heart, getting organized when you don't have the organizing gene. Now, I know it can feel impossible to get organized when we don't necessarily feel like it comes naturally to us, but I am so excited to dig in today and talk about some strategies that can help with that.

THIS IS ABBY

If we haven't met yet, my name is Abby Lawson and I have been teaching all about organization and home decor at justagirlandherblog.com for more than a decade now. I also have an Instagram account, YouTube channel and shop called Abby Organizes, dedicated to my love of all things organization. So you may have seen me under that name as well.

I am wife to my brilliant husband Donnie, who works with me on our blog and business. And we have two awesome not-so-little boys, Connor and Caleb, who are always keeping us busy. Through my past several years of blogging, I've been so humbled to have been featured in magazines like HGTV Magazine, Country Sampler, on the websites of Forbes, The Huffington Post, Apartment Therapy, Better Homes and Gardens, Yahoo News and Marie Kondo's newsletter, and more.

NOT NATURALLY NEAT

But even though I've been talking about organization on the Internet for a really long time, I am actually pretty scatterbrained by nature. My parents definitely wouldn't say that I was a neatnik kid, my room was usually a mess, and I tended to leave a trail of half-finished projects and clutter in my wake wherever I went. I'm sure I annoyed my college roommate by always leaving stuff laying around rather than putting it back where it went and keeping the room tidy.

And when I was a mom of two crazy little toddlers living in a tiny townhouse and feeling like I was drowning in a sea of toys and mess that never seemed to go away, it felt like I would never ever be organized, no matter how hard I tried.

But eventually I became determined. I was so sick of dealing with clutter all the time and I knew that there had to be a better way. I began learning everything I could about organization and trying out different strategies in my home. I definitely wasn't perfect at it right away, and I'm still not.

A LEARNING CURVE

But slowly and surely I started becoming more and more organized. I learned what worked and what didn't and what methods helped my organization systems improve and stay solid for the long haul.

I am thrilled to say that though our home is far from perfect, it now stays generally tidy most of the time, and that is such a freeing feeling. I am no longer controlled by my clutter. I can find what I need when I need it.

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My disorganization doesn't cause me to run late, and I don't blink an eye about having people over, because even when our house gets messy and it does, we can have it return to its tidy state in not much time at all, since we have smart organizing systems in place. And if I can do it, you can do it too.

DEBUNKING A MYTH

So the first thing I want to do before I jump into strategies is to debunk the organizing myth that way too many of us tend to fall into. There seems to be this misbelief that either you are organized or you aren't. And if you aren't, there's nothing you can do about it. I am living proof that that is absolutely not true.

Are there people who are more naturally inclined to organization? Sure. But organization is also a set of strategies and habits that can be learned and honed over time. I remember when I was in gymnastics growing up, I was not the most athletically gifted by a long shot. It took me a while to get some of the simpler moves, let alone something more complicated like a backhand spring.

But I kept showing up, working hard at it, going to classes, and eventually I was able to do backhand springs and round off backhand springs and even perform them in cheerleading competitions at the state and national level. Were there girls who learned how to do those tricks more quickly than me? Absolutely. But I kept working at it, going to classes and showing up, and eventually I got them too.

A GROWTH MINDSET

Organizing is like that. It might take some of us, like me, a little longer to get a knack for it, but if we stick with it and are willing to work at it and work it into our muscle memory, then we will get there. In one of my favorite books called Mindset, the author Carol Dweck says, no matter what your ability is, effort is what ignites that ability and turns it into accomplishment.

Her whole premise in the book is to encourage people to have a growth mindset where we strive to learn and overcome and improve in areas that may be a challenge for us, rather than a fixed mindset like the one I used to have that says, well, I'm not naturally good at this, so it's never going to happen.

Her research is really fascinating, and she proves over and over again that it is completely possible to conquer areas like organization that we may not initially feel are our strengths.

Okay, so now as we get into the strategies that will be most helpful for us as we seek to get organized, let's do so with a growth mindset. We may not be perfect at it at first, but as we work at it over time, we will get there.

SOLID HABITS

Now, as far as strategy goes, what I'm about to say next may surprise you. I don't actually think that the most important part of getting organized is walking into a cluttered room and throwing out a bunch of stuff. There is a time and place for decluttering absolutely. But even more important than spending a huge amount of time purging, buying bins and tidying up is developing solid organizing habits.

When we think of organizing, we think of carving out a weekend or full week or month and going through a full room and getting it to look like something we see on Pinterest,

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right? It can certainly be helpful to start with a room that's organized exactly how you want it, but it's not enough.

Thinking of organizing as just one huge push to tidy up a room is like going on a crash diet. Just like going on a crazy diet for a short amount of time often results in gaining all of the weight back. Plus some going on an organizing spree without working on our habits will result in a room that gets messy again, leaving us frustrated and feeling like organizing just doesn't work for us.

A LIFESTYLE CHANGE

Instead, what we need is a lifestyle change. Our goal is not to have a Pinterest-perfect room that only stays organized long enough for us to take pictures. Our goal is to have smart organizing systems that help our homes stay tidy for the long haul, systems that are easy to maintain and that feel like they don't take much upkeep at all. Our goal is to become organized people, and to do that, we need solid organizing habits.

THREE HABITS

Today I want to talk about the three specific organizing habits that have been most helpful for me as I've gone from scattering mess to generally tidy. Most of the time, these were habits that I definitely did not do by default. I've had to learn them and work them into my days and routines. And when I was able to make these habits a steady fixture in my life, organization started to happen a lot more naturally and felt a lot less like work.

HABIT #1: CLOSE THE LOOP

So the first habit I want to talk about is one I like to call close the loop. When I say close the loop, I'm talking about carrying a task through to completion, including any cleanup, before moving on to the next thing. As a naturally scatterbrained person, this may possibly be the rule that has been the hardest to get myself to follow. My natural tendency is to jump from project to project, leaving a trail of disarray behind me as I go, when really, I would be saving myself time and frustration if I took the few extra minutes to close the loop, finish up my project, clean up any materials that are left over, and then move on to the next thing.

IN THE KITCHEN

For example, it's easy to cook dinner, eat, and then quickly rush off to the next activity or task, leaving dishes and cleanup for later. When we would do that in our house, we inevitably would end up with an overflowing sink of dirty dishes almost constantly. Because there never seemed to be a convenient time to do cleanup.

I had to change my mindset. Instead of thinking of cooking dinner and cleaning up after dinner as two separate tasks. I had to start thinking of them as one complete project where closing the loop to the project wasn't complete until cleanup was done and the dishwasher was running. Only after I had completely closed the loop could I move on to my next task. And you better bet that I was thanking myself the next morning when I came downstairs to a clean kitchen rather than a big mess I had to clean up before I could start my day.

IN THE CRAFT ROOM

Another common place where I failed to close the loop was in my home office and craft room. I would get super into a creative project, like using my Cricut cutting machine to make a fun shirt for

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one of my kids. I was really meticulous about preparing all the pieces and putting it together just so. Then when I had completed the shirt, I would go off to show it to them and conveniently forget about the vinyl scraps and tools I had left laying around my office. The next time I went in there to work, I would be annoyed at the mess and either have to take the time to clean it up then, when I was really supposed to be working on something else. Or I would have to work around it, which was usually annoying and ended up taking longer.

Instead, I have challenged myself to close the loop with my creative projects, cleaning up everything before I can call them complete and move on to the next thing. And my office stays tidy and ready for me to tackle my next project with nothing else in the way.

So the next time you tackle a project, from making dinner to working on a craft to playing a board game with your family, make it a point to close the loop completely, including cleanup, before moving on to the next thing. And watch your house stay tidier because of it.

Now, I would love to say that that's it. We just close the loop every time and we will never have clutter and mess to deal with ever again. But we all know that's not how life works, right? We get busy, we run out of time, we're tired, we get pulled in a different direction by our kids or spouse or significant other, and loops don't get closed. So what do we do then?

HABIT #2: SCAN AND FIX

This is where our second habit comes in. A habit I call scan and fix. Scan and fix is exactly what it sounds like. Anytime I open up a cabinet door or grab something or pull open a drawer or even walk through a room, I scan the space for anything that is untidy or out of place and I try to fix at least one thing.

So, for example, in this closet, I could take 15 seconds or so and straighten the shoes, or 5 seconds and hang the bag on a hook. Or in this play space, it would take me less than 30 seconds to straighten the bins and put some of the big toys that are on the floor back on the shelves where they go.

Now, some of you who are a more naturally organizing kind might be thinking, well, obviously, doesn't everyone do that already? And the answer, my friends, is no. For someone like me who feels like their brain was not naturally wired for organization, learning the scan and fix habit was a total game changer.

AN ORGANIZED HABIT

I always wondered how people kept homes that seemed to be generally tidy all the time when mine was always a train wreck. And the answer is that they have developed habits like the scan and fix, where they always have an eye out for things that are out of place and straighten them automatically without even thinking about it.

When they open a cabinet and some cups are laying on their sides, they set them up right where they belong. When they open a drawer and some shirts have become messy, they take 15 seconds to fold them and put them back neatly. When they walk through the room and someone has left something out on the table, they pick it up and return it to its rightful spot as they go through.

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A BIG DIFFERENCE

Each of these tasks only takes a few seconds to complete, but if we're scanning and fixing several times throughout the day, it really adds up. Never was this more apparent to me that when I went to Ecuador for a week, leaving Donnie and the boys behind to fend for themselves. Donnie did a great job holding down the fort, and the boys were a big help, too. But even so, when I got back after a week without my scanning and fixing as I went through my day, I was surprised at how much was out of place, and it took me a little while to catch everything back up.

THREE THINGS IN THE MORNING

Those little few second tasks really make a big difference. One way you can start to train yourself to adopt the scan and fix habit is to scan and fix three things right when you wake up. If you set your alarm on your phone, you could even name the alarm Scan and Fix as a reminder right then, when you're getting out of bed, make it your goal to scan and fix three things before you move on with the rest of your morning routine.

Maybe you throw some clothes that were on the floor into the hamper, wipe some toothpaste out of the sink and put away some hair ties that were left out. Maybe you travel down to the kitchen and clear some items off the island, write some boxes that have fallen over in the pantry, and throw away a bag of salad that had expired. By starting each day with the scan and fix, you will begin with an organizing mindset and make it easier to keep up on your organizing habits throughout the day.

VISUAL CUE

Another way to remind yourself to scan and fix is to give yourself a visual cue. You can start with one room, like the kitchen, for example. Maybe put a sign that says Scan and Fix on the fridge. Or do little Post It notes on the inside of your messiest cabinets or on the pantry door to remind you if you want a visual cue that goes with you. Maybe put a colorful rubber band on your wrist. And when you reach for something and notice it, use that as your reminder to scan and fix an item.

The longer you do it, the more it will become a natural habit and you'll begin scanning and fixing without even thinking about it. And it doesn't feel like it takes any extra time out of your day at all.

HABIT #3: WEEKLY RESET

So we're going to be closing our loops and scanning and fixing like champs. But no matter how hard we try, there always seem to be the items that sneak out of place anyway, slowly adding clutter to our surfaces, messes on our floors, and disorder to our rooms. As such, there is one more habit that we can add to our organizing arsenal to help our home stay a lot more tidy.

The third habit is one I call the weekly reset. The weekly reset is an opportunity to wipe the slate clean. Once per week, everyone in the household takes the time to work together to straighten up each room, putting everything back in its rightful home so that the clutter is cleared away and the house is neat and tidy.

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HABIT STACKING

The most challenging part of the weekly reset is being consistent about it. It's easy to get busy and forget all about resetting the house. To remedy this problem, I call on the strategy I employ most often when I am trying to build a new habit, which is called habit stacking. Habit stacking simply means that we attach a new habit that we're trying to build to an existing habit, something that is already happening on a regular basis.

The habit stacking strategy can definitely come in handy when we're trying to make the weekly reset a consistent fixture in our homes. So in our house, we do our weekly reset before the big cleaning day. Cleaning day is already really consistent and it goes a lot more smoothly if the house is picked up ahead of time. So the night before cleaning day, everyone in the family gathers any items that they may have strewn around the house and puts them back where they go, returning our house to its tidiest state.

Another way we've used habit stacking to encourage our weekly reset in the past was actually initiated by my husband, Donnie. He swore that watching Sunday afternoon football was much more enjoyable when the house was picked up and tidy. If he was going to initiate the tidying, I wasn't going to fight it. So the weekly football game became our cue. On Saturday night or Sunday morning, we would all make our way through the house and straighten up anything that was out of place so we could watch the game in a peaceful, cleaned up house.

If you have kids in school or work a traditional Monday through Friday work week, maybe your goal could be to have the house reset before you start into your week on Monday morning. Take some time on Sunday evening to complete your weekly reset so that your week starts off on the right foot.

MAKE IT YOUR OWN

There is no one perfect day for everyone to do the reset. The perfect day for your household is whatever day you will stick to consistently. So talk to the other members of your house, decide on a time you all can commit to on a regular basis, and commit to completing the reset each week. You may get some pushback at first. Our boys often do their fair share of complaining when we announce that it's time to straighten up. But everyone will ultimately enjoy living in a neat and tidy house where they can find what they need when they need it, and the weekly reset plays a big role in helping that happen.

Now, there's nothing magical about once per week. I use the term weekly reset because I have found that a week is about the average time when some clutter has started to creep in. But the clutter is not so bad that it will take hours to clear. You will have to find the sweet spot for your household. When we had little kids who were playing with lots of toys all the time, for example, a once per week reset just wouldn't have cut it. If you are in a phase like that or just feel like the clutter builds up too much in one week, feel free to do the reset twice per week or more.

As time goes on and you and your family members get better at closing your loops and scanning and fixing, you may find that you only need to do your reset every other week. If you're not doing any sort of reset already, start by trying it weekly, and then, as you figure out the needs of your household, you can adjust to doing it more

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or less often with the weekly reset. Even if we have left open a few loops or missed items during our scan and fix, we always have a way to hit the reset button so the clutter and mess don't continue to build up. Consistency is key. It's a lot easier to initiate our reset if we know it's going to take ten to 15 minutes rather than several hours.

RECAPPING

Okay, so let's recap. In order to make organization a more natural part of your life and keep your home tidier for the long haul, we're going to work on implementing three key habits. Number one, close the loop. Finishing a project to completion, including cleanup before moving on to the next thing. Number two scan and fix. Becoming more aware of our surroundings by scanning for things that are out of place and taking a few seconds to fix them instead of walking right by. And three, the weekly reset, our catchall habit. So even in those instances where we forget to close the loop and scan and fix, we carve out some time each week to reset all of our items to their rightful homes so we can start again with a clean slate.

At first glance, habits may not seem as exciting as going out and buying a bunch of cute bins or a new piece of storage furniture, but in reality, habits are actually pretty magical. Long term change and impact almost never happen only by one solitary burst of action. Instead, it's the small but consistent things we do each day that really add up and make the biggest difference.

Becoming an organized person can start by simply picking up a stray sock or doing the dishes right after dinner. But the compilation of all of those smaller acts is a tidier, more organized life that allows us to relax and feel more at peace in our homes, to not have to deal with the stress of being late because we're unorganized and can't find what we're looking for and can truly have a positive impact on every other area of our life. And that is a pretty powerful thing. I hope these three simple habits will make as big of an impact on your life as they have on mine.

WHAT ABOUT ORGANIZING PROJECTS?

Now, if you're thinking, okay, Abby, those habits sound great and I can work on those. But what about all of the organizing projects I want to work on in my house? In addition to adopting these habits, how do I tackle an overly cluttered kitchen? Or a messy bathroom vanity? Or a playroom that has gotten out of control?
FREE GUIDE

I didn't want to keep you here all day talking about organizing process, though to be honest, that sounds right up my alley. So I created a little guide that you can snag instead. The Organization Project Planning Guide walks you through the proven six step process I use to tackle any organizing project. It tells you what questions to ask to figure out the best way to set up your space and provides a few space planning pages to help you execute your organizing vision. Finally, it includes a thorough organizing checklist so you can make sure you don't miss any important steps in the process.

The organization project planning guide is completely free, and you can snag it at justagirlandherblog.com/planninghq. We will send your project planning guide right to your inbox.

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SPECIAL OFFER

And when you sign up for that, you should also get an offer for a super discounted $9 deal on our habit tracker spreadsheet, which is a really fun way to help hold ourselves accountable for sticking to new habits. If for some reason that doesn't pop up automatically for you, you can get it at justagirlandherblog.com/habitshq.

CHAT WITH ABBY

I'd love to connect with you and chat more about all things organizing over on Instagram, and you can find me over there at abbyorganizes. If you end up building new habits and putting organizing systems in place in your home, definitely send me a message or pictures and let me know so I can celebrate with you.

Thank you so much for joining me to talk about helpful organizing habits. I cannot wait to see what you accomplish in your home, and I hope that the strategies we talked about today will help keep your house organized for the long haul.

Enjoy the rest of the sessions and Get Organized HQ. I hope you have an amazing day. Talk to you soon.

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Saving Money + Time With Budget Friendly Meals

ABBY THEDFORD • TRANSCRIPT

Hey, everybody. My name is Abby Thedford, and you can find me on YouTube as the Simplified Saver. I have a YouTube channel that I started a couple of years ago, and I like to share with other people how to save money at home in simple ways.

And one of those ways is by cooking. So in this lesson today, I'm going to be sharing with y'all some really simple and easy ten minute meals that are about $10. For each meal, you're going to get ten recipes to download that you can give a try yourself.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

I have bought all of my ingredients, mostly at Aldi, because Aldi is where I can shop for my family and save the most money. I'm going to share with you all a little bit more tips as the video goes on. But what you're going to need for today is foil. You're going to need a sharpie, and you're going to need some aluminum trays that you can freeze if you choose to make these into freezer meals or batch cooking. And we will get into that in a little bit later.

FEEDING A FAMILY OF SIX

So I have a family of six, and we have a strict $200 a week grocery budget. Some of you may be thinking, wow, that is crazy for a family of six, but I promise you, when you are able to cook at home, learn how to cook healthy meals on a budget, you are going to be able to do it just like we are.

Whenever I cook meals for my family, I try to keep it very simple, not overcomplicate things. If it takes more than ten minutes to cook it, I don't cook it, and I try to incorporate as much healthy food as I can. My tip is to always have some sort of lean protein, some sort of carb, and some sort of veggie in every single meal so that my kids are getting as much as they can that is healthy. All of these recipes are also five ingredients about. So that also helps you save some money and makes it really simple.

TODAY'S MEALS

We're going to go ahead and get started. The first meal that we are going to cook is going to be chicken and rice. Okay, so this is how I find it best to organize what I'm doing. I have each of my meals organized in a tray. We're going to make chicken and rice. We're going to make baked ziti, and we're going to make tater tot casserole. And this one has a special ingredient I will tell you all about.

But these are very basic meals. You may have even cooked them before, but I'm going to tell you about batch cooking. So batch cooking is whenever you are making a meal for dinner and you're duplicating that meal and you're setting one aside in the freezer for a later date.

BATCH COOKING

So batch cooking is something that I find

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very helpful for my family. We are very busy all the time. And whenever I'm cooking a meal, let's say I'm cooking tater tot casserole, I will double that meal and save that other half for the freezer. And another night, whenever we are busy and I don't have time to cook and I'm tempted to go out to eat and spend more money, I will pull that meal out of the freezer and we will cook it, and that helps save us some money.

You don't even notice that you're doubling it. Really? It doesn't take extra time to double a recipe. You're doing the same thing anyway. So that's a great technique that I use for my family a lot to help us save money and save time.

SUPER SPEEDY

Okay, so we are going to get this going as fast as we can. I'm going to cook my rice in an instant pot. I'm going to thaw my chicken in the microwave. I'm going to cook my pasta. I've already got that going right there. And I'm going to cook these meats together since they are the same, and then drain it and separate it. And then we're going to get this done in, like, 30 minutes. We're going to have three meals done super-fast.

I am choosing to cook my rice in an instant pot just because it has a rice setting, and it is the easiest and fastest way for me. You can choose how to cook the rice on your own, whether it be with a rice cooker or the boiling method. You can even use instant rice if you prefer. For the tater tot casserole I'm using canned veggies just it's super affordable, but you can also use frozen veggies if preferred.

All right, so my secret ingredient for the tater tot casserole is Uncle Chris's steak seasoning. It tastes amazing. Give it a try. You can find it at Walmart or on Amazon. It will make it taste so much better than without.

AN ASSEMBLY LINE

I find that the easiest way to make this work is to have an assembly line of sorts to get everything organized. What I love about making these freezer meals is that you don't have to necessarily cook them. So I don't have to cook the cream of chicken yet. I don't have to cook the pasta sauce yet with everything because I will be doing that later.

If you find that your rice is too dry, you can take some of the chicken broth and add it in. I think that it gives it more flavor, so that's usually what I do if I want my chicken and rice to be more moist.

WRAP IN FOIL

Our once these are done and cooled off, you're going to layer with foil. If I'm going to put in my deep freezer, I will do two layers of foil. If this is going to stay in my freezer in my house, like, next to my refrigerator, and it's not going to be in there for long, I will do two layers. If I'm just going to put it in the fridge, I will do one. Then I will take a sharpie and label it and date it and then cook it whenever I need it.

Thanks so much for being here everybody. I hope that you all found this beneficial and encouraging for you to help your family save money in the kitchen and also eat some food that is healthy.

If you all want to find me on my social media platform you can find me at the Simplified Saver for YouTube. You can also find me on Instagram for the same handle. I will put it right here. There's also a downloadable with

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all of these recipes that you can give a try yourself.

Thanks so much for watching. Bye everybody.

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Tackling Daily Tasks with Chronic Pain

AIMEE ESTHER • TRANSCRIPT

Hi, I'm Aimee Esther, and I live with multiple chronic illnesses. I have POTS (Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome) Small Intestine Bacterial Overgrowth (SIBO), IBS, Fibromyalgia, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, Chronic Migraines, PCOS (Polycystic Ovary Syndrome), Endometriosis, Hashimoto's disease. I have lots of health problems, autoimmune diseases, chronic fatigue, chronic pain. All the things are going wrong in my body.

And I make videos on YouTube about how to live the most amazing life despite having challenges of pain and fatigue, because sometimes you try all the things to help your illness. And I'm still trying things. I'm still working on them. But you want to live a good life while you're in it.

STILL AN AMAZING LIFE

It is not always easy to live with all of these illnesses. There are days where I curl up in a ball and cry, but then the next day I get myself back up and I keep on going. And I do believe that it is possible to live an amazing life even if you live with physical challenges, and it makes things a little more difficult.

And I also have a productivity workbook to help those who live chronically ill get more done in their day, to find a system that works for you. Not to brag, but I am an expert in the field of chronic illness because I practice every day. I've been practicing every day for almost eight years. So I am really good at living chronically ill. So if you want all the tips, head to my YouTube channel or my Instagram.

ORGANIZING WITH CHRONIC ILLNESS

But obviously, we are all here to talk about organizing your home and your space and your mind. And today I want to talk about tackling the daily tasks, getting the daily things done when you live chronically ill, because those are hard. Just the simple things that maybe seemed like not a big deal when you weren't sick or to other people are a really big deal to you. All right, let's jump in. I have ten things I'm going to share with you today.

TIP ONE: MANAGE EXPECTATIONS

So the first thing we need to talk about is expectations. How often do you have a good day? And you write all the things you want to do? You think you can accomplish the world because you're feeling good that day?

GETTING EXCITED

And you make this huge list of all the things you're going to get done, and you're going to start setting schedules, and you're starting this new routine, and you have all these ideas. Or you come to this conference and it gets you excited and motivated to take on more, and you hope that every day is going to be like this one.

And then the next day comes and chronic

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illness hits you and pain hits you and fatigue hits you, and regular everyday life hits you, and you don't get anything done that you wanted to. And then you feel worse about yourself because you had all these big plans. You thought you could do these things, and you realized in the moment you couldn't do it.

I'm just saying I do this all the time. Whenever I have a good day, I get a little too excited, a little too motivated. I'm a go getter type person. I love to get things done. It's my favorite thing to do.

PLANNING TO BE SICK

But when you live chronically ill, it's not always possible. So instead of planning to get all this stuff done, I like to plan to be sick. Now, I know that might sound silly. I know that might sound like have the opposite effect. I'm going to get less done, but I actually end up getting more done. If I plan to be sick, I plan to be at my worst.

Because here's the thing. I can always do more. I can always have kind of a backup list, which we'll talk about in a little bit of things that I can do that will be extra, that will help me achieve more than I had planned.

But when my expectations are too high and then I'm not able to fulfill those expectations, I just feel bad about myself. And guess what? When I feel bad about myself, I don't want to do stuff. It makes me want to do less. So instead, I just plan to be sick.

BEING REALISTIC

Now, that's not to say that I plan to do nothing and I just accept that I'm going to have a messy house all the time, and I'm never going to be able to work on my business, and I'm never going to be able to do all the things I want to do.

No, I just expect that I'm going to be at my worst that next day, that next week, any day I expect it's going to be the worst physical health day. And then I plan for how I can still get stuff done. I say if I have my worst day tomorrow, how am I still going to work on my business? How am I still going to get my daily tasks done? How am I still going to clean my house? How am I still going to take care of my kids? How am I still going to do whatever it is that I want to do while living in a lot of pain and a lot of fatigue?

TIP TWO: FIVE MINUTE RULE

This leads me into the second tip, which for me has been game changing in getting stuff done with chronic illness and with a human brain. Because human brains are really hard to get stuff done with. They have really good excuses for not doing things. And that is what I call the five minute rule.

The five minute rule means I do something for five minutes and that's it. That's the whole goal for the whole day. So if there's anything I want to accomplish in my life, I do it for five minutes a day. That's it.

I tell myself I need to clean my house for five minutes a day. I need to work on my business for five minutes a day. Now, you're probably sitting here thinking, Aimee, how in the world am I supposed to clean my nasty house if I only do it for five minutes? There's no way it's going to stay clean or there's no way I'm going to get organized if I only work on it for five minutes a day.

HOLDING YOURSELF ACCOUNTABLE

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Stay with me. Let me explain, because this really does work. It's a wonderful concept. Just try it out for me. So let me explain why this works. So with the five minute rule, we are not doing this because we are trying to deep clean our whole house. We are not doing this because we're trying to accomplish some huge thing. We are doing this because it's really difficult to do what you say you're going to do.

It is really difficult to keep yourself accountable. If somebody else asks us to do something, it's a lot easier to do it because we know that they are holding us accountable, that we want to do that for them, that we said we would do it. And so even if we're in a lot of pain and we're feeling really sick, we're still going to do it.

But when it comes to yourself, it's really difficult to do what you said you would do because when you're having a good day, you want to get all the stuff done and then the next day you are like, oh, well, it doesn't really matter. I'm really not feeling good. I know I wanted a clean house, I know I wanted to start a business, but it's not that big of a deal. I'm not going to do it. No.

We are cutting that cycle by using the five minute rule because it's pretty easy to convince yourself to do something for five minutes. Now, if you're in the hospital, of course, don't do the five minute rule. You're fine, just rest. But on all the other days, I want you to just do it for five minutes, whatever it is that you want to do.

IT'S ONLY FIVE MINUTES

If it's you want to figure out how to keep your house cleaner, then you clean for five minutes a day and you set a timer and you say, okay, I'm going to go for five minutes and see how much I can get done. And there are three reasons that we do this. One, I already talked about, which is doing what you said you would do, keeping yourself accountable, because it's pretty hard to convince yourself not to do something for five minutes.

And when your brain tells you that it's not a big deal, it's not going to make that much of a difference. Why would I do it for five minutes? I may as well do zero. Remind yourself that it's not because we're trying to deep clean our whole house. It's because we are keeping ourselves accountable. We're doing what we said we would do. Okay?

BETTER THAN ZERO MINUTES

And the second reason that we do this is because you actually do get done more than you think you would. Let's say you want to write a book. If you work on it for five minutes a day for two years and you never miss a day and you do it for five minutes every single day, you're going to write a whole lot more than if you did it one day for 30 minutes, and then you never touched it again because it was too overwhelming and too hard and you were too sick.

Even five minutes a day, you're doing more than you think. And you are creating a habit for yourself that will last so that when you do have a day when you feel better, you'll be able to do more, because you're in the habit of no matter what, I do this.

You want to start doing yoga, you want to start exercising. And it's really hard because you're physically ill. Let's do yoga. Five minutes a day. Five minutes. Five minutes is better than zero. It is. It always will be better than zero. And then you're in the habit.

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BUILDING A HABIT

So when you do have a good day, or maybe you do find some solutions that help you feel a little bit better, you're already in the habit of doing yoga every day. Now you can do it a little bit longer. Now you can see even more benefits from it because you're doing it extra.

MOMENTUM

And the third reason that we do this, which is the one I don't want to focus on, but it does happen, and that is that we get momentum once we get going. We want to keep going. Most of the time, I would say nine times out of ten, when I tell myself I'm going to work on my business for five minutes, I end up working longer than five minutes.

Even though before I start, I tell myself, I will still love you. I will still be proud of you. You are still amazing if you only do five minutes. And if you do five minutes and then you stop, you're still farther ahead than you would have if you wouldn't have started. I tell myself that I don't do it because I want to keep going. I do it because I want to do what I said I would do. I'm trying to create a habit. I'm trying to stick to something and keep myself accountable.

But most of the time, I end up doing more. If I tell myself I have to clean for five minutes, it's pretty hard to talk myself out of that because it's so little. It's not going to make me that sick doing five minutes. Even if I'm in a ton of pain, I can do anything for five minutes. And I get going, and I start doing stuff, and then the timer goes off, and I'm like, well, kind of in the middle of cleaning up these toys, I may as well finish. Well. There's also this other thing, and I kind of just keep going.

FEELING GOOD

And sometimes I actually feel better physically. I always feel better mentally when I get up and do something, but sometimes I feel better physically just getting up and going. And then I realize, oh, I thought my body wanted to rest right now. Good thing I got up and did my five minute rule because now I'm actually feeling better, I'm going to keep going.

Other times it's too much for me. I start going for five minutes and I need to rest after. Totally fine. We'll pick it up tomorrow. We'll try another day. We're just going to do five minutes a day, and it's going to be just fine.

TIP THREE: BLOCK OUT YOUR DAY

The next tip is to block out your day. And I hear this tip a lot in the organization productivity world, but it really does work so well when you live chronically ill. Think like when you were in high school and you do math in math class and you move to history for history class, and you move to English for English class. And if you try to do your math homework in history, you end up not understanding the history lesson and not understanding your math because it's too much for your brain to try to juggle both things.

You've got to segment your life and your brain for different tasks that you want to do instead of trying to play with your kids while you're trying to work on your business. Instead, let's segment that out. Maybe when the kids go to bed, we work on our business so that we're not thinking about the kids while we're working.

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MULTITASKING DOESN'T WORK

It's easier for our brains to focus when we're only thinking about one task. Multitasking does not work. It doesn't feel good. We get less done if we try to multitask. So even if you're feeling good for a few minutes and you're like, okay, I'm going to work on my business while we're at the park with the kids, and I'm going to try to clean my house, no, we're not going to be able to do it all at the same time, my friend.

We've got to segment our day so that when we are focused on work, we are all in on work. When we're focused on cleaning, we are all in on cleaning. When we're focused on kids, we're all in on kids. Or whatever it is that you want to do now. There's things you can do in the background. You could listen to a podcast while you clean or whatever. There's things like that. But we need to really try to focus our brains on one thing at a time.

LIKE HIGH SCHOOL

So blocking out your day just as you did in high school with your school classes saying, okay, from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m., is when I seem to have the most energy in my day. That's the time I'm going to have my cleaning block because it's the most active, or that's my exercise block or whatever it is that you want to do the best time of day for you. Figure that out.

Block out your day in segments. For me, kind of afternoon, I seem to crash. Mornings and afternoon are not my best productivity time, so I'm very relaxed in the morning, I'm very relaxed in the afternoon. So from like 2:00 to 04:00 p.m., I just really need to rest and not have anything big happening because it's too much for my body.

Same thing with the mornings, right? But oftentimes in the evenings, I don't know why I have this burst of energy. And so from 7:00 to 09:00 p.m., that's when I get a lot of work done, because I often not all the time, but often will have a little bit of energy at that time.

UPS AND DOWNS

And I think that happens when you live chronically ill. A lot of things are up and down. Sometimes it's consistent day by day. For some people, it's different every day. But I still think that blocking out times to do certain tasks is very helpful. So if you block out 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. as your cleaning block, what you want to do is in that 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. block, do your five minute minimum.

I usually like to do it right at the beginning of the block because, like I said, sometimes I get going and I want to keep going. Other times I do a little bit, and then I need a rest before my next block starts. But you can do it however you would like.

STAY IN YOUR LANE

Of course, but when I block it out that way, then I can remind myself when I'm working, even if I do have a little bit of energy, and I think, oh, now I'm feeling good, I should really clean. And I tell myself, no, Aimee, you had time during your clean block to clean. You weren't feeling good. That's unfortunate. We'll try again tomorrow. But right now it's work time. We're going to stay in work. Just like when we're in math class, we got to stay in math class. We can't do our history assignment in math class because then we're not going to really focus on either thing.

If I try to clean during my work block, then

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I'm going to be thinking, oh, I should have been working. Oh, there's all this work I need to do. Instead, I remind myself, okay, I didn't get a lot done in my cleaning block today. That's okay, we're going to start again tomorrow on a cleaning block. Hopefully I feel good tomorrow during my cleaning block. If not, that's okay, we'll try again the next day. Right now is work time. We're going to do our five minute minimum for my work block, and then after that, we'll see how we feel.

Blocking out your day in these different segments helps you to get done all the things you want to do in your day instead of spending your whole day cleaning, because you're doing five minutes every 2 hours cleaning and then you get nothing else done. Let's segment that out and make sure we get the things that are most important.

TIP FOUR: FOCUS ON THE GROSS

The next tip is to focus on the gross. Now, this works great with cleaning, but it actually works in a lot of different categories and areas of your life. So let's talk about cleaning. Focus on the gross.

So you're going to work for five minutes on cleaning, sometimes longer, but you're going to minimum at five minutes. And as you get cleaning, you're like, what do I do? My house is a disaster. There's so many things everywhere. Well, we focus on the gross, all right. My toilets haven't been cleaned in way too long. We're going to focus there. Or the dishes are getting disgusting. Let's focus there.

DOMINO EFFECT

Or there's a sticky mess on the floor and every time my kid walks through it, they're tracking stickiness throughout my whole house. That's what I'm going to focus on for the five minutes as I start, we focus on the gross because those are the things that spread. Those are the things that build up.

For example, dishes. We all know that dishes build up really quickly. So I usually start with the dishes because I only have to do it for five minutes. And then usually once I get going, I want to just finish because I'm already in there. But I start there because it's the grossest place in my house.

If there's crumbs on the counter, my kids can still eat their lunch if there's crumbs from breakfast on the counter. But if we don't have dishes, then how are they supposed to eat their lunch, right? So I focus on the gross things first.

GETTING MORE DONE IN THE LONG RUN

And when it comes to other areas of your life, let's say you are writing a book. Well, focus on the gross areas. That means the areas that you don't really want to do or the areas that organize what you're doing. So for example, if you're writing a book, maybe your focus is on the outline. Maybe it's more fun to start writing that chapter you've been waiting to write. But you're going to get a lot more done later if you focus on the gross today. If you focus on organizing your book, if you focus on writing an outline for your book, that's probably going to help you in the long run.

If you have a small business, maybe it's emails. For me, emails are really hard for me. They overwhelm me, they stress me out. But I find that when I do work on them, I actually feel way better after because it's almost like a weight lifted off of me, when filming a YouTube video is really exciting

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for me and I love doing it. But when I focus on the gross for the five minutes, the part that's like okay, I only have to do this for five minutes, and then I can be done.

When I focus on the gross first, I end up getting more done in the long run because I get the overwhelming part out of the way so that when I am feeling good on another day, I can sit down and film and do something fun because I got rid of the gross.

SAFETY FIRST

Another example of focusing on the gross is if you're a mom or a dad and you are taking care of your children. A gross thing, it's not actually gross, but the most important thing is safety, right? We need to keep them safe. So although maybe that doesn't really line up with the word gross. Whatever, focus on the safety. You can decide on the word there. But when we focus on, okay, the most important thing is that my kids are safe. So as long as they're safe, we're good.

Like they're being taken care of physically, emotionally, then if everything else gets left, it's okay. If they don't get to go to the park all summer, it's okay. We've kept them safe. We've kept them healthy. We've focused on the most important things in other areas. I'll call it the gross.

It feels like it doesn't really work in that scenario, but you know what I mean? Focus on what is the most important and use your energy and your physical strength and your mental strength for that first. Okay?

TIP FIVE: LET THE REST GO

Number five is to let the rest go. Focus on the gross and let the rest go, or focus on the safety and let the rest go. This is very difficult to do, especially if you're someone like me who just loves an organized, beautiful home and loves to get stuff done and knock stuff off my list.

It is so hard to let the rest go. It is so hard to do five minutes and then be like, okay, I know the rest of my house is a disaster. I feel like I didn't really do anything today. It was only five minutes.

IT TAKES PRACTICE

But it takes practice. It takes so much practice, and I'm getting so much better about this. I have been working on this for eight plus years now, and it does take a lot of practice to get better at letting things go. It is very difficult to just do the minimum and then not feel bad that everything else is still chaos.

And I'm not saying that you let the rest go, as in you learn how to just always live in an unorganized house and you never organize it, and it's always disgusting or whatever. No, I'm not saying that.

A BETTER DAY WILL COME

I'm saying you look at your day and you say, I'm feeling awful today. I did my daily five minimum of cleaning, and that's all I was able to do. I'm going to feel proud of myself today and know that another day will come where I can go organize that closet that I've been wanting to organize where I can deep clean the house.

There will come a day where I can afford to hire someone to deep clean my house. Maybe like, we can accept life as it is and strive to be better and know that better days will come and want to accomplish more.

It's okay to have both of those things and

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reminding yourself that I can let this go today because another day will come that I will be able to get it done today. I'm proud of myself for the five minutes.

TIP SIX: SIMPLIFY

Number six is to simplify. I'm not going to spend a ton of time on this one just because I know there's going to be other people in this conference who will share tons about simplifying, decluttering your house and your mind. Think, this is huge.

When I simplified my toys and my clothes and all my stuff, it just makes things so much easier because you have less to take care of, you have less to clean up. And I have an entire chapter titled Simplify in my Productivity Workbook that dives deep into this.

I'm sure you'll hear about it all over this conference as well, but it really is better. It makes things so much better. It helps your mind to not focus on so many things when you have less stuff. And it's so much easier to do if you are struggling to get things decluttered and simplified. Just do it five minutes a day. Tell yourself, five minutes a day, I'm going to work on simplifying my life.

TIP SEVEN: HAVE TOS

Okay, the next two tips deal with the have tos and the want tos. So have tos are things that you just have to get done. Because you're a human, now technically, you don't have to do anything. You could just never do the dishes again and it would be just fine. You could use paper plates, like there's things you could do.

But I think as a human, we've kind of decided that there's things that we sort of have to do. There are daily things that need to get done. There's also want to dos like, I want to organize that closet. Do I have to do it today? Will we not have dishes or laundry if I don't do it? No, we'll be just fine if the closet is messy another day. Those are the want tos.

THE BIG THINGS

And for this section, I want to focus on those big things that have to get done, but they never end up getting done because they're always last on the list. We get the dishes done first. We don't end up washing our sheets or cleaning the bathrooms or whatever. So for those things, I like to set them on a rotation schedule.

So I've heard it said before, like, oh, every Monday you should clean your bathroom, and every Tuesday you should clean your sheets, and every Wednesday you should mop the floors or whatever. And I could never stick to that because maybe on Monday I'm having the worst pain day of my life, and I only get the five minutes done, and then I cannot function anymore.

A ROTATION, NOT A SCHEDULE

Then I've missed it, and then I'm off schedule, and my bathrooms go another week without getting cleaned, right? Instead, I do a rotation schedule so when I have the energy so maybe I've done my five minutes of cleaning, and then I feel like I could keep going. I pick the next task in my rotation and I do it that day.

And then if the next day I don't feel good, I don't do anything, and that's okay. I just pick up where I was before. So, for example, let's say my rotations are cleaning out the bathroom, cleaning out the car, washing the sheets, organizing and decluttering a space, and washing windows.

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I like to pick, like, fiveish things to rotate through. On Monday, I check in with myself. How am I feeling? Oh, dang, I'm not feeling so good. I'm not going to do anything in my rotation schedule. The next day, I do my five minutes of cleaning, and then I'm like, you know what? I'm feeling good. Let's do something on my rotation. And I look at, what did I do last time? Well, last time I did the windows, which means I start my rotation at bathrooms.

KEEP ROTATING

And the next day is Wednesday. I'm not feeling so hot. I don't do anything on my rotation. On Thursday, I'm feeling pretty decent again. I think I could do something. Okay, well, last time on my rotation, I did bathrooms, even though it was two days ago. I just go to the next thing in my rotation, which is cleaning out the car. Sweet. That's done.

Friday, I'm not feeling good. Saturday, not feeling good. Sunday, not feeling good. Monday, I finally feel good again. I had three days off, and it's tempting to be like, oh, I missed all these days. I'm so behind. No, we just keep going with our rotation. We did bathrooms, we did car.
The next thing is wash sheets, even though it was four days ago.

We just keep that rotation going. If you aren't feeling up for it, you skip it. You start the next day. Sometimes in a week I get all five done, and it's great. Sometimes I don't. You get to decide how many are on your list. Maybe it changes from time to time. Sometimes you can take on more, sometimes you can't, but you just rotate through those things.

NUMBER EIGHT: WANT TOS

All right, so we've all heard of a to do list. It's a thing. Everybody has one. You write it down. You write down all these things you want to do. And then if you live chronically ill, you get to the end of the day and you look at it and you're like, I only did one thing, and it was the tiniest task on the list. And I already have six other things to put on the list. And then you feel bad because you called it a to do list, and you were supposed to do all those things on your to do list because you're a human being and you're an adult and that's what people do.

Well, I decided to change that. And instead of calling it a to do list, it's a very simple change, but I call it a wish list. This is my wish list, and I write down all of the things that I want to do. And whenever they come to my mind, I write them down.

A WISH LIST

I walk past my kids' closet, I'm like, dang, that really should be organized. Well, I don't feel good today. I'm going to just write it on my wish list. And I write, clean out kids closet. And the simple change of calling it a wish list instead of a to do list has made the biggest difference, you would not believe.

Because it takes the pressure off. It's now that I do these things for fun, because it sounds fun, not because I feel like I have to or I'm a bad human or a bad mom if I don't do it. No, just because it sounds fun to clean out a closet, because it's going to feel good after I don't have to do it, it's a wish list. I just get to decide if I do it or not that day, and it makes it fun. And when things are fun, I'm more likely to do it.

TIP NINE: FOCUS ON WHAT YOU CAN DO

Number nine is focus on what you can do instead of what you can't do. And I know this sounds like a typical life coachy thing to say, but it really does make a huge difference. So I want you to think about this.

Imagine a perfectly clean room. Spotless, deep cleaned, amazing. And there's one pile of laundry in the middle of the floor. Even if it's in the corner. Let's put it in the corner. There's a pile of laundry in the corner of the room. Tell me, where does your eye go? It goes to the laundry. It goes to the problem. It goes to the mess.

SEEING THE PROBLEM

Even if everything else is pristine and amazing, your eye naturally goes to the problem. This happens whether you can visually see it or not. Sometimes it is a visual thing, like keeping your house clean. Sometimes it's just in your mind.

You focus on the problem, the things that aren't getting done without noticing, like, hey, wait a second. The rest of this whole room is spotless. There's no other problem. It's deep clean. There's no crumbs, there's no nothing. Except my eye keeps going to that pile of laundry.

IT TAKES TRAINING

And it takes a lot of training your brain to learn how to see what you can do instead of what you can't do. So when you are struggling, instead of thinking about all the things you can't get done because you're too sick: Oh, man, I can't even stand today because my POTS is flaring and it makes me really dizzy. So I can't do anything today.

Instead I'm like, Wait, I can't stand up, but what I could do is sit on the floor and organize one of my cabinets.

I am having a migraine and I really wanted to work on a YouTube video. Oh, man, this is so awful. I can't do anything for my business. And I'm like, Wait, no. What can I do for my business? Oh, I could lay here and write down some video ideas for later. I could voice record myself with some video ideas. If I can't even function to write something down. I could call a friend and talk to her about some ideas. Bounce ideas off of her.

There's always something we can do wherever we're at. Take your five minutes a day or more and focus on what you can do in those five minutes instead of, well, I'm not going to be able to get the bathrooms clean because I'm too sick. No, I can just wipe the counter off and I'm fine. That's enough. That's enough.

Today I can do something. Focus on what you can do.

TIP TEN: CONSUME CAREFULLY

Okay, the last tip, and arguably the most important and the hardest one, stop consuming content that makes you feel like crap. Okay?

We've all done it. We follow those people who seem really motivating because their house is always perfectly clean. But in reality, it's just making you feel bad about yourself over and over again. So consume content that makes you feel good.

I'm not saying if you are having a bad day, you should then go find a video about someone having a bad day and mope together and say, poor us, life is so hard

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now. There's a time and a place to do that. Sometimes that's what you need and that's okay.

CREATE INSTEAD OF CONSUME?

But my suggestion is to consume content . . . if you are going to consume it, you don't have to. We live in a world where we think we have to consume something all the time.

What if we created more than we consumed? Just an idea. Anyway, if you consume content, social media, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, whatever, and it makes you feel like crap, stop it, okay?

FIND CONTENT THAT MAKES YOU FEEL GOOD

Find something that doesn't make you feel like crap or get off altogether. I find that I need to take social media fast all the time. I am a content creator. Literally make my money by making content. YouTube videos, Instagram posts, whatever. If I post something that makes you feel like crap, don't follow me. Just don't. There's no point. Why would you do that? I don't want you to follow me if I make you feel like crap, right?

I want you to follow people who uplift you, who, yes, motivate you, but not that make you feel like you need to be this perfect version of yourself. So, yeah, watch a cleaning video on YouTube, but don't watch one where you don't first see the mess. Or don't watch one where they can just get everything done in one day, because then you feel bad that you're not able to do that.

Find content that makes you feel good. And the great thing about our world today is there is so much content out there that you will be able to find it. So I would, right now, go on your social media, your YouTube, your Instagram, your TikTok, whatever, unsubscribe, unfollow all the accounts that make it difficult for you.
And there's nothing wrong with those people who post things that are perfect and beautiful. They are awesome human beings. For some people, they are extremely helpful. But if it's not helpful for you, we're not shaming those people who post things. We don't have to go on there and tell them that we're unfollowing them. Just unfollow and find things that uplift you, and find things in the real world that uplift you. Find people who uplift you, and you are going to be much better off.

STAYING IN TOUCH

All right, those are my ten tips. If you live chronically ill and you want to get daily tasks done, I hope that was helpful for you. If you want more information from me, you want more help from me. I do life coaching for people who live chronically ill. I help people find joy, meaning, and purpose in a life full of chronic pain and fatigue. I also share tips and tricks on my YouTube channel and podcast, Instagram account: Aimee Esther. I post a lot on YouTube. I post some on Instagram. I love YouTube. That's my home. But if you want to chat with me, DM me on Instagram is the best place to go.

And I think that's everything I have for you today. I hope you enjoyed this, and I hope to see you soon.

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Curating Your Closet for Confident Style

ALISON LUMBATIS • TRANSCRIPT

Hi, I am Alison Lumbatis. I'm the founder and CEO of Outfit Formulas and the author of the Ultimate Book of Outfit Formulas. But first and foremost, I am a recovering yoga pants addict. That's right. As a mom of three, I fell into a yoga pants rut years ago, and that's really what prompted me to create Outfit Formulas and to make it my mission to make it easier for you to get dressed every single day.

Today, I'm going to share some tips with you on how to curate confident style and find closet contentment. Plus, I'm going to show you my favorite quick little hack that is going to make it super easy for you to get dressed every day.

YOGA PANTS RUT

But first off, let's step into the wayback machine and talk a little bit about my yoga pants rut. So how many of you listening right now have ever walked into your closet and said, I have a closet full of clothes but nothing to wear? That was me back in 2012.

I got the opportunity to work from home, which was amazing in so many ways. But I quickly realized that the clothes that were in my closet worked really, really well for my corporate office environment, that they did not work at all for my new work from home environment. So I had to learn how to rebuild my wardrobe. But in order to do that, I had to get rid of a lot of stuff, which I'm going to talk to you about in a little while.

WHAT'S A CAPSULE WARDROBE?

But you've really got to know what you have in order to know what you need. I'm a big believer in shopping with a purpose and making sure that everything you buy is able to be mixed and matched with everything else in your closet. Some people like to call this a capsule wardrobe, which I inadvertently stumbled upon back in 2014 when I first created the Outfit Formulas capsule wardrobe program.

I didn't even know what a capsule wardrobe was back then. Being totally, totally honest, I had to look the term up whenever one of my readers said, hey, that's a capsule wardrobe if you're not familiar with it. Basically, it is a grouping of pieces in your closet that you can mix and match. It's generally a small amount of clothes that you can pair up in multiple different ways.

ADVANTAGES OF A CAPSULE WARDROBE

There are many advantages to it. Number one, it gives you a lot of bang for your buck, which I love. I did not have an unlimited budget to shop all the time. And number two, it makes it super, super easy to get dressed every single day.

I don't know about you, but I get decision fatigue. I think there's some statistic out there that says we make, like, 35,000 decisions every single day. That is mind

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blowing. So let's make a commitment that after watching today, getting dressed is not going to be one of those hard decisions for you. Okay? All right, let's do this.

So I'm going to go back again and talk to you a little bit about this story of me getting out of my yoga pants. Rut because I think it's important for me to get to my deeper why of why I make the commitment to get dressed every day and how this is going to dovetail beautifully into our talk about confidence.

ALISON'S STORY

So after about three months of working from home, putting on the faded black yoga pants, I started to notice some things happening around me. At first it was great. I was throwing in loads of laundry between conference calls. I was getting a lot done around the house.

But I noticed over time that I started to roll out of bed just a couple of minutes before the kids had to be ready for school, throw on those yoga pants, rush through my day, hurry up and get on email, rush to the afternoon carpool to pick the kids up. I was still in my yoga pants and I never made any time for self-care or to make myself a priority.

WHAT IS HAPPENING?

So after this going on for a few months, I started to notice some things snowballing. For instance, I wasn't feeling as motivated in my job. The loads of laundry weren't getting done between conference calls. I started to not cook as healthy. I wasn't working out even though I was putting on yoga pants.

There were so many things that started to happen and I couldn't really put my finger on what had changed. So I sat down one night and I thought about it really hard and I thought, you know what's different? I'm not getting up and actually getting ready in the mornings. I don't have that accountability partner built in anymore that makes it necessary for me to actually put on real clothes before I leave the house.

MOMMY, WHAT HAPPENED?

So that next morning I decided to get up about an hour earlier than everyone else and I made that time. I planned out my day. I scheduled in time for my own self-care, to quickly get a shower, to find something to wear, to put on a little bit of makeup, to brush my hair, which was not happening by the way, and to take this time to actually feel good.

And the first day that I did it, I noticed something amazing happened. I felt more motivated again. I felt more energetic. I went through my day with just a little bit of lighter step. It just felt good.

And when I picked my daughter up from school that afternoon and she hopped in the car and looked at me, she said, mommy, what happened to you? And I said, what honey? And she said, you look pretty today. And honestly I laughed. But that was the thing that was my deeper why.

I realized that it wasn't just about me anymore, that I was impacting the people around me by not showing up as my best self every day. So I made that commitment from that day forward that I would take more time for my self care and know that it was not selfish to focus on doing this every single morning.

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SHOP THE CLOSET

So I started out with a very small budget. I couldn't go out and buy a bunch of clothes all at once, and I didn't have the clothes in place in my closet to just completely redo my wardrobe for my new work from home lifestyle. It took time and it took energy, and I had to curate my closet over time.

But one of the things that I learned early on is that I was able to shop my closet. I was able to put together outfits from the pieces that I already had in there. And that's really become one of the core values of the Outfit Formulas philosophy is that I teach women to shop your closet first because chances are you already have pieces in there that you're going to be able to wear.

You don't have to go out and break the bank and spend hundreds or thousands of dollars to reinvent your wardrobe. You can start small with a few pieces that you love and build from there. The fact is, we only wear about 20% of what's in our closets at any given time. So that means that other 80% that's in there is doing what?

DECISION FATIGUE

It's creating decision fatigue. Whether you realize it or not, when you walk in your closet and you see all of those clothes in there, your brain gets overwhelmed. It can't differentiate between what fits, what doesn't fit, what's in style, what's not, what you've worn, what you haven't worn.

It's just clothes, right? So by taking out the 80% that you're not wearing, you're able to focus on the 20% that you are. And then you can go out and shop with intention to fill in the gaps in your wardrobe and know what you truly need.

MEAL PLANNING FOR YOUR CLOSET

It's like meal planning for your closet. You know what happens when you're hungry and you go to the grocery store and you don't have that list? Well, you're just going to randomly buy things. And those things may come home and they might make a meal, but they might not make a meal, who knows?

When you actually plan out your meals in advance, then you know exactly what to buy. And you know when you bring those things home that you're going to be able to pair them up into recipes, right?

Well, Outfit Formulas works the same way. We equip you with that shopping list, tell you exactly what to buy, you check off what you already have in your closet first, then voila, you get a new outfit idea every single day to make it super easy for you to get dressed.

WHY DRESSING WELL IS IMPORTANT

So let's talk a little bit about that confidence piece. I already shared some of my own personal story about how I felt more motivated the day that I got dressed and how it had a lot more to do with the way it made me feel than it did with the way it made me look. So this is not shallow.

Actually, science proves it. There's plenty of research out there right now that is supporting this exact thing that dressing well increases our performance, that people make assumptions about us based on the way we dress and the way that we dress and feel is directly linked.

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That's right. The way we feel about ourselves is directly linked to our appearance. So in other words, it is anything but shallow to want to feel good in your clothes. And before we move on to some nuts and bolts of style, if you take nothing else from this talk today, I want you to know this you are worthy of a wardrobe that you love, and you deserve to dress the body that you have now. No exceptions. We all deserve to feel amazing in our clothes.

BANG FOR YOUR BUCK

So why do I focus on capsule wardrobes? Well, for one thing, I've told you before that you get the most bang for your buck. If you know that a piece that you're buying is going to be able to be paired up with something else in your closet, you're going to be able to use it in multiple different ways. Right?

Well, I used to be a terrible shopper. I'm going to be the first to admit this. I would go out and scour the clearance racks, buy a bunch of stuff, bring it home, throw it out of my bed, look at it, and realize that none of that stuff went with each other and it didn't go with anything in my closet.

THE FIVE ELEMENTS

So I wasn't really shopping with a focus on building outfits. When I started Outfit Formulas as a former engineer, I knew that there had to be some framework, some easier way to get dressed every day. And that's when I realized that every single outfit has five different elements.

You have your bottoms, which is anything you're going to wear on your lower half. This is your shorts, your skirts, your pants, your jeans, et cetera. You've got your tops, which are self-explanatory. You have your toppers, which are your cardigans, your blazers, your denim jackets. You have your shoes and you have your accessories. So every outfit is made up of these five different elements.

SWAPPING THINGS OUT

And you can create different outfit formulas by swapping out one of these elements. So, for instance, if you have a pair of black jeans, you can pair that up with a striped top with a denim jacket with white sneakers. Or you can pair up your black jeans with a black shirt. If you want to go with an all black column, you can add on a black moto jacket. And you can put on a pair of leopard print ankle boots if you want to wear it for a date night out. So you can see we're just swapping out the pieces in that formula to make it work for everyone.

And that was really the beauty of Outfit Formulas because I wanted it to work for everybody, every budget, every age, no exceptions. And that was the way to make it work. So I give you this list of basics so that you can go out and equip your closet with the things that you need and then pair them up in multiple different ways with seasonal trends, which, who doesn't love a good seasonal trend, right?

Even if you don't consider yourself a trendy person, this is an easy way just to add in the latest color trends or patterns or whatever the case may be, just to keep the basics in your closet fresh and feeling new to you without having to constantly reinvent your wardrobe. Which honestly, who wants to do that? I know I don't.

CLEAN YOUR CLOSET

But before we get into the shopping part, I should let you know that the cleaning of the closet is super important. And if you're

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kind of cringing at the thought of doing that right now, let me tell you, it's not something you have to do all in one day. The best way to eat the elephants, one bite at a time, right?

But it is super important to get the things out of there that you're not wearing so that you can make that accurate assessment and remove that decision fatigue when you walk into your closet every morning.

FAVORITE HACKS

And now going to teach you one of my favorite hacks for getting dressed every day so you don't have to go shopping for this. You're going to start this in your closet and you're going to be able to do it today. You don't have to clean your closet out. What you're going to do is you're going to start by pulling out your favorite bottoms. So this can be your favorite pair of jeans, your favorite skirt, your favorite pair of shorts, whatever it is you wear on the lower half of your body.

Take that item and lay it out on your bed. Now you're going to go back into your closet and choose a top that coordinates with that. So I used the example earlier of the black jeans with the striped top. You could pull in your striped top in this case. Then you're going to go and you're going to get your topper and you're going to lay that down with those other two pieces.

So let's just say denim jacket. So now you've got your three pieces there. Now go grab a pair of shoes that coordinates with it. So let's grab those white sneakers, lay them down with those pieces. And now you're going to take your phone and you're going to pick it up and you're going to snap a picture of that outfit pairing that's laying on your bed.

AN ALBUM OF IDEAS

Now you're going to move on and do this again. Keep the bottoms there, but swap everything else out and you're going to do this. I like to set a timer on my phone for like 15 minutes at a time to do this because it can get overwhelming, especially if you've got a lot of different pairings that you're doing.

But what you're going to do is you're going to keep pairing items up with that pair of bottoms until you've exhausted all options for that. And then you're going to move on to your next pair of bottoms and you're going to start this process all over again.

What's going to happen is at the end of this exercise, you're going to have this beautiful album of outfit ideas at the ready. Next time you wake up in the morning and you say, I need a cute outfit to go to the dentist right now, pull it up in your phone, your outfits are going to be right there.

SELFIE TIME

And when you put on a cute outfit to go to the dentist, here's another tip. Snap a selfie in the mirror, keep it in that same album, label it Outfit Ideas and pull it up. I'll tell you this, I can put on a cute outfit on Monday and then by Wednesday totally forget what it was. If it happens to me, I'm sure it happens to you too. So if you're feeling cute, take the photo. Be sure to save it, be sure to document it, and make sure that you have that on your phone that you can refer back to when you're in a pinch and you need an outfit in a hurry. I promise you it works every single time.

Here's another tip. Go to Pinterest. Pinterest is your friend. If you don't want to do the legwork like that, you can also

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just search black jeans outfits on Pinterest. You can make it as specific or broad as you want. They could be black jeans outfits for casual stay at home. They could be black jeans outfits for date night. Whatever the case may be, you can take those pieces of inspiration and apply it to your closet and make substitutions. Don't be afraid to play around with your clothes to make the outfit ideas work for you.

FREE DOWNLOAD

And if you're really struggling to get your basics in place, then I have a freebie download for you today. These are my absolute favorite closet staples pieces. It's called 13 Closet Staples That Every Woman Needs. You can download it at outfitformulas.com/13staples.

And the bonus to that is you're going to have some outfit ideas there that you're going to be able to style today. Because I want you to be able to get started on this as quickly as possible. I am all about those quick wins, especially when it comes to getting dressed.

So try out some of the outfits. Style them from your closet. If you do, be sure to tag us on Instagram at outfitformulasofficial because I love to see them so visit outfitformulas.com/13staples and try that out.

Don't forget to shop your closet first. If you have anything that's on that list on the closet staples list, then go ahead and check it off. Chances are you will, because most women already have a lot of closet staples in place.

All right, so give it a try and let me know what you think. We are all about those quick wins, remember? So style your outfit today and see how much more confident you feel.

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How an Organized Fridge Can Save You Money

AMY CROSS • TRANSCRIPT

I go grocery shopping once every three weeks, and we have zero food waste. I spend $135 per person. So our size of our family right now that are living in the house is for two people. But even when we had eight people living here at the house, this refrigerator worked for all of the items that we needed.

The average family in the United States throws away 30% to 40% of the food that they buy. And the World Economic Forum came out last spring saying that the global average was 61%. We go to the grocery store once every three weeks, and we have zero food waste. So being able to organize your fridge, not only is it pretty, but it'll actually help you save so much money by none of the stuff going to waste.

MAKING IT STRETCH

Around two weeks into my grocery cycle, I am really looking into my drawers and at my produce to see what needs to be used up before I go grocery shopping. Sometimes I can push out grocery shopping then another seven to ten days, sometimes even another two weeks, by looking at what we have that needs to be used up and then basing our next shopping trip on that.

So I just encourage you, whatever your grocery shopping cycle is right now, if you're going every other day or every day to the store, just trying to see what you have already in the fridge, and you can push out your shopping trip. Even one extra day will help save you so much money.

I get all of the time, it would be great to buy all that produce, but I can't fit it in my fridge. All of this stuff was in my fridge. We are getting ready to clean it out, to take some pictures, so we can share it with you. But my fridge is completely empty, and this is every single item, including a whole bunch of vegetables that are in this blue tub that was fitting in my fridge.

A FRIDGE TOUR

It's actually totally empty right now, and everything that was on my fridge, in my fridge, is on the counter. And there's a lot of stuff here. So I get asked all the time how big my fridge is and all of those kind of things. It is counter depth, which is a standard size for an American fridge. The ice maker is in the door, and it's also down at the bottom in the drawer, But I actually took that part of it out to have more freezer space. But the ice maker is just here, and it's not taking up that big section here inside of the fridge.

THE CRISPERS

And then it has these two drawers that I use for crisper drawers. And it also has a third drawer that I use for, like, cheese and deli slices and different things. And then for the crisper drawers, I always put a paper towel or a napkin in there. They're normally seasonal, especially in the wintertime - these have strawberries on them - that it helps clean up any of the little crumbs and different things that are in the drawer that

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the produce items will leave in there. But it also helps collect a little bit of the moisture that is getting released off of the produce items. So I always keep a napkin or a paper towel.

We're going to delete the dinging here. Close this. I have two crisper drawers. One of them I have set for vegetables, and the other one I have set for fruits. I think it is so important not necessarily what that little dial says on your crisper drawer, but what you're storing in the drawers together.

So over the years, just because I like the way that the lemons and the avocados fit together, I didn't realize that I was actually figuring something out to make avocados last longer. And when you store those in the same drawer, or any other citrus, you can actually get your avocados to last for a month, and citrus will last a lot longer than that in the refrigerator. So I have one drawer that always has lemons and citrus and avocados together.

And then I have another drawer that will put any seasonal produce in. So in the summertime, it's corn on the cob, but in the fall, we have different squashes and eggplants, and those kind of things will go into this other crisper drawer. We will go through more produce items at the end of this segment, but right now, we're going to talk about what we do with this empty fridge and how I figure out the different shelf sizes, which is really important.

SHELF HEIGHT

So I'm going to figure out, based on the largest jar, that I want to put it into my refrigerator. So I base this on being able to fit this size jar in the shelf. If you see they're not the same heights, I was able to make them two different heights. Turn around, because that says smokehouse almonds. So I want to make sure that my largest items fit in first, which are my half gallon or gallon sized jars, and also my lettuce container. So I want to make sure that the shelf will hold my lettuce container, which normally sits right here.

Another item that I love that fits in my refrigerator is this acrylic basket. We call it, we call it the salad basket. And I normally keep it on the shelf right up here. And then with this being a newer fridge, I keep my milk in my door. So if you have a really old fridge, sometimes that's not recommended. In my fridge, it's totally okay.

Okay. These two items I get asked about all of the time, and I do not have a link for you. They are items that I have found at Marshalls or T. J. Maxx over the years. These ceramic baskets are my favorite. I have them on the shelves in my fridge, and I sort them out as I need them. So sometimes you'll see them in my fridge, but I don't have a link for them.

MAKING CHEESE LAST

These cheese containers are acrylic drawer organizers. They're really hard to find a link for, and they're something that I picked up at the stores over the years. These cheeses I just have in these acrylic little drawers because they're handy for me in the refrigerator. They're not getting lost, and they're pretty, which I like. But the other ways that I store cheese is more so it stays fresher longer. So Parmesan cheese, I normally use these stasher bags, and then I just push out any air when I go to close it back up, and it fits easily in my refrigerator. This did have a whole bunch of sliced cheese in it, and it's almost empty now. But this is how I keep sliced cheese. This is about a month old right now, and there's no

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mold, no anything.

Normally I buy medium cheddar cheese, which I can freeze. So sharp cheese will get all crumbly, but medium Cheddar, you can freeze. And then I pull it out and I'll put it in these kind of glass containers. I just slice it all in funny different directions so it fits in the container. But I shred my own cheese. And as I shred it, I will put it in a quart size jar with a metal lid, and it will stay fresh for a really long time in the refrigerator.

TAKING A BACK SEAT

When I start loading my refrigerator, I'm going to put items at the back of the refrigerator that I don't use very often, but still need to stay cold. So I have these crispy pickles that I had made. We actually have a couple of jars of these, so I'm going to make sure that they go way in the back of the refrigerator. And we only have one that's easier to access. The crispy pickle recipe is actually on our blog if you want to check it out on thecrosslegacy.com. Okay, sour carrot, which is also a staple in my refrigerator, we have a video for that, too. This is elderberry syrup grapes in a jar.

MAKING MILK WORK

We're lucky here in the Seattle area that we actually get our milk delivered straight to our house. But if I was getting milk at the grocery store, I would still get two cartons to make a gallon instead of getting one larger gallon, because as we use it up, I can throw this whole carton away and not be taking up so much space in our refrigerator.

So if you don't go through milk really quickly, going through gallons a day, which we did at one point in our life, but now that there's not so many people here in the house, finding them in half gallons in the cartons like this ends up saving us space in the refrigerator. So it's something to think about if that works for your family.

EGGS-ACTLY RIGHT

One of our go to snacks in the refrigerator is always our boiled eggs. And since we have our own chickens, we don't get cartons all the time. So I have these acrylic egg cartons that I keep in the refrigerator. If you ever see eggs in a refrigerator, it's because they are hard boiled. And having backyard chickens, we normally keep our other eggs in the cupboard.

So if you're buying store bought eggs, and especially if you're getting in them in the five dozen packages, these acrylic little trays are really handy to be able to resize them, and they fit perfectly on your shelf.

PEPPERS AND PRODUCE

Peppers can go in your crisper drawer, but I always worry that they're going to get bruised and damaged. So I store them up here on my shelf, and they're more protected up here. We lovingly refer to this as a salad basket, and I will show you why I'm able to put all of these quart sized jars in this basket. It will hold six, and that way I know all my cut veggies are really easy to grab out of the refrigerator and to hand out as snacks.

So I have cut carrots here. I'm going to tuck this jar in the back, because I have half an open jar that I'm going to have closer. I have cucumbers that are sliced. These will last for about ten days after they're sliced if you keep the skins on. So seven to ten days with the skins on, and five to seven days if you take the skins off and store it in a jar with the metal lid.

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LONG LASTING FRESHNESS

And then this is half an avocado. It's actually over a month old at this point. It was full, and about a week ago, I cut it in half and put it in a jar because I only used half of it. So this is the next avocado that I want to use.

These raspberries are three weeks old at this point right now, and they still look perfect in this jar. So raspberries and blackberries will last two to three weeks, strawberries will last three weeks, grapes will last four to six weeks, and blueberries will last six to eight weeks. When you're following our instructions, here's some strawberries that didn't fit in the big jar. So I always encourage my family to use up the things in the small jar before we start opening the bigger jars.

Cherry tomatoes are one thing that I normally keep in the refrigerator, since these are still on the stem. And if you keep items on the stem longer, they stay fresher longer. I have it in this flat Pyrex container, but normally, if they're not on the stem, then I will put them in a Mason jar into the refrigerator. So cherry sized tomatoes go into the refrigerator. They will stay fresh for a month. I do not do that with a larger summer sized tomato. Those I would keep on a plate on my counter.

TO CUT OR NOT TO CUT

I have some radishes here again, radishes. Sometimes if they're smaller, I will put them in a jar. But I'm just going to put these in my vegetable drawer. And then you saw that I had some cut carrots already. I didn't cut them all yet. I tried to cut the ones that were skinnier already and make those into sticks. The ones that were a little bit fatter, I kept those to stay in the drawer. They will stay fresh for about two weeks. I've already washed them. I will put them in the crisper drawer. Once they're cut, they actually stay fresh for over a month.

So I'm going to put these in the crisper drawer down at the bottom. I have a container of celery here, and then I actually have some that is not cut yet. Sometimes you just don't do it all the day that you're washing the produce. So this is the celery that is washed. And I'm just keeping that in the crisper drawer for right now. In the next couple of days, I will be cutting the celery and putting it in glass. But right now, it's just going into the crisper drawer.

SQUASH

And then I have eggplant and zucchinis. Oh, we're just going to put the eggplant in first. So this eggplant was washed. I'm going to put this in the crisper drawer with the vegetables. I talk about two different kinds of zucchini and squashes. So if you're getting squash and zucchini from the grocery store, and it's like the smaller size, like this, like under a foot, those go in the crisper drawer after they're washed. They have a thinner skin that if you barely touch it with your fingernail, you're going to ruin the skin or mark the skin up.

Zucchini that you're getting this time of year that are actually coming out of your garden, that are like leg size, those can be washed and stored in your pantry, and they will actually last six months or so. So those huge garden zucchinis that you're getting from outside that have been sun cured and have a harder skin on them, those are safe for your pantry. The smaller ones that you get at the market, those go in your crisper drawer.

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CITRUS

So this drawer over here, I keep all of my citrus, my lemons, and my oranges and my avocados. I make sure that my avocados will fit in this drawer. If I have a little bit extra oranges or lemons, then they can stay in the bowl. But it's so important to keep your lemons and your avocados together, and they will stay fresher longer, which will save you tons of money.

A lot of people don't think about washing their lemons or their citrus when you bring it home. But it is so important. Even if you're not eating the peel, by washing them properly, you're killing off the mold spores. So you're not introducing the mold spores to your refrigerator.

KEEP THEM APART

Okay, these are the oranges that don't fit into the refrigerator. I had them in a bowl on the countertop. I just wanted to do this little reminder that you never put oranges, apples, and bananas together, because they will spoil each other quicker. So make sure that you keep those separated into other bowls.

If you do have room in your refrigerator, keep your oranges and your apples in the refrigerator. They will last so much longer, but make sure that they're separated into different containers. So I normally keep my oranges in the drawer and then the apples up on the shelf.

CILANTRO AND PARSLEY

All right. The last produce items I'm putting into the refrigerator are cilantro and parsley. At this point, the cilantro and parsley is over a month old. I'm going to retrim the ends on the cilantro. All I need to do is cut off about a quarter of an inch, and it'll reopen up the vascular system on the plant so the water can keep sucking up into the plant and keeping it looking fresh. So I'm going to do the same thing. I have some floaties, a little stem in there that I'm going to get out. I'm actually going to dump this water out and put new water in, so I'm just going to trim these up. You only need to cut off a quarter of an inch to open up the plant again. But I cut off a little bit extra here so they were all even.

And I'm going to put new filtered water into these jars. Okay, so put filtered water in your jars, your glasses, whatever you use, make sure it's water that you would want to use. Our tap water has too much chlorine in it, and it will kill the plants. I also take just a sharpie, and I write on the outside of the jar so I remember which one is parsley and which one is cilantro. And every ten days or so, I just trim the ends again and give it new fresh water and just be checking it when it's in the refrigerator and making sure that the stems are all the way down the bottom and touching the water. So these are going to go into the refrigerator. They normally last around six to eight weeks. Normally, I will put these right here on the shelf in the door as I put the other condiments back in and stuff, they don't get knocked over. And it's just really handy to have them right here.

THE GLASS JAR TRICK

So this is just produce in my refrigerator. And the dairy, because I didn't want that sitting on the counter. All of this is all produce. One of my other favorite tricks is to take containers like this and take the contents out and put it in glass jars. Not only will it look pretty in your refrigerator, but it actually helps you save money because it will last so much longer.

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So normally, Greek yogurt will last around six weeks from when you buy it but when you put it in glass, it will last longer. It will last approximately, like, two weeks after that date. So I normally go by this best by date, and I want to use it by that date, but it will stay fresher longer. And I use metal canning lids. I guess I just I put them in Mason jars with the metal canning lids.

WRITE AND TAP

So I have cottage cheese and Greek yogurt that I'm going to fill up. And then I just take a Sharpie just like I do for other items, and I will write what it is on the outside and the best by date on it.

I have a towel on my counter here, and I was just kind of tapping it a little bit just to get some of the air bubbles out of it, which will help it settle and stay pressure longer. So I have this almost filled up. I'm going to get one more little jar and fill it up the rest of the way.

But I did want to note that I normally use a wide mouth quart jar for these or a wide mouth pint size jar because it's easier to get your spatula or whatever in your jar to get your items back up.

So anyway, so this one's Greek yogurt, and then we're going to do another one with cottage cheese. But this fits so much easier in my fridge and takes up less space than these bulky plastic containers. Okay, I just write right here on the jar, but you can also write on the lid. So I'm going to write what it is, and then I write the best by date on it also.

Honestly, I pushed that date a couple of days later when I write it on the jar. And Mike never knows if it says it's ready on the 25th, I will put like, the 28th on it. For cottage cheese, I'm going to do the same thing as I do for Greek yogurt and do the same thing where I'm going to kind of tap it down a little bit on a towel. I don't want to break my jar or my countertop.

RIGHT UP FRONT

We will show these going into the fridge, but I want to talk about a couple of little secrets that I do. So this big container here made a quart size and a pint size. It was a brand new container, and this is what it filled up. The larger jars I'm going to hide in the back of the refrigerator behind our produce. So when you open up the fridge, the produce is like the first thing that you see when you're wanting to grab a snack or something. And then the smaller jars that I want to be used first, I will put up closer or in the doors so people know to grab these first.

And then once the small ones are empty, then we'll start using the bigger ones so that way things aren't getting lost, and I don't have to look at a lot of the items. So we'll show you putting those away in the refrigerator. So that is one tip here.

NUMBERING THE JARS

And then the other one is if I have multiple sizes of the same jar for the items I will write on here of, like, there's two or three, I will write one of three or two of three. So that way we know that when we're getting to that third of three, three of three a jar, that's the last one of those items, and that's the last one. We need to use it up and put that on our grocery list, those kind of things, or we're not still searching in the refrigerator for another jar, thinking that there's one back there. We know exactly. So if there's no markings of the, like, one of two jars, then we know that there's just one big

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jar and it's in the back.

And then these smaller ones are the ones that we're going to use first. While we're talking about repackaging items, I also put this potato salad in a glass dish that will be able to stack easily with the items that I want to store it with instead of having this other plastic container that is not going to utilize the space very well. So, again, this might seem like it's an extra step. It will end up giving you so much more space in your refrigerator and helping you save money.

PACK THE BACK

Okay. Those Greek yogurts and cottage cheeses that I had earlier, I'm going to take the larger jar, the larger jars, and I'm going to tuck them in the back of the refrigerator. Hard boiled eggs going back in there. Some blueberries I forgot about. Blueberries will actually last six to eight weeks.

Here's some random things that I'm just storing in my refrigerator. So the sun dried tomatoes I don't use very often. I know to go looking for them if I need them in a recipe so I can tuck those way in the back of the refrigerator and they will still be great.

Okay. I have kind of trained my family that they look up here for cut items to grab first, or if I have things like pears and pineapple that I home can that need to be used up soon. They know to look for these in the door here. I have these random tubes of things that I just hide up here where nobody else can reach. If we have juice. I like these containers, these carafes. So these are from Amazon. We have a larger one too, but we rarely use it. These are just extra flaxseeds and hemp hearts that I keep towards the back of the refrigerator also. Overnight oats.

WHERE ARE THE LEFTOVERS?

People see pictures of my fridge all the time and ask where the leftovers are. We actually eat the leftovers, and we don't just throw them in the refrigerator for them to die later. We try to make a plan for them. So either I am making like an extra chicken breast or two that we are going to have for the next meal, or I'm making a larger portion to batch cook it so I can put a whole other dinner's worth into the freezer, which I did with the taco meat.

FREEZING AND DEFROSTING MEAT

So I just pulled this taco meat out of the freezer. This is going to be dinner tonight, so it's all ready to go and we won't have any waste. And then this chicken breast is going to be for lunch today. And then in our freezer, we have packages of meat like this because they come from the butcher. I always make sure to put them on a plate or in a glass container when I put these into the refrigerator to defrost and make sure that they're not around vegetables. These normally take around two days to defrost. So this will be something that we will have for dinner in the coming days as it's defrosting safely in the refrigerator.

Okay. This is my London broil that I have in a glass container. So I normally pull out enough meat for not tonight, but two nights out. So I normally have at least one thing defrosting in the refrigerator every day. This is taco meat for tonight. And the chicken breast. We actually have some potato salad too. I'm going to keep all of these items together.

WHAT ABOUT CONDIMENTS?

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You might notice that I don't have ketchup bottles and different things. We actually have a lot of allergies in our family and I'm diabetic, so I try to cut all the sugar that I can. I make our own ketchup and barbecue sauce. That sound. Another thing is people always have so many condiments in their refrigerator. I have learned over the years that if I can keep just two different salad dressings in my refrigerator at a time, or two different mustards or barbecue sauces and make that the limit, then it saves so much space in my refrigerator. So we don't open a new container until one of them is gone. For salad dressings especially, we normally have like a vinaigrette kind of salad dressing and then like a creamy kind of salad dressing. And that's all I have open in the refrigerator at the time.

I teach a course on how to save money on groceries, and one of those is how to stock your pantry. And when you're keeping unopened items in your pantry, they will last like 18 months past the best by date. So if you can keep those extra salad dressings in your house unopened in your pantry, then they will end up saving you money. Once they go into the refrigerator and opened, then you want to start using them up. So instead of having an overabundance of condiments in your refrigerator that nobody is using, try to pare it down a little bit. Two salad dressings.

IT ALL FIT

Did you see all of that stuff on the counter earlier? It's all in the fridge, like it's all sitting here. These are things I'm going to eat for dinner tonight. These are leftovers that we're going to have for lunch today or tomorrow. This is dinner that is defrosting that we will have in the next day or so. And everything else in here is produce and snacks that we'd be grabbing easily out of the refrigerator. Different dairy items like the Greek yogurt and the cottage cheese. We know to grab the smaller jars first before we start pulling out those larger jars.

Thank you for joining us. I hope you learned something with our fridge clean out today. Make sure that you're following the Cross Legacy on all of our different social media sites, on Instagram and YouTube. And we have a blog that will break down all of these produce tips. This all started just two years ago with strawberries in a jar going viral. But I have tips for all produce items to get them to last longer.

Make sure to check out our book called I Bought It, Now What? Which is a bestseller on Amazon. Or you can buy it through our website. So thanks for joining.

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The Practice of Owning Well

ANN & KATE • TRANSCRIPT

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

TASHA: Well. Please join me in welcoming Ann and Kate from Done & Done Home. We are going to be talking about this whole concept of Owning Well. But first of all, I want you to meet them. Let them introduce themselves. So welcome, Ann and Kate.

KATE: Thanks so much.

ANN: Hi!

KATE: I'm Kate. This is my mom, Ann.

TASHA: Okay, perfect. I was just going to ask which one is which so everyone knows. Thank you so much for being here today.

DIVING IN: WHAT IS OWNING WELL?

TASHA: And I just want to dive right in. Like I said, we're going to be talking about this concept of Owning Well. So can you just give us a working definition, at least for the purposes of this session? How do you define "owning well"?

ANN: Owning Well is our philosophy of buying the best you can afford and taking good care of it and planning to take good care of it so that if you spend more money on it, you're careful and you're willing to repair, and then you have better things that last longer.

KATE: It's sort of the anti-fast fashion in that way of buying higher quality clothes or even higher quality appliances and things like that so that you're not constantly having to buy new and more and therefore sort of burdening the landfills with all the stuff that you're getting rid of.

OWNING LESS OR BUYING LESS?

TASHA: Right. Yeah. So I'm excited to unpack this whole concept. Would you say that owning well is equivalent to owning less?

KATE: I wouldn't say it's equivalent to owning less. I would say it's equivalent to buying less.

ANN: Agreed. Right.

KATE: So you can have as much in your home as you want, and that fits and makes you feel comfortable, and so it doesn't prevent you from having those things. But you do buy less because you take care of it. And it lasts longer because it's higher quality. So you're not constantly shopping and replacing items, which for us is good because we hate shopping. So that works well.

TASHA: Yeah. This is a great strategy. The fellow viewers who hate shopping, this can alleviate some of that. How does this all relate to organizing, would you say?

ORGANIZING LESS

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ANN: One of the things that people always say to me is that they're not good at organizing, or organizing is so hard. And I always say to them, organizing is easy, decluttering is hard. And what it comes down to is when you have too much, it does make it hard to run an efficient home. No matter the size of the home, no matter what you're doing, no matter how many people live there, it does make it difficult. So when you're owning well, you tend to have the right things that you want, need and love. And so it does make organizing much easier.

KATE: Yeah. There's not tons of extra stuff because you have the right, good working version of what you need.

TASHA: Right. So can you just give me a couple of examples? I may be putting you on the spot here a little bit, but just like off the top of your head.

HOW TO START OWNING WELL: TWO CATEGORIES

TASHA: For someone who wants to start this practice of owning well. What are some of the things you see most often that are maybe the most impactful things to really pay attention to? Buying high quality, taking good care of them, repairing them. So most impactful and/or things that you see maybe people not owning well as often. And what are some of the things that you start with?

KATE: I would say there's two sort of categories that are great to start with, which are like, more expensive clothing items, so that might be like coats, boots, things like that –

ANN: Blazers.

KATE: – blazers, sweaters, things that are going to stick around for a long time versus like, T shirts and underwear, right? Like things that are going to be less expensive.

APPLIANCES ARE NOT JUST IN THE KITCHEN

KATE: And then the other category, I would say, is appliances. And that's both kitchen, but also like a blow dryer, right? You can go through four cheap blow dryers or you can get one good one that's going to last. I've literally – I'm not joking – I've had my blow dryer for 15 years. It was expensive when I bought it. It would have been way more expensive now because it was 15 years ago. But I use it on my bangs at least every day and I still have it. It's great. Like does it look perfect? No. Is it a little old? Fine. But it works perfectly.

ANN: I mean, that's the thing. You've had 15 years of satisfying use. You plug it in, you turn it on, it does what it's supposed to do.

KATE: Yeah.

ANN: There is nothing so frustrating as having spent some money, even if it's not a lot, and not having that thing work the way you were hoping it would.

THE KITCHEN MIXER THAT BRINGS JOY

KATE: And I think a lot of that goes in the kitchen as well. So you get like a really cheap hand mixer and it dies. Or the things don't fit – .

ANN: It has no power.

KATE: – It has no power, and you're like, this is so annoying. Where if you just got the one really nice one. My mom has one that

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she bought herself and has now given as gifts, like multiple times, because it's like so fantastic. And it has a light on it.

ANN: It has a light on it.

TASHA: Which one is it now? I want to know.

ANN: It's a Kitchen Aid hand mixer. But even that, you know, the two – I don't know what those are even called – .

KATE: Like the wand.

ANN: – The wand things that go in there. They are coated in plastic on the bottom, so when you're in a bowl, they don't make a ton of noise. It has a lovely light so you can cn see what you're doing. The way it turns up and turns down is easy.

KATE: On the one she had before, that level one was like ten speed.

ANN: Right.

KATE: And so you turn it on and everything would go everywhere and you're like, no. Nobody wants that when they're like, trying to make cookies with their grandkids. It's just annoying.

ANN: Right. You just want things to do what they're supposed to do. And the ease of it, the ease of cleaning it, the ease of putting the pieces on – .

KATE: And the joy of it.

HAPPINESS IS A WARM WINTER COAT

KATE: And that's also, I think about clothing. Like, when you have nice clothes that you know you're going to have for a few years, like a winter jacket, you don't replace every year. And so if you get a high quality one like you got one this year, it's going to last years. But it feels good and luxurious and makes you feel, like, rich and fancy and smart, and you're like, that's how you should feel on all your clothes. You don't want to buy just, like, cheap crap and then get – .

ANN: Where you're like, this is my cheap crap,

KATE: – and I'm cold too.

ANN: Right? Horrible.

TASHA: Actually, the warmth on coats makes a big difference.

ANN: It does make a huge difference. And if you've never had a coat that's truly warm, you kind of don't know what you're missing. You just wouldn't know.

KATE: Yep.

ANN: But even for us, when I was looking for a new coat and I realized I have had two winter coats in a very long period of time – you ladies are too young to even imagine this – but that I had spent a lot of money on each one of those, but they lasted for well over a decade.

KATE: Yeah.

ANN: And because I'm kind of a neutral gal in colors and styles, I don't think anybody was like, "Ann's wearing that coat again" – .

KATE: No, nobody cared.

ANN: – It's just my coat. I would wear it. It was so good. And so when I was committing to this coat this year, I had a moment's

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hesitation. I'd looked, I'd shopped, I'd tried things on.

IT TAKES A LITTLE MORE WORK – BUT IT'S WORTH IT

ANN: That's the other thing about owning well. You might have to put a little more work into it, but it's worth it. Kate's very good at taking pictures of things that she thinks she might want, and then once she takes a photo, she feels like she kind of already owns it. So does she really need to own it?

KATE: It's in my thing here. I don't really have to go buy it.

ANN: Right. But then if she later is like, I'm cold. I need a better coat –.

KATE: Yeah.

ANN: – then she has to go buy it. But I did feel that putting the work in made a big difference, and I was so happy every day I put my coat on this year.

KATE: Yeah.

TASHA: Yeah, absolutely. So when it comes to this, would you say this probably is more like a gut reaction, more so than, like a calculated formula? Do you think that you have spent less overall by practicing this?

PRICE PER WEAR

KATE: So our sort of methodology to this is price per wear –.

ANN: Yes.

KATE: Right. So you go like, if you buy a coat and you wear it once, and the coat was $100 and then you didn't like it and it was cheap and you were cold, that's $100 for that item.

But if you buy a coat for $1,000, but you wear it 1000 times, that's a dollar a wear.

And so you go. We have found, and I believe with our clients as well and our friends and everybody that we've taught this to, the more you spend and the more you take care of the item, the cost goes down over time,

THE TROUBLE WITH SALE ITEMS

ANN: So long as you're careful with your purchase, right?

KATE: Yeah.

ANN: Because one of the ways people get into trouble with this is sale items.

So, like, they say, oh, it's the end of the season. The coat that I might have wanted is on sale. It's not the color I wanted, and to be honest, it's not even the exact right size, but it's a coat, so what does it matter? You've now purchased something that is not right, that you didn't want, that was expensive anyway. And so that's what we call sunk costs. You've spent the money and then you don't even want to wear it.

So let that go and start again. And when people ask us how we got so good at this, and I say, unfortunately, we had to practice.

KATE: It does take some practice.

ANN: We made some mistakes, but we're great at it now and we support each other in it of like asking the right questions. Are you really going to wear that? Is that what you really need? Right? And then you kind of think like, oh –.

KATE: Yeah.

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THE RIGHT PAIR OF JEANS

ANN: One of the ways in clothes, one of the things in this category that's a very interesting thing is jeans –

KATE: Yeah.

ANN: – where people think like, oh, it's just jeans. I'll just grab an inexpensive pair or whatever. But if they don't feel good about it and they don't wash well and wear well, right? Because a good pair of jeans –.

KATE: Can last a long time.

ANN: – and get you through so much, right? You're like, I'm good, these are good, I'm fine. I feel confident, I'm happy. Right? And I wear jeans all the time and I always have. So for me it's a particular area, but I think it does make a big difference.

And I was debating it the other day with Kate where I was saying – .

KATE: Well, she ordered a cheap pair of jeans and didn't like them and returned them because she was like, I know I'm not going to want to wear them.

ANN: I put them on, I said, I feel like a fool, bye. Right back. Returned them right away. But I did give it a try, right, where I was like, okay, it is inexpensive and maybe it will work. But, no.

KATE: No.

OWNING WELL AND THE ENVIRONMENT

TASHA: Yeah, absolutely. So we talked a little bit about this with having less stuff going to landfills. Can you touch a little bit more on how owning well also correlates with being eco friendly?

KATE: So I think that the biggest thing about this, really, is that you're buying less cheap stuff and therefore going through less cheap stuff and getting rid of less cheap stuff. So for us, we do say with clients and in our course and our book, the initial purge of stuff in your home is going to feel a little bad because you're like, oh God, I got rid of like eight bags of either donate or garbage. And it feels like, oh, I wasted money and I'm burdening the environment and all these things.

It is what it is. You already owned the item, sunk cost and now they have to go –.

ANN: It's actually garbage at this point. Or donation.

KATE: Yeah, you don't want it in your home.

ANN: For you, you don't want it in your home.

KATE: Right. And so that doesn't feel great. But then as you sort of go on your organizing journey and your owning well journey and you shop better, you really do get rid of less items.

HIGHER QUALITY = BETTER DONATIONS

KATE: And also one of the things that we like to say is when you buy high quality items but you no longer want it, it's going to be in better shape for you to give to somebody else. Right?

So when you buy a cheap sweater, let's say, and it pills and you wear it twice and there's like a string hanging off it well, yeah, you can put that in a donate bag, but nobody else wants to wear that either. Whereas

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if you buy a high quality sweater and you wear it for two years and it's in really great shape and then you donate it, somebody else could get two years out of it. And so it's about sort of taking care of things in that way, right?

HIGH QUALITY – OR JUST OVERPRICED?

TASHA: Absolutely. Do you have any tips for people? Because I know, as I'm hearing you talk about this, I hear what you're saying and I'm like, how do I know when something is just overpriced versus when it is high quality? Because some things are expensive, but not necessarily that much higher quality. Like you can buy the expensive sweater and it still pills.

KATE: Yes, absolutely.

ANN: Yes, we have made that very mistake.

KATE: I would say one of the things for that with us is brand recognition. So we have specific brands that we like, that we know hold up – .

ANN: And that we know fit us well. We're not all built the same. And so some brands that work for one of us, you might really want and like that brand, but if it doesn't work for you, waste.

KATE: Yeah, and that's absolutely true. I would say sweaters is really one of those categories where you can spend $100 on a sweater and you're like, I'm sorry, this is now garbage. Like, I wore it twice and it's falling apart.

FIND YOUR BRAND AND YOUR STYLE

KATE: And so I think sometimes you will make those mistakes, but once you find a brand that you like and that fits you and that lasts well, sticking to that sort of category.

But I also think one of the big things, at least with clothes, is steering away from some of the sort of fast fashion where you know, it's just not going to last of like H & M or something like that, where it's like just really quick, it wasn't expensive and it's just going to fall.

ANN: Well. And also one of the things for us is that when someone is still closer to their girl age – where they're like finding their style and they don't really know what is going to be right for them – they don't need to commit for the long term unless it's something that they truly know. Right? And so for them to go to H & M or go somewhere and they're trying things out and they're trying to find out what works for their body, what's their life really like, oh, they change jobs, that different clothes. They're trying to figure it out.

And after a certain age, that all settles down. But even for the younger girls to be careful of not just burdening the landfills, just try not to just be like an armload of stuff or whatever, put some thought into it. But then when you get a little bit older, you do get better at it. You do know what works for you, what brands, styles, colors work for you. And so keeping that in mind, trying not to do the thing where you go shopping with your friend or your sister and you come home with stuff where you're like, wait – .

KATE: That's her style, that's not my style, I don't want to wear that.

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NOT YOUR STYLE? RETURN IT.

ANN: And return. Return, right. Give yourself some time to cool off either if you've ordered online or brought it home. Take time. A lot of owning well just takes time and thought you just can't be...

KATE: Yeah, I think that's right.

TASHA: Yeah, definitely. I mean, returning, I make so many returns and honestly, I feel good when I make returns.

KATE: I have – no joke – like twelve things in my car that have to be returned to different places.

TASHA: Exactly. You kind of, in a way, tried it out. You brought it into your space and you said, this doesn't really fit my space. And then you got to take it back and you got your money back. It's amazing.

KATE: It's amazing. One of those things we have with clients where people, they open their front hall closet and they're like, oh, you're never going to know what's here. And we're like, returns and donations. And they're like, how did you know? Because everybody has returns that they don't do or donations that they don't have time to drop off.

DON'T WASTE YOUR MONEY: RETURN IT

KATE: But you go, don't waste the money. Don't just let it sit there when you know it's something you don't want. Just like deal with the return right away. That's another great way of owning well. You're like, I bought it, I don't want it. I'm going to own well and return it

ANN: Well, and to have your system for return – Kate's really are my shipping department – so I just feel like "I have to return all this" and she – .

KATE: She just gives it me.

ANN: – does it for me. But to have your system set up well, so that it's not the big burden because one of the things when people say, like, I can't believe they charged return shipping, and you go, well, that's a drag, but if you keep it and don't use it – .

KATE: That's even worse.

ANN: – All that money is theirs and not yours.

TASHA: Yes, absolutely. I actually just had a situation like that where I got like $125 back, and I think that they took like $6 for it.

KATE: Take my $6.

TASHA: When I got the 125, I wasn't like, oh, it should have been 131. I was like: This is great.

ANN: Well, that's truly like, you rented the item for a few days for $6 or whatever, try and figure out what you were doing. So you're like, okay, charge me.

TASHA: Definitely. And also, I would just say don't be afraid to make returns. I know some people, the employees are not going to take it personally.

KATE: That's so true.

ANN: You're right, though. People do feel badly about it. Or they feel like when people were going to stores all the time – it's less so now, lots of buying online – but people felt like, oh, I took all her time, she helped me find this thing. Well, that's her job and

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she's there to help you. And she doesn't want you to be unhappy. She wants you to continue to shop there. So return. Return.

WHAT ABOUT REPAIRING IT?

TASHA: Definitely. So let's shift a little bit. Can we talk about repairing versus replacing things? So in your experience, when is it time to repair something and when is it time to say, okay, this lasted for 15 years. That was awesome. I don't know that I can continue to repair it.

KATE: I think if the repair is going to bring it up to the level where you're still happy with the item, then it's worth doing it.

So, like, let's say your boots are a little scuffed at the end of the year or the heels a little, totally you can fix them up and wear them next winter. But if they're starting to look old or faded and you've tried to replace them, I mean, tried to repair them the year before and it just really wasn't quite right, then it's time to get a new one.

Or like, it's much, much harder to fix appliances and stuff these days than it used to be. And so with that, it's like once one of those is worn out or isn't working at its best capacity, you probably do have to get a new one. But the hope is that the higher quality ones, that happens over a lot more time than the less.

ANN: I mean, that's one of those things that's sort of heartbreaking when you know something like a toaster or something and it simply breaks and it cannot be repaired. And there's no small repair store like there used to be in every town. Like we support the shoe guys. We take all our boots and shoes in at the end of the year and get those done so that when the year comes, when it comes fall again, we're like, oh, look, instead of going to buy new boots, our boots look new – .

KATE: Yeah.

ANN: – right? So we have our boots and things repaired.

But the repairman thing, I don't quite know what anyone does about it. There is a website called Buy Things Once and they list different – it's English – but they list different companies and things where you have a much better chance of only buying that. And they do.

RESPONSIBLE COMPANIES REPAIR, REPLACE, RECYCLE

KATE: There are companies that do repairs like Patagonia. Like, I got a rip in a Patagonia coat and they repaired it for me and sent it back to me. And if they can't repair it, then they'll send you a new one and – .

ANN: Then they recycle.

KATE: So you go looking into brands that way – of brands that are working hard on this mission, as well as just yourself shopping –.

ANN: But not like beating yourself up completely about it because people feel terrible about it. But the way that things are being manufactured –.

KATE: They're not really made to last

ANN: We're not really responsible for that. You can do your homework, like Kate said, and support the good companies that are trying their hardest. But it is hard.

TASHA: Yeah. And the truth is, from time to

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time, even a good company, there's an error in manufacturing the particular unit that you got. And that just is kind of how things go, unfortunately, sometimes. But you're right, the lack of small repair shops means it is harder to repair things.

But it's awesome to know, not only you mentioned Patagonia, I know you can shop some of their worn wear.

KATE: Uh-huh.

TASHA: So if you purchase something – there's a few different companies, I think, who do that – but if you purchase something, you wear it for a season, it's still in good shape. But you decided, hey, it's not really for my body, you can send that back. And it can get like, literally a second life.

ANN: Yeah.

KATE: That's amazing.

TASHA: And a second life, maybe for someone else who it was going to be a stretch to afford that coat, but they can get it a little bit more affordable because they're buying it secondhand.

ANN: Well, and in that way, we are voting with our dollars to support the companies that are trying harder. And I think it's like we always talk about, can one person make a difference, does any of this make any difference? And it does make a difference, I think. But we have to do it collectively, right? Each person trying their hardest to say, like, I'm not buying a bunch of junk, I'm not burdening the landfills, I'm going to be careful and I'm going to support the companies that are trying.

TASHA: And the more people that do it, the more of a difference it'll make.

KATE: Exactly.

OWNING WELL AND HAVING KIDS

TASHA: So let's talk a little bit also about having kids, because obviously kids are in a little bit of a different life stage. I mean, you even mentioned young women who are figuring out their style and figuring out what they're settling into.

Well, kids don't settle into anything. They are growing. And from the beginning of the school year to the end of the school year, all of a sudden their pants don't fit anymore and they're two inches too short and all of that. So is this something you would still try to practice specifically for kids items? Of course, it's a probably concept that you want to have in their mind long term. But when it comes to kids clothes, kids toys, things like that, what is your experience there?

KATE: So I have three little boys, they're six and a half and three next week, and I have a ten week old. And it's helpful that they're all boys because hand me downs and whatnot. And I went into having children thinking that the answer to this question was no, that kids sort of destroy their stuff or even from the baby stage, they get milk on it or it gets dirty or whatever. And what I've found is that the higher quality items or the better made items actually last because they wash really well. So I have things that will go absolutely to my third son. So my second son is wearing them now and my third son will wear them.

MIX IT UP: ONE & DONE OR PASS IT DOWN

KATE: And so I would say for me, my sort

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of methodology that I've gotten into is having a mix of things because my oldest son, James, he is like a lover of dirt. He is like in the dirt gardening with his grandpa, just like covered head to toe in mud. And you go, there are some clothes that are just like that's, your outdoor gardening clothes, those are not meant to last. I got some Amazon shorts and we're just going to call it a day. But then there are other things like a little bit higher quality T shirt or like a polo shirt where even if they get pen on it, even if they get food on it, you can wash it 50 times and I can still give it to the next kid. Like I have T shirts – .

ANN: Sort of amazing.

KATE: It's amazing – they look brand new. And so I would say having a mix so that especially those ones that, you know, you might want to hand down or do hand me downs with a friend or a family member or whatever, have those get a little bit higher quality. And I'm not saying buy like Jacques RD, not like that. I have, like, Marine Layer or J. Crew or even the Gap lasts really well versus things like Carter's or Target where those I'm not intending to pass down because I can't get stains and stuff out of them.

ANN: Well, then a lot of it's like novelty tees. And so what James is into, Charlie might not be into – .

KATE: Right.

ANN: – but they want their dinosaurs or their cars or their whatever it is.

KATE: Right.

ANN: – and so fine, get those things for them and those companies do a good job at producing those things at a low price.

KATE: Right? I got your $4 T shirt, call it a day. It's only meant to be worn a few times.

IF THE SHOE FITS

KATE: And I will say shoes are one of those things that I don't hand down because they get so beaten in, but I still buy relatively good quality because I want them to be comfortable.

ANN: Your boys are so hard on their shoes. If you didn't, they'd be done with them in two weeks.

KATE: Right, exactly. They do like, destroy their shoes. I have certain crazy boys, but yeah, I'd say it's sort of like split down the middle. That the higher quality.

And again, if you don't have like, dirty, messy boys and you have like, a lovely, dainty little girl, which I know nothing about, I probably would buy mostly higher quality stuff if I knew I was going to have more kids.

Again, if you're only having one kid, maybe it doesn't matter so much. So I think thinking about it in that way and how long you really want or need the item to last, like, I knew with James I'd have more kids and I knew they'd probably be boys.

ANN: You didn't know it was going to be all boys.

KATE: I didn't, but I do have two stepsons, so we're on five boys now. So you go like, I kind of knew it be boys.

And so I wanted stuff to last. And as I said in the beginning of this, I don't like shopping, so I want stuff to be able to be passed down. And I only had to buy it once.

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TASHA: Right. And I figure that it's a little bit of trial and error. Right. So you are like, oh, we wore through these shoes before, they actually outgrew the size. And so that might be an indication that, okay, –.

KATE: That's so true.

TASHA: – I want to buy a little bit higher quality so that I'm only having to buy this size of shoe one time.

KATE: Yes, that's absolutely true. That's a really good point.

WHEN OWNING LESS IS BETTER

TASHA: Yeah. Well, we talked a little bit about the beginning. Not about the beginning, at the beginning about how owning well doesn't necessarily mean owning less. It may be owning the same amount, but just the same items last for longer. But are there any categories where you found where there's just like too much of a certain item or owning less is actually preferable?

ANN: For us, most stuff.

KATE: For us, everything. Owning less of everything is good.

ANN: And we always say this, it just makes everything easier. Right. We've tried other ways. It's not like we've been this way our whole lives, but it is just easier owning less.

KATE: Yeah. I think for me, I don't have any categories, I would say, where I would recommend buying less quality other than these kids items we were talking about, unless it's something either like seasonal or holiday or it's meant to be like a one time thing. Right.

PLUSH BUNNIES AND JELLY BEANS

KATE: So for me, I did a whole thing on our Instagram stories about my kids Easter baskets this year. So the baskets themselves. I obviously really want to last. And I didn't want to fill them with just candy because like and so I also didn't want to buy a bunch of plastic crap that I knew I was going to throw out because I'm throwing you the garbage. And I just got really overwhelmed about it. But I do think this is your little Easter plastic toy. It's not meant to at last. It's not something you're going to have forever. I'm going to buy you a new one next year. I didn't spend a ton of money on it. Or like a tiny little stuffed animal or things like that, where you go like, it's just fun and seasonal and you know you're going to get rid of it.

Versus something like certain toy like trucks I have, let's say, where all three boys will play with them. They'll last a long time. They're not meant to be just like in the moment or like a Halloween costume.

You go, the kid's not going to wear the same Halloween costume the next year. And chances are the next kid isn't going to want to wear that Halloween costume either. And so you go like, that's quick, just like quick things that you know are not going to last.

ANN: What I was going to say, it's interesting that when you put like, the little plastic toy in the Easter basket, and some other person might think like, I don't want to buy that plastic yuck, I'm going to buy a lovely stuffed animal. And it's high quality and it's beautiful. And it's going to last and last and last. And you end up – .

KATE: You can never get rid of it, you have like a hundred of them.

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ANN: – like here's Jojo's bunny or whatever. We can't get rid of that – .

KATE: Every Easter for like twelve years.

ANN: – And so you end up with these bins full of high quality stuffed animals

KATE: – That you then can't donate because nobody will take stuffed animals.

ANN: – Can't take stuffed animals. So then you end up trying to push them off on your sister or something. She's like, I've got enough for my kids. Get those out of here. And so it is a complicated thing of like – .

KATE: Yeah.

ANN: – How long is this going to last? How long do I want to be the caretaker of this particular item? And maybe you go, Easter. I want it to be over by Easter Monday. I want it done.

KATE: Just go out the door, right?

ANN: Let that happen. And so maybe jelly beans in that case are better than the high quality stuffed animal.

KATE: That's probably true.

WRAPPING UP

TASHA: Well, thank you so much for sharing all of this information with us today. Before we wrap up, is there any just like, last thoughts that you want to leave us with about owning well?

ANN: The one thing that I would like to say about owning well is that it takes time. It really is something that you have to learn and practice and don't be too hard on yourself. In our experience with all our clients and all our employees and everybody, it just seems like people are trying incredibly hard to do right and to be decent and to take care of these things. So whatever little information we've added to make it easier, that's what we want. We don't want to make it harder.

KATE: And if you have questions, write to us. We'd love to answer.

TASHA: Absolutely. Where can people find you online?

KATE: So you can find us at Done & Done Home on our website and our Instagram. And we have a book that came out last year called Love Your Home Again. And we have an online course by the same name, so you can find all of that on our website.

TASHA: Okay, great. And we'll put links down below on this session in the description box so people can easily find your platforms. Thank you so much for joining us today.

ANN: Thank you.

KATE: Thank you so much.

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Get a Game Plan - 3 Steps to Design Your Winning Week

ANNA DEARMON KORNICK • TRANSCRIPT

Hi, there. My name is Anna Dearmon Kornick. I'm a time management coach and host of It's About Time, a podcast sharing stories and strategies to inspire better work, life, and balance. I'm thrilled that you've decided to spend your time with me today, so we're going to dive right in and get a game plan with three steps to design your winning week.

Now, before we get started, you're going to want to grab something so you can take notes, because I'll have some questions for you throughout this workshop, and you'll definitely want to take down some notes as you're designing your winning week.

All right, are you ready to get started? Let's go.

HOW WE SPEND OUR DAYS

How we spend our days is how we spend our lives. I'm going to say that one more time. How we spend our days is how we spend our lives. And I love kicking off our time together with this quote from writer Annie Dillard. Because it's such an important reminder that although it's so easy to get caught up in the day to day, heading from meeting to meeting, crossing one thing off of your to do list after the next, in the end, how we spend our time during the day is what adds up over time to create the lives that we hope to live.

So as we're spending time today getting a game plan and designing our winning week, I encourage you to think about not just how you'll reach the end of your to do list, but how you'll design, craft, and build a life that you look back on with happy memories and positive, pleasant thoughts and stories of adventures.

TODAY'S GAME PLAN

So let's get to it. During our time together today we're going to start by deciding what matters most. Then we're going to design your winning week, and then finally, we're going to define your weekly game plan.

ANNA'S STORY

And as we're getting started today, it's only appropriate that I tell you a little bit about who I am and how I got my start. So I actually kicked off my career, click clacking around in high heels and pencil skirts in the marble halls of Congress as the scheduler to a United States congressman. Yes. My very first job involved creating a minute by minute schedule for someone who had to somehow be everywhere at once. It was incredibly exciting, and I loved living in the hustle and bustle of the political world in Washington, DC.

But got to let you know, I'm a Louisiana girl, born and raised in Louisiana. I live about an hour outside of New Orleans now. And if there's one thing that I need you to know about Louisiana, it's that our food is second to none. And as much as I love DC. I really started to miss home, and I missed gumbo and etouffee and jambalaya and all those

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good things.

CRISIS MANAGEMENT

So I hopped on a plane and moved back to Louisiana, where I kicked off a ten year career in the 24/7 world of crisis communications and government affairs, every day brought another crisis to be managed in order to be created out of chaos. Let's see, earthquakes, oil spills, tornadoes, hurricanes, droughts and floods, nonprofits on the brink of financial collapse, you name it. And I have probably escorted someone down a back freight elevator into an alley in order to avoid TV cameras waiting outside.

Now, as you can imagine, this 24/7, always on kind of lifestyle can really take its toll on you. And that was the case for me, too. Suddenly, I realized that I hadn't taken time off in as long as I could remember. That I was missing important milestone events for friends and family, baby showers, birthday parties, things that I really wanted to be at. Not only that, my boundaries were nonexistent, my health was not in a good place, and my relationships were really crumbling because I was in always on work mode.

So you could say that suddenly I was the crisis that had to be managed. And so after one too many days spent crying in the stairwell on the way up to my windowless office, I knew that something had to change. And so I walked away in search of something better, in search of something different and hoping that somehow I could take this experience that I had earned creating order out of chaos in order to help others either avoid, either dig themselves out of that place of burnout that I was in, or help them avoid it altogether.

So after trial and error and reading stacks of books and diving in and absorbing as much knowledge as possible, I'm now a time management coach and host of It's About Time, my podcast, sharing stories and strategies about work life imbalance. And now I'm on a mission to help busy professionals stop feeling overwhelmed so they can spend time on what matters most.

WHAT MATTERS MOST?

And that's exactly where we're starting today. We're going to start by deciding what matters most. And any conversation about deciding what matters most should begin with the Pareto Principle. So chances are you've heard of the Pareto Principle, or you've heard of it referred to as the 80/20 rule. The Pareto Principle states that for many events, roughly 80% of the outputs come from 20% of the inputs. So 80% of what you get out comes from 20% of what you put in.

And we see this example all the time. Chances are, if you were to take a look at your client roster, 20% of your clients produce 80% of your revenue. Chances are you spend 80% of your week on 20% of your activities. And I'll bet that if I headed to your closet, chances are you reach for 20% of your clothing 80% of the time. We all have favorites that we go back to, right?

And so this is important for us because it's an important reminder that some stuff is just more important than other stuff. In a world where we're constantly told that everything is important, everything is on fire, it's important for us to remember that some things are just more important. And so in beginning this conversation around what matters most, I like for us to frame what matters most to us in terms of our roles and our responsibilities.

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ROLES

So you're definitely going to want to grab something to take notes with now, because we're going to answer the question, who am I and what do I do? And here's what I mean by that. When it comes to who am I, your roles, what are the different hats that you wear in your life? And so I encourage you to jot some of those down where you're taking notes. Now, some of your roles might include coworker, business owner, spouse, partner. Maybe you're a parent, a mother or a father. Maybe you're an aunt or an uncle, a child, a daughter, a son. Maybe you're a volunteer or a neighbor, a coworker, a mentor. What are all of the different roles that you play in your life? Because it's those roles that really help us think through how we spend our time as we show up in those roles.

RESPONSIBILITIES

And then on the other side, let's think about our responsibilities. And when I say responsibilities, I don't mean sweeping the floors or taking out the trash or filling out your weekly timesheet. No. Instead, when I say responsibilities, I mean those different areas of our life that may not be captured by one of our roles. So some examples of that include volunteerism. Maybe you are a member of a volunteer organization. So your volunteerism or your community service is a responsibility and aspect of your life. Wellness, financial, health, spirituality, relationships. Think of these as the different buckets or the different chapters of your life if you were creating a guidebook about yourself.

ALL THE ROCKS

And so the reason why we stop to think through our roles and responsibilities is because it gets our wheels turning. It begins to get us thinking about how we spend our time in these different roles, in different areas of our life. And so every time you write down a role or responsibility for just a split second flash, you can't help but think about how you spend your time in that area. And so we're going to take that inspiration that we're stirring up and we're going to divide them into categories. We're going to think about how we spend our time in terms of categories.

And the thing is that priorities can be complicated. It can be really tough to decide what truly matters most when there's so much competing for our time and when there are so many different ways that we want to give our time to others. And that's why I like to take the abstract concept of priorities and turn them into something that you can picture, that you can imagine touching and feeling.

And so I like to use the concept of boulders, big rocks, and pebbles. So let me tell you about each one of these types of priorities.

BOULDERS

First are your boulders. And boulders are the important, but often not urgent ways that we spend our time. These are the things in our life that help us show up as our best selves. And they should be our immovables, our stake in the ground, those things that we commit to spending our time in order to improve ourselves, in order to show up as our best selves.

Your boundaries between life and work and your routines are important examples of boulders. Your morning routine helps you show up as your best self throughout the day. Your evening routine sets you up for success in getting a good night's sleep.

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Some examples of boulders can include attending a worship service on the weekend or calling your grandmother every Thursday just to check in again.

These are those activities that are important, but they're not necessarily urgent. And because they're not urgent, they often fall by the wayside if we don't give them the weight that they deserve.

BIG ROCKS

Next are our big rocks. And big rocks are a high priority. These are the important and urgent tasks that really move the needle in your life and your work. A lot of times these are project based. These are things that are often in our genius zone, those things that we love doing and we're good at doing them. And very often big rocks are best performed when we're in a deep work mode of concentration.

Like I said, big rocks are those activities that move the needle in your life and work. But here's the biggest difference between boulders and big rocks. Typically with big rocks, you've got a little bit of wiggle room despite the urgency. And so when we think about our big rocks as being, as being optionally moved around, when you try to push a boulder with all your might, it's not going to move. But big rocks, there's a little bit of wiggle room there. So we want to keep that in mind before we head into our next session.

PEBBLES

And then finally, the third type of priority. These are our pebbles. And pebbles are everything else. These are all of the not super important, not typically urgent small tasks. And to dos that typically take up a good bit of space on our to do lists. And pebbles can take over our lives if we don't watch out.

Thinking back to that 80/20 rule, chances are if we were to analyze the contents of our to do list for the day, 80% of that to do list is very likely pebbles. And the remaining 20%, that 20% that helps us show up as our best self and moves the needle in our life and work. Those are our boulders and big rocks.

And before we move on to our next section, a quick recap of boulders, big rocks, and pebbles. Boulders are the things that are not urgent, but they are very important and they help us show up as our best selves. Big rocks, these are the activities that are important. They're typically urgent and they move the needle in your life and work. And finally, pebbles are everything else. Not super urgent, not incredibly important. And they can easily take over your day if you don't watch out.

PRODUCTIVITY PITFALLS

All right, way to go. This is great. So far, you've already started getting your wheels turning about who you are and how you spend your time. And you're thinking through a new way to prioritize by giving weight to the different ways that you spend your time. Now we're going to head into our next section and take those boulders, big rocks and pebbles and use them to design your winning week. But before we start putting pen to paper and designing that winning week, it helps to know about a few productivity pitfalls.

PARKINSON'S LAW

So let me tell you about Parkinson's Law. Parkinson's Law states that work expands

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to fill the time available. So in other words, without setting boundaries around when you'll end your work, you could keep going forever. Because there's always one more thing that we can edit or a font that we can change or have someone else review or do another pass. There's always something else that we can do on a work project in that unlimited, impossible pursuit for perfection. So work expands to fill the time of allotted, Parkinson's Law.

PLANNING FALLACY

The next productivity pitfall I want to tell you about is the planning fallacy. Now, the planning fallacy states that we consistently underestimate how much time is needed to complete a task. Yes, this is a thing. So if you've ever felt, oh, I just am not incredibly good at estimating how long things take, you are not alone.

TIME BLOCKING

But fortunately, we've got several tools that can help us combat those productivity pitfalls. And the first of those is time blocking. A favorite, right? And time blocking, simply put, is creating blocks in your schedule that represent your tasks. Oh, yes, calendar appointments are for so much more than just meetings.

TASK BATCHING

And then our second tool is task batching. Task batching, simply put, is grouping similar tasks together and performing them in chunks. You think about the way that we do laundry. We don't wear one shirt and then put that shirt in the washing machine and then move that shirt to the dryer, and then press that shirt, iron that shirt, and then hang it up. And then go and get a pair of pants and do the same process all over again. And then get a pair of socks and do the same process all over again. That would be silly. That would be a waste of time, of energy, and it just doesn't make sense. And so there are so many opportunities that we have throughout our work week and our personal lives to collect some of our small tasks, those pebbles, into a laundry basket and to perform them all at once.

Great examples of this could include having a time block every Friday afternoon in which you write thank you notes to clients, or having a time block once a week in which you conduct all of your financial related tasks for the week. Instead of checking your bank account on Tuesday and paying a bill on Wednesday and sending an invoice on Thursday, knock them out all one after the other, maybe on Friday morning.

DESIGN A WINNING WEEK

So we're going to take boulders, big rocks and pebbles that we've talked through, and we're going to imagine that we're starting with a clean slate. This is where we're going to put pen to paper. This is where the rubber meets the road, and we are going to design our ideal week.

A CLEAN SLATE

So let's suspend reality and pretend like we've got a clean slate. Now, for some of you, this is going to be exhilarating. And for some of you, it's going to be terrifying to imagine that there's nothing on your calendar. But we want to start with a clean slate when we design our ideal week, because it's meant to be a template that we use as a guide as we enter each week, so that we're not reinventing the wheel and making the same decisions week after week. We want to decide once and then use this ideal week as a template for decision

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making moving forward.

BLOCK YOUR BOULDERS

So the first thing that we're going to do when we design our ideal week is to block our boulders. First, we're going to put in those important but not urgent activities. You'll see, some of the examples I have listed here are a Sunday morning worship service, a daily workout, and then bedtime stories with my girls.

For me, bedtime stories is an example of a boulder. Because I don't want to miss bedtime stories, I prioritize that time with my girls. And if I get a speaking request or a meeting request that conflicts with bedtime stories, I have to think really hard about whether I want to move that boulder. And so having that as a placeholder in my calendar keeps it there. So I'm reminded about what matters most.

STANDING MEETINGS

Once you've blocked your boulders, it's time for the reality to start coming in. This is your opportunity to add in your standing meetings. Maybe you have a standing client meeting on Tuesday mornings or a team check in on Friday mornings, whatever they are. We're going to add in our standing meetings.

ADD ROUTINES

Next, we're going to add in our routines. So you might be thinking, whoa, Anna, that calendar just got really full. You went from this to this just with routines. Yes, that's absolutely right. So I believe that there are five essential routines that help us show up as our best selves.

Our morning routine and our evening routine, our workday startup routine, and our workday shutdown routine. And finally, a weekly planning session that you'll see right here called The Weekly Game Plan. And if you're thinking, ooh, I want to learn about these routines, I want more. On these five essential routines, you can actually find a free bonus guide and accompanying podcast episode all about how to create the five essential routines over at annadkornick.com/17. So I encourage you to check that out, check out that episode, and download the bonus guide to create routines that actually stick.

So back to our ideal week. We've added in time for our routines, morning workday, startup workday, shutdown, evening routine, and weekly planning session. And we want to hold this space because our routines are a form of boulder, they help us show up as our best selves.

BLOCK BIG ROCKS

But now we're going to take a look at our open space, what's available now that we've added in all these different aspects of our week. Because this open space is where we're going to block our big rocks. This is the space that you have available for working on those needle moving projects. So this is your chance to create time blocks that either represent specific projects, they may represent categories of your work, whatever that looks like for you.

And then finally, in the space remaining, we're going to sprinkle in the pebbles. The great thing about pebbles is that they're small, and so we can fit them into the nooks and crannies of our weeks. Or you can take a laundry basket full of pebbles if you're task batching and perform them all at once, it's almost like taking a pile of pebbles and squeezing them into a big rock.

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WHAT IF?

So now you might be thinking, okay, Anna, so I'm designing this ideal week based on my boulders, my big rocks, sprinkling in the pebbles, making sure that I've got space for standing meetings. What if I never get this perfect? What is the point? I feel like I'm setting myself up for failure.

You also might be thinking, but what if I'm heading into a week that's not a typical week? What if there's a conference? Or what if my kids get sick? Or what if your schedule isn't consistent? Maybe some weeks you're traveling for work, and some weeks you're working from the office. In some weeks, you're at home. Or maybe your schedule cycles. Maybe some weeks you're engaged in more meetings or collaborative work, and other weeks you're head down working on projects.

And then what if you look at everything that you need and want to do and realize that one week isn't enough to get it all done? Well, first, I just want to offer a word of encouragement and a reminder that your ideal week is a planning tool. It is not meant to be a measure of perfection for you to hold yourself up against on how well you hit every single mark in your ideal week.

Instead, it's an opportunity for you to make decisions and think through how you would choose to spend your time in a perfect world and then begin to adjust your schedule in order to create that experience that you want to have.

DEFINE YOUR WEEKLY GAME PLAN

And one way that you can adapt your ideal week, week by week, is by defining a weekly game plan. So a weekly game plan or a weekly planning session is the single most important thing that you can do each week. All caps, underlined, bold 100%. The single most important thing that you can do each week a weekly planning session is your bird's eye view of the week.

That enables you to combat overwhelm, to catch communication breakdowns before they happen, to set boundaries and decide what you're willing to do and what you're not willing to do, to identify obstacles before they become a problem. And to get your game plan for the week so you can step into Sunday or Monday morning feeling calm, prepared and ready for anything.

So we're going to spend the time remaining to game plan your game plan. And these are our four steps for creating a game plan for your game plan.

First, we're going to decide what your game plan will include. Then we're going to identify what tools you need to have a successful weekly planning session. We'll decide when you'll make your game plan each week. And finally, we'll talk about some ideas for how you can make it fun so you look forward to it week after week.

WHAT TO INCLUDE

First up, let's talk about what your game plan will include. Every successful meeting has an agenda. I think we can all agree on that. And so if you're having a meeting with yourself to plan your week, wouldn't it be helpful to have an agenda? I highly recommend creating a step by step agenda for your weekly planning session.

I tend to start by scanning my calendar for the week ahead, identifying where I have meetings, what deadlines are up ahead, and

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which days feel kind of tough and full. And then I plan out all of my big rock time blocks for the week. How will I use each of these time blocks in my ideal week in order to make sure that I'm tracking on my goals for the month or for the quarter?

Once I've got a really great understanding of what my week looks like, I talk with my husband and I ask, what do you have going on this week that I can be aware of so that we can support each other?

The next step is to make sure that we both understand the logistics of the week. Who's picking up our kiddos on which day? Who's taking the little one to the doctor's appointment? Who's taking the older one to dance lessons? It's having that communication in advance that really enables the week to go smoothly.

Then, based on what the week looks like, we plan our meals for the week, then we make our grocery list, and after that, I check the weather for the week ahead and head over to both my girls' closets. I have a four year old and a two year old and I choose all of their outfits for the week based on the weather so that it makes our mornings move so much smoother. So here on the screen you'll see some examples of things that you can incorporate into your weekly planning session. But the most important thing is to make it yours.

WHAT TOOLS YOU NEED

So the next step in game planning your game plan is to decide what tools you'll need. Again, one of the most distracting possibilities for sitting down to do your weekly planning session is to sit down and you've got your cup of coffee and you're ready to make your plan. And then you realize that you've left your planner on the other side of the house or that you don't have your kiddo's soccer schedule for the week ahead.

And so then you get up, you go find it, and inevitably you get distracted and you start doing laundry or cleaning the house. And then you completely get derailed from making your plan. So in order to have the most effective and efficient weekly planning session as possible, go ahead and identify what tools you need to have in order to set yourself up for success.

Then you'll be able to gather each of those items before you sit down to start planning. And one helpful tip is to create a weekly planning session box or tote bag that has these items in it ready to go so you can sit down and get started.

WHEN TO PLAN

So next up, when you'll make your game plan, there are so many different thoughts and ideas about the best time to have a weekly planning session. Some say Sundays, some say Monday mornings, and while others even say Friday afternoons. But really the best time to have a weekly planning session is the time that you'll stick to. And the best way to stick to your weekly planning session is by creating a time block for it and holding space for it in your calendar.

I like to do my weekly game planning session on Sunday mornings, but I'm really becoming interested in planning on Fridays in order to head into my weekend with a clear game plan. So it just goes to show you that even if you have planned for years on a Sunday, switching things up based on the evolution of what your life looks like is completely normal. So before we move on to the next slide, I want you to think about

when you'll do your weekly planning session.

MAKING IT FUN

And then finally, how will you make it fun? In the early days of establishing any new habit, we have to have some type of external reward. Something that's going to get us excited about starting this new habit and doing this weekly planning session that's going to have us look forward to it and make us want to follow through.

Because after a few weeks of doing that weekly planning session, you'll begin to feel that intrinsic internal reward for following through. You'll realize that you feel more calm, you'll realize that you feel more prepared, and you won't want to miss that weekly planning session.

But in the beginning, we want to decide how we'll make it fun. So I've included a few helpful ideas that might make your weekly planning session fun. And so, whenever you set your time for your weekly planning session, make sure you decide how you'll make it fun, whether that's by making your favorite coffee or doing your planning session outside, meeting up with a friend, or enjoying your favorite snack while you plan for the week.

WHAT YOU'VE DONE

All right, I just want to give you a big, just round of applause. This is amazing.
You did it. During the time that we've spent together, you've thought critically to decide what matters most using boulders, big rocks, and pebbles. You've designed your winning week, creating your template to step into the week with a plan. And you've defined your weekly game planning session. Your weekly planning session because you know what you'll plan, what you need to plan, when you'll plan, and how you'll make it fun.

Again, I'm so glad that you've spent time with me today and that you've carved out this time for yourself to pour into yourself and your personal development. I would love to invite you to check out It's About Time, my podcast about work, life, and balance, with new episodes dropping every Monday wherever you listen to podcasts. And I encourage you to head over and tune into episode 17, all about the five essential routines, where you'll find a bonus guide to help you design those routines.

SPECIAL OFFER

And finally, I am so thrilled to offer you two weeks of free membership inside the It's About Time Academy. The It's About Time Academy is my time management membership community that includes a monthly group coaching session with me, Q, and A about any questions that you have relating to time management, productivity, and work life balance. A supportive community of other go getters who are getting things done, as well as Ask Anna Anytime Coaching - you pop a question in our community, and I get back to you.

It's like having a time management coach in your pocket. And then finally, a members only private podcast on a different topic each month that pertains to work life balance, to time management, and to productivity. And I would be so excited to welcome you inside the Academy for two weeks.

That's it for today. Again, it's been an honor to spend time with you, to walk you through getting your game plan and designing your winning week. I'll talk to you soon.

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Effectively Utilizing a Family Command Central

APRIL PERRY • TRANSCRIPT

We are so excited to have April Perry with us today. She is from Learn Do Become, and we are going to be talking all about how to create a family-focused Command Central. So, this is going to be a really powerful tool for all of you in just keeping things organized and well managed.

FAMILY-FOCUSED COMMAND CENTRAL

TASHA: I am going to let her explain all of it because she's the expert on this. And so, before we dive into this family-focused Command Central, we're going to be talking about there's really five key elements, and we're going to break all of those down as we go throughout today's session. But the first question I want to ask you, April, is can you tell us the why behind this? What are the benefits that people are going to see from implementing a system like this?

FEELING OVERWHELMED

APRIL: Yes. I'm so glad to be here, and I think just a little story is probably the easiest way to explain it. But essentially, I was overwhelmed. I liked being organized back in high school and even in college, I kind of did my best. And then once we started having children, and then life started getting busier and busier with a home, and we were trying to start a business together, and I was stressed, overwhelmed, not sleeping super well. I would procrastinate anything that felt hard, and it was affecting every area of my life. I'm trying to be happy and enjoy my life. And I'm guessing that those participants here who are listening, you probably feel that way. You feel overwhelmed, and you just don't feel like there's a way out sometimes, and there's so much required of you. But what happened was I was reading and reading and reading and trying to solve my own pain point. And I read the book called Getting Things Done by David Allen, and it was amazing.

CREATING CALM

APRIL And I figured out I could create something. It's called my Command Central, and you kind of see some of it pictured here behind me. A lot of it's digital as well. But I caught the vision and I built it. And what I'm talking about today are the five core elements to kind of get that started.

And once I built it, my life just felt calm. All of a sudden, I was walking around my house. Literally, I remember walking around my house and thinking, I have nothing to do. Everything is clean, organized, done, my mind's calm. My emails are at zero. I literally had nothing to do.

TIME FOR FAMILY

APRIL And the best part was, one day, my little son, he was four years old, and he said, hey, mom, can you come play soccer with me in the backyard? Now, up to that point, I would always say, oh, maybe in a minute. I'm busy. I'm making dinner. I'm doing stuff. But this was the first time that

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I remembered saying, yes, I'd love to play soccer with you.

I actually had everything done. I went out I was present. I didn't feel guilty, I didn't feel stressed.
And I thought, okay, this is amazing. And since then so now it's been more than 15 years, I've just been teaching this to hundreds of thousands of people. I talk about it every day. And I am just glad to be here because I want to provide relief because I know that pain point. So anyway, that's my story. Yes.

TASHA: No, I love that. And I think what you're describing is what so many women here at Get Organized HQ Virtual, and really across the world, that is what they want. And being present and just all of the benefits that come with that. It's not just, oh good, the dishes are clean, or oh, good, this is organized, but all of those other benefits for yourself and your family. So, I love that story so much. So, can you tell us what are the five key elements of a family Command Central?

AUTOMATIC RESULTS

APRIL: So, as I was thinking specifically for this audience, I was just asking, okay, what could they build today that's going to help you automatically start getting results? Because I think that's what everyone wants is results, relief. Just show me how to do it.

So, here's what I would say. Simplified landing spots and an inbox, that's number one. And then a very focused calendar. I'm going to explain how most people use a calendar sub-optimally and how you can make a quick little switch to make it better. Routines list, Current Projects list, and a context based Next Actions list. You do those five, I guarantee you're going to feel a little lift.

I always talk about that lift. You're going to feel it, and then you can build the rest of the Command Central if and when you want. But that's a great way to get started and find out if this is what you have been needing.

YOU CAN START TODAY

APRIL: Great. Yeah. And if you're taking notes, don't worry, we are going to dive into all five of those as we're going. So, if you didn't get every name going through, we're going to retouch on all of those.

But I'm super excited for everyone who's here and participating in this session because like you said, this is going to be really actionable and something that you can do starting today. It's not something for a month from now, when I order the right supplies from Amazon and they arrive and I get it built. This is something that can start making a difference right now.

So, let's dive right in. And that first one you mentioned, the simplified landing spots, I think is what you said. Can you explain a little bit more about what that is?

SIMPLIFIED LANDING SPOTS

APRIL: Yes. Okay. So most of us understand the feeling where messages are coming to us from all directions. So, you get flyers on the front door. Maybe kids bring stuff home in their backpacks.

You get stuff in the mail. That's just the physical stuff. I remember my kids would get home and throw something at me while I'm sitting on the couch, hey, mom, sign

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this, do this, pay for this, right? And you just have all this stuff.

A FLOOD OF INFORMATION

APRIL: And then when you look at the digital where you have probably an email inbox, you might have multiple social media accounts that have direct messages. Most groups now have apps to update you on this child's thing here and this thing here. And the family has an app. And so, what happens is, if you just calculate that, I mean, I think 18 to 43 locations, and everything comes into you. And then you spend most of your day (which I'm guessing you raise your hand) just rotating through them. Check this email, that email, this one, this one text, right?

Everything just comes up. And if you were to calculate how many minutes a day or maybe hours a day you spend cycling through your landing spots, I guarantee that's just sucking time and energy.

PHYSICAL ITEMS

APRIL: So, the easiest way to get this solved is, first to have one main landing spot for physical items, and then an inbox that goes with it. So, this little white box right here behind me, that's my inbox. But I protect that. I don't let anyone put anything in it for me. Everything that they want for me is in one spot on the kitchen counter. I go through that each day.

TWO MINUTE RULE

APRIL: Two minute rule, right? Put something on the calendar, recycle, make the phone call, do whatever. Two minute rule, get rid of it, and only put things in here that can wait for my weekly review. So maybe it's like five things a week, like, hardly anything, because most is digital.

So, I'll get to that in a second. But that way, this box just has, oh, this is actually that bill I need to sit down and call on. Or it's that thing I actually need to think through. And that's great.

EMAILS TO ZERO

APRIL: But then digitally compiling email inboxes is probably one of the best things. If you have to have a separate one for work because of work rules, that's fine. I'd say maximum two email inboxes, one personal, one professional. Or for me, because I work for myself, I just have it combined with lots of filters. And I'm not getting into Emails to Zero today, but Inbox Zero, I think is pretty amazing. And that's something we teach. We have free on our website. You can Google it or whatever, check it out if you need to, but then it's teaching the people in your life how to get in touch with you and consolidating.

So maybe if you must have, like, GroupMe and WhatsApp, or a bunch of different messaging, then maybe you keep all of those in one place on your phone. I put them on my second page of the phone and just check it once a day so it's not constantly bothering me. I don't want alerts and reminders and things popping up.

If I get a text message that I do need to respond to, but I can't do it right now. I often just like, screenshot email it to myself and I process it with my emails. It's just whatever you can do to make as few landing spots as possible. And obviously you're going to have to decide that for yourself, what makes the most sense. But when you think, I'm going to protect my brain from

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feeling scattered right at the beginning, that's step one. It's going to change your life. Just that!

PROTECT YOUR BRAIN

TASHA: Yes, absolutely. And we'll include links down below this session. So, like the Inbox Zero that you mentioned that we don't have time to dive into today, we'll have a link down below as well where people can go and read more about that. Because I know with some of this, we're like scratching the surface, and I'm sure there's people who are listening, like, "no, tell me more!". So, we will definitely yes, absolutely. But starting with having that spot to put everything both physically and digitally, I love how you touched on that because I think so often we talk about the physical inbox, which is so important and good, but forget about all of the digital input. And like you said, so much of inputs nowadays, is digital probably over physical? In most cases. Yeah.

APRIL: Protect your brain.

CALENDAR CHAOS

TASHA: Yes, absolutely. Now, I know a lot of people, so protecting your brain, they put it out on paper and using planners and calendars and everything like that. But I know you mentioned at the very beginning maybe there's some ways we could be using calendars more helpfully. So, I think that was the second part of this family centered Command Central. Can you share a little bit more about some tweaks that we can make with our calendars?

APRIL: Yes, and I mean, first of all, if you love the way you're calendaring, that's fantastic. I'm not here to change that for anyone. But I do talk to a lot of people, and find out most people have just common things that they've done with their calendars that aren't serving them. So that's just where I'm coming from because I don't want anyone to think that I'm like, here to make you change everything that's already working. Like, no, it's working great.

USING MENTAL SPACE

APRIL But what most people do is either they don't use a calendar and they keep everything in their heads. And if you're one of those people, you might actually pride yourself on it and think like, I'm so good at keeping everything in my head. I don't need a calendar. It's just that that's using your psychic RAM. That's using your brain space. So, learning to trust an external system actually is really important if you want to feel relief.

OVER-SCHEDULING

APRIL Also, some people really over schedule themselves, and so what they'll do is they'll just hunker down and say, okay, I'm going to block every minute of every day next 72 hours, every minute is organized. So, I'm going to get everything done. If you're in catch up mode and you have to and there's an emergency, that's fine for three days, but you don't want to live an emergency for your whole life. So, if you block time for every routine, all your exercise, here's when I'll drink water, here's when I'm going to sleep exactly. Here's when my child will throw the tantrum.

If you really think you have that much control, what's going to end up happening is you're going to miss something, you're going to be late, then you're going to have to reorganize everything else, and then you're going to feel frustrated with yourself.

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A BLANK CANVAS

APRIL Or the other thing that ends up happening is people really clutter calendars with tasks or other routines and things that really could be managed by other parts of the Command Central. And so, the way I think about it is I want your calendar to feel like a blank canvas. Like, it's just open, it's clear.

And if you're thinking, but my day is crazy and I have so much to do, I get it. But that's going to be handled through the routines list, through this context-based Next Actions list, through some of these other resources that will give your brain the ability to focus. And when you look at the calendar that day, you're going to feel like, okay, it's blank, it's open. I know where my body needs to be, what has to be done. Everything else is just taken off, and it feels amazing.

CLEAR THE CLUTTER

TASHA: Yes. So, it sounds like really prioritizing which things get a spot on your calendar and then using other elements for things that maybe don't show up on your calendar, so your calendar isn't looking as cluttered. Am I getting that right?.

WHERE YOUR BODY NEEDS TO BE

APRIL Yeah. So really, I only put two things on my calendar, so first is where my body needs to be. So, for today, I had a team meeting at a couple of hours ago, and I have this call with you. Those are the only appointments on my calendar where my body needs to be. So of course, I want to be able to see that. I wake up in the morning, oh, I got those two things. Great.

I also only write the tasks that must be done that day. Typically, if you actually look at your list of tasks, most of them can be done sometime that week or sometime that month, or it's usually pretty flexible.

TO DO LISTS?

APRIL But what people tend to do, what I did all growing up was I would write a huge list for today, and then I'd get maybe one done. And then what do you do with the rest of them? You just rewrite them the next day, right? Or if someone uses a digital task manager, if I went into your digital task manager today, how many red overdue dates would I see?

I think most people, it's like, yeah, everything's overdue, and then I just kind of give up. So, if your calendar is just where your body needs to be and just the tasks that you 100% have to do before you go to bed, not routines. Like one-time tasks, like, I have to pay this bill. Or I have to call this person about this thing today.

EMPOWERING TOOL

APRIL That's going to just help you look at it and say, okay. Then let's say you wake up in the morning, you have the flu, you look at your calendar. You just have two things to cancel. You move two events, and you go back to sleep. Right. You don't want to be looking at something big because it's going to drain you, and having a very focused calendar is going to empower you.

TASHA: Yes, I love that mindset that we are empowering, not draining. And it is so interesting how these tools, they really have a lot of power in how we use them.

AVOIDING PSYCOLOGICAL DRAIN

APRIL: Gosh so much. And I think we don't

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realize how much psychological drain there is with long lists that don't get done and full calendars that don't get completed. And especially for the women who are watching, a lot of us are very conscientious and we think, well, let me write down all the things my heart wants to do, how big my heart is. And we write it all down and then we kind of beat ourselves up when we don't get there. And I want to save you from that and help you start making progress and feeling really good because your heart is big, but you don't have to have it all on your calendar.

TASHA: Yes, absolutely. So, it sounds to me like the calendar items, they are very time specific or maybe very one and done need to happen today. There's a lot of other things that happen, I think, in our day to day that are more of like, every day. Like, I need to wash my dishes. I guess I CAN do that tomorrow and I don't have to do it at 05:00 p.m.. But what do you do with some of those items that are a little bit more maybe a habit or I think a routine?

APRIL: Yeah, the routine. Okay, so the routines list, I want to dive into that, and we'll dive into that, I think, in a second.

KEEP ROUTINES OUT OF YOUR CALENDAR

APRIL: But the main idea is if you write something down on your calendar or your task list for today, and it's something that you do repeatedly, like laundry, dishes, grocery shopping, exercise, drink your water, take your vitamins. Right there's like all these things that we do. But I know it feels good to write it all down and get that dopamine burst when you check it off. And if it's working for you, again, write it down and check it off. Like get that dopamine hit.

But what I notice is if you put that on a routines list, which I'll show you that in a second, that's going to alleviate, like I'd say, 90% of what most people put on their calendar. The other ones are Next Actions. We'll be talking about that as well. And that's where it's a flexible weekly list that says basically I still need to do it, but I don't need to do it right this second. And I'll be showing how it works, but mine just looks like this. It's super simple. You can do it digitally as well.

I just want you to be thinking, I can still do those tasks, I can still do those routines, but my brain doesn't need to see them as equivalent to a calendar specific task. That differentiation is going to be huge when it comes to your stress level.

So that's what I'm doing right now is I'm alleviating the stress level. Just trust me and try it because I promise it's going to make a difference.

PERFECT MULTIPLE-CHOICE DAY

TASHA: Yes. And like you said, they are a little different. I mean, if you wake up in the morning, your example, and have the flu and you have a meeting, you need to actively cancel your meeting. But if there's dishes in the sink, tomorrow, they'll still be there.

APRIL: They'll still be there. Not a big deal, right? And I think when your brain knows sure, I want to do everything. I call it the multiple choice perfect day. That's something my husband taught me. Multiple choice, multiple choice perfect day. That there's all these things that we want to do. Most days, we're not going to do all of them, we're going to pick. But every day can be a perfect day. We just don't want to set ourselves up to think we have to be 100% or all or nothing because we want to have great mental health in the process of all this.

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STRUGGLING WITH ROUTINES

TASHA: Absolutely, yes. So as people are working with these routines, and I know you said we're going to dive more into routines list, even if we're not going for the absolute perfect day, where we can do everything that's even on our wish list, sometimes it's really hard to keep up with the routines.

For me, something as simple as taking vitamins, like, why am I the worst person in the world at taking a pill? It's not that hard, people. I really struggle with something so simple. So, what would you do in a situation where you're trying to keep your calendar really clear and open and you're trying to utilize these routines, but some of the things you really do want to be a routine, they're not happening yet?

CREATING A ROUTINES LIST

APRIL: Okay, that's such a good question. I think every one of us deals with this, so I'll just share how I found to make it work because this is not a pain point for me anymore. But it used to be huge.

Most of us don't want to create a routines list because we feel like we're putting ourselves in jail. And that's how I felt initially, I made a big routines list. Like, okay, I'm going to iron every other Thursday. We're going to do a library trip every other Tuesday. And I made this perfect routines list.

And when I looked at it, I literally wanted to throw up because I felt like, well, there's my jail now. Where's my creativity? What if I just don't feel like it? And sometimes people just say, well, let's just push through and use our willpower. Well, I think that's a great way to hate your life, and I don't want you to hate your life.

So instead, what I recommend is you do make the routines list. And so, I first just made mine. I typed it out and I printed it and I posted it, and it was like daily, weekly. And on weekly, I put even Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays. Like, I did that monthly, quarterly, yearly, I made the list.

A WEEKLY REVIEW

APRIL: But the way I thought about it was, okay, every week I'm going to look at this list as part of my weekly review. If anything on your routines list is calendar specific, like, well, I have piano lessons on this day, or I have a team meeting on this day, then, of course, that's on your calendar because remember, that's where your body needs to be. But for everything else, I think of them like, that multiple choice, perfect day. Ideally, yes, I would do all of this every day. Realistically, I probably won't, but let me give myself a lot of grace.

However, for something like taking a vitamin, let's say your doctor is like, you really do need to be taking this vitamin. This is essential for your health. This is really important. Or flossing your teeth. Your dentist is like, hey, when was the last time you flossed? Okay, I got to get some of this stuff going because it's giving me long term health care, right?

Anything for long term health sustainability, family business, all those things where you're like,

I really do need these routines. Okay, obviously, we're not going to try to be perfect all at once, but let's say you would take maybe one or two routines a week and say, okay, this week I'm going to really focus on establishing this routine.

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MAKING HABITS EASIER

TASHA: Now, when we talk about projects, in a moment, I'll talk about how establishing a routine is a project. Then it moves into routine mode. So that month and we'll talk about this limited projects list, you might say, yeah, I'm really going to get my morning health routine locked in. That's a project. And that's when books like Atomic Habits are so good.

Things like, okay, how can I make taking my vitamin easier? Like, I went and got a little pill sorter, and I kept it right on my counter, and I made it a routine to fill it. And then every day, it was just so easy to take it because I didn't have to go digging through a drawer and find the right thing. Right. So, you can then set up little things that will make it easier for you. But that's a focused project. And then once it's in routine mode, then okay, moves on the routines list, and we move on to the next one.

And you do that over and over and over again as it works with your life. You're going to be so organized and feel amazing, and then your routines start getting done consistently.

LIGHT BULB MOMENT

TASHA: Yeah, I mean, that's like mega light bulb moment for me. I'd never heard anyone phrase it quite like that. But when you are creating a routine or creating a habit, I feel like people use those words somewhat interchangeably. That is a project. If it's not yet a habit, it is a project. And I think I'd always thought of it as like, no, no, this is a habit. It's just a really bad habit.

But I love that, that you are in project mode. You are like, okay, I don't know, two weeks and we're going to do this every day. And that is like one concise, one and done project, even though the long term goal is an everyday thing. I don't know. I love that. Yeah, that's awesome.

Okay. Anything else on routines, or are we ready to move into the next thing on projects specifically?

CREATING A ROUTINE IS A PROJECT

APRIL: I think that's a good start. And we have podcasts and stuff. People can come listen if they want more. But yes, I think that's a good overview. Just make your list, only put things on your calendar that are calendar specific, and then make creation of routines projects. If you just do that, you're going to be so ahead of the game. It's going to be great.

TASHA: And you said you reference your routines list weekly, so do you ever go back to it if you're in one of those moments where you're like, oh, what should I do next? And check on that right now?

APRIL: Mine are pretty automatic. I use Asana to organize my projects and tasks. So, I'm in Asana each day as I work, and I just have April's routines, and so I can just click on it and look at it if I want to. But I don't think of routines like a big checklist for me. I think of it like a resource of who I want to become, and it's just happy.

DELIBERATE DECISIONS

APRIL: So, when I look at it, there's no guilt, there's no frustration. It's just like, hey, how's that going? And if I am keeping the car washed and clean, great. And if the car is disgusting, well, that's okay. If I'm choosing not to do it, it helps me to be able to more deliberately make my decisions and know

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that if I ever need to go look at my routines, I can. But I just don't stress about them. They just start happening naturally.

ALL ABOUT PROJECTS

TASHA: Yeah, absolutely. All right, so moving on to projects. We've touched on it a little here and there, but how do you keep track of your projects overall?

APRIL: Okay, so this is a unique way that I've developed that really works, not just for me, but to strengthen the whole family. And the reason we titled this class, like, having this family-focused Command Central is because I believe the family is like, that's our whole purpose and focus.

Like, I want to have a strong family, I want a strong marriage, I want to take care of my children. I want to feel connected to the people I love. And I'm not looking to just go check off a bunch of things so I can have random strangers think I'm successful. Like, I really want this to be something that works with the whole family.

And it was really hard for me when I was trying to develop professionally and personally and with the family to find anyone who seemed to care about that, and I care so deeply about that.

So that's why I've tweaked the projects list.

A PROJECT PYRAMID

APRIL Essentially, what I recommend is that you have a tiered projects list. This has taken so much pressure off because most people . . . we've had more than 100,000 people on live Webinars, and I've interviewed, like, asked them questions, done the chat with them. So, this is pretty proven data that most people are working on between 50 to a hundred projects at the same time.

So, if you think a project is a multi-step task, most people literally are . . . If you said, write down your projects, they just start laughing. They just say, oh, I have so many. I'm trying to redo the bathroom and start this business and plan a birthday party. And so, they're working on all of these projects, and then how many get done? Who wants to work on 100 projects? No one? That feels terrible.

So, what happens is you have a lot of people starting things, never finishing them, and then feeling really down about themselves because they look at their life and like, well, this isn't the life I wanted to create.

Okay, so let's actually solve that with project management, which I know it sounds so boring, but I don't know if you can tell how passionate I am about this, but I care so deeply.

FOUR TIERS

APRIL So, if you have a tiered projects list, here's what it looks like. Think of it like a pyramid. You have your Current Projects. That's what you're working on this month. And I'll go deeper into this. But this is seven to eight maximum, and it could just be one to three. We'll talk a little more about that.

Then I have In Progress or Waiting Projects. Those are things you've done your part. You've now given something to someone else, and you might have a calendar trigger to follow up on it, but it's off your plate.

Then we have Next in Line Projects, which is beautiful because let's say you have seven or eight Current ones, and then a new project comes in, like someone just broke their foot and now needs surgery. Now that's your new project.

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You take one and put it in Next in Line, and you're not going to overwhelm yourself and keep saying, sure, give it all to me. I can just take it. I'll take on the whole world because then you end up just collapsing because you're so tired or getting sick, right?

And then after Next in Line, we have Someday, and this is a beautiful place to put those dreams. Like, I want to make a toy company for my grandkids. It's Someday. It's not a Current Project, but you can have those dreams that you put into Someday.

CURRENT PROJECTS

APRIL Okay, so let's talk about the Current because that's all I really want you focusing on. And I have a little . . . I don't know if you can see it, I'll show you. For those who are watching, I'll show you. So, I have a little chalkboard right there, and I just keep my Current Projects posted. Okay.

So right now, I have five for the month, and it's projects for me, projects for my family, and then the beyond category. That includes volunteer or paid work, but I also keep those in Asana. I also put them on the back of my Next Actions list. These are my projects for the month, and I protect that list, but I also evaluate it each week to make sure it's still the accurate projects list.

So, if it's establishing a better routine, like, I'm trying to optimize my nutrition this month, and I really need to focus on it because there are some health things I'm trying to improve. So, optimize nutrition, that is my personal project for the month.

When we have projects identified and you have a maximum of three in each category, but no more than seven or eight total across the three categories, now you have your focus. So, you're not going to do the 50. They're going to go in the Next in Line or Someday, but this is where we have to have a real conversation with ourselves and say, what can I actually get done this month?

SET YOUR FOCUS

APRIL Given my routines, given my calendar schedule, given what I've got going on? Like if right now you have a lot of children in your home and you're taking care of them all day long, you're probably just going to have a couple of projects. You're not going to try to do eight projects.

Right now we have one high schooler. Our other kids are grown. So, I can do five projects, and that's fine. The way that you know your projects list is optimal, again that lift. When you look at your list, if you feel like, oh, I can do it. If you feel that you've got the right list, if you feel like you're going to throw up.

MOVE THINGS AROUND

APRIL I know I say that a lot, but most people feel like they want to throw up every day, then you just need to change your list. And so, the idea is that you have a very focused, visual way to tell yourself, this is what I'm doing. Then if someone comes in and says, hey, guess what? I have this new project for you, you can say, oh, I love that idea. Let me add that to my Next in Line list, and I'll consider that for next month.

So instead of saying, yeah, sure, I'll plan that event. Sure, I can now host that family. Yes, let me take on this new work project, because our hearts are big, remember? Then you're able to actually look at it and say, well, I've already maxed out my projects for this month, but I could put that on my

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Next in Line, and we could talk in a couple of weeks.

So that's the main idea. I know it's been a lot. Does that make sense? How are we doing?

REFRAMING PROJECTS

TASHA: Right. Yeah. My big takeaway from that is I love how you define projects. Because when you were first talking about it, I was like, okay, well, I have a few things I'm working on for work. And I mean, we'd like to remodel our bathroom, but like you said, health problems or health goals. Even if they're not problems, those are projects. Things like hosting people who are going to be coming into your home. That is a project. Just maybe not in the sense that we think of it.

So, I think that's a really helpful maybe just like, reframe of what constitutes a project, because calling things what they are is really helpful as well. If you think, okay, I'm only working on three projects, but you didn't include these five other things that you're also doing. It's like, oh, I'm doing more than I thought.

SEE ALL THE PROJECTS

APRIL I'm so glad you said that. And we actually just did a couple of podcasts on this because people were saying, sometimes I write down my projects and then I don't move forward on any of them, and I don't realize why. And then I have to step back and say, oh, yeah, well, a friend of mine asked me to participate in this thing this week, and I did it all week. Or I've taken on these other responsibilities. But when you see a project, I think of it like a multi-step task you could get completed in a month.

Now, for you right now, preparing for this summit, this is a huge project. You could just put the summit on your work projects list, and as long as it's moving forward every month, it's great. Or you could break into sub projects. So, I'm sure you've already done stuff like this where it's like, okay, we're just going to organize the speakers right now, or, we're just going to do the interviews, or we're just going to get the website ready so you can create those sub projects. And then move them out.

BE REALISTIC

APRIL And if during the month, you get all of your projects done and you're like, I still have bandwidth, great. You got this Next in Line list. You just move them on up, and then you just keep moving. Or, like, if you're sick. I had a lot of health problems, so I was sick for a couple of years, mostly. And on the really bad months, I literally would go to my chalkboard. I would erase the whole thing and put, get well soon, April. And that was my project.

So, I think when you can see, hey, we're not here to drive ourselves and become crazy people. We're here to be able to use our energy and our hearts and our love to do good things in the world and protect our families and take care of things and live our mission.

And if your Current Projects list is not giving you that lift to live your mission and love your people, then you can just optimize it. So that would be my encouragement.

BREAKING IT DOWN

TASHA: Yes. I absolutely love that. I think

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that is awesome. So, when it comes to those projects that we have on that list, even if it's a really good list and it's giving you that lift, I do think sometimes . . . So, something like this summit that you mentioned, this is like months and months and months of lead up, and I love it, and it's so awesome.

But how do you break something down that is that massive or even something slightly smaller than a 100 speaker summit? How do you avoid the overwhelm of even if you know, yes, this is where my heart is at. This is what I want to put my energy into. Some of those things can still have a ton of steps, and it can be overwhelming. Even if you have it organized

NATURAL PLANNING MODEL

APRIL: It can, but if you organize it . . . okay, so David Allen has something called the Natural Planning Model, which has changed my life. And I'll just say it briefly, but it's so good. Okay, so this applies to something like a summit, a wedding, a family reunion, a big vacation. Like, we're traveling internationally this summer. We've got to get vaccines and new suitcases. Right. Or all this stuff. Or the holidays. I mean, the holidays, you can easily get overwhelmed, all there is.

Okay, so the basics of it is first, you do I'll just go over the five real quick? Is that good? Can we just do this? Okay. Because this is empowering, and it's changed my life.

LOOK AT PURPOSE & PRINCIPALS

APRIL Number one, you look at purpose and principles. Why am I actually doing it? Just make sure it's actually in alignment with your values.

OUTCOME VISIONING

APRIL Second is outcome. Visioning. You say, if this were wildly successful, what would it look like? So hopefully you've already done that with a summit you already know, and you've already had it be wildly successful for years. So hopefully you can just keep building on that.

BRAINSTORM

APRIL Then you do your brainstorm. And this is where breaking it into those categories, those categories are eventually going to be like the seed beds for your projects. So, it's something like, okay, obviously I've got to have the people. I need to have the digital assets. I need to be able to have the marketing ads, the process of how people will join the email sequences. Like you start brainstorming. And typically, I just get out a piece of paper and just make little bubbles. And for example, we just launched a new product. So, things like, oh, what are the promo codes? What are we going to offer? What's the login? You just are doing all the little bubbles.

ORGANIZE

APRIL Then the next is after brainstorm is organize, and then the review and do, like identify the Next Actions. So, for organize, that's when I look at all the bubbles, and I organize it by timeline.

So, for like the holidays, I'd say, okay, in October I'm going to do these things. And you could do sticky notes and move them. You could do it digitally and move it. But in October I do this.

In early November, I do this. Prior to Thanksgiving, I do this. After Thanksgiving,

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I do this. And I have it organized in a timeline. So then instead of looking at the whole entire project, that feels incredibly overwhelming. You're just looking at these little things that have to be done by a certain date. And you identify, is this a project? Is this just a task? Is this a calendar event? How does it fit in the Command Central? That has helped me where I have never been overwhelmed by a project in 15 years because it just fits into the Command Central all at once.

TASHA: But can you go back to the Next Actions list and touch on that a little more? Because we've mentioned it a couple of times, but I don't think we've totally broken it down. So, can we dive into that one?

TAKE THE NEXT ACTION

APRIL This is my favorite list, okay? And I'll tell you why. It's because it has alleviated all the stuff I used to write down in my planner. And that was when I was in high school. I had a Franklin Quest planner, and I carried it every day and I wrote every list. And there are probably 30 things on my list every day. First of all, I noticed though, a lot of what I wrote down were projects that I'd write on task list. And we do that even right now. Things like, I'm going to redo the backyard. You're not doing that today. You can't redo the backyard today, but you write it down like a project and that feels overwhelming.

This is not a project. It's a Next Action. So that's the first thing, is it alleviates your list also everything on it because it's a Next Action. It's really doable. And I'll define that and it's very flexible for the week, so it gives you something super solid that just kind of goes with you throughout the week. So, to define the Next Action. This is from David Allen's book Getting Things Done. He says it's the next physical visible activity that will lead a project toward completion.

FOR THE WANT OF A TAPE MEASURE

APRIL Now, the story I tell that typically makes the most sense is from a conference. I was speaking, and someone raised her hand and said, hey, April, I have books all over my living room, and I can't sit there. Nobody can come in. Just books everywhere. So, I said, okay, that's a project, right? Get the books out of the living room. So, I said, okay, where do they go? She said, well, they go in the office. I said, okay, can you just put the books in the office? Because that could work.

She said, well, no, because first I need to order bookshelves. And I said, okay, if I brought you my computer right now, could you just order bookshelves? Because that's the Next Action. She said, well, no, because they come in different sizes, and I have to measure my office walls before I can order the bookshelves. And I said, okay, great. If you went into your office right now, could you measure office walls? Because that's the Next Action. She said, well, no, because I can't find my tape measure.

So that was the key. She was writing on her list clean the living room, get rid of all the books, when what she really needed to have was find or buy or borrow a tape measure. Those are two different tasks. So, what you would do if really you already have the tape measure, you already ordered the bookshelves, you already assembled the bookshelves, that would be a home task to move the books into the bookshelves, that's home. If it's I need to go buy a tape measure, then that's an errand.

ORGANIZING YOUR NEXT ACTIONS

APRIL So, the way this is organized is it's

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home computer, errands, phone, to discuss. You can make some additional ones. Like, I have one for reading. What am I reading or learning this week? Can I keep that on there? Or what are some activities I can do with my teenage son while he's home? Like, I made that. Or to pray about. Like you can make your own if you want to add context.

But what's beautiful is then when you're working on a project, whatever's on your project list, or if it's a one off task, like, oh, I see you need to grab a prescription. That's just an errand, right? So, I keep this. I mean, I'll just show you my planner. I use the weekly planner, and you can use any planner, really. You can optimize any planner. And you could do a sticky note that moves. You can do a little bookmark that you stick in there, but this goes with the day.

So, every week, I just make a new one of these and everything should be checked off. If it's not checked off, it's typically because it's either a sub-project you put on there and you've got to boil it down more, or maybe it's something you actually don't even want to do and let's just get rid of it and we'll put that in a Someday.

PUT IT IN CONTEXT

APRIL But when you have a very simple Next Actions list organized by context, that alleviates your daily calendar, it alleviates the pressure on your brain and it gives you options. So, when pockets of time open up, you know exactly what to do. Have you ever gone to a store and then you get home and you're like, oh, I could have run that other errand. I was right next to it. If you just have on your errands list what you need to do, then while you're out, you're like, what other errands can I do?

And then you feel like you got the cheat codes or like the secret easy button or whatever, because you start grouping things, and then all of a sudden you have more energy and you're actually moving things forward.

MAKING LIFE DOABLE

APRIL We had some college students over last night, and I taught one of them about how to do a Next Action, and she sent me a text this morning, and she was like, okay, it's weird how well this works. I just made really good progress on two things I've been procrastinating. And it's fun and it's also really eye-opening when you realize you're not procrastinating because you're lazy, you're not capable, you're whatever story you tell yourself. You're procrastinating typically because you haven't identified a Next Action that gives you that lift.

Same thing with your Current Projects list, your calendar, your Next Actions. If it doesn't make you feel like life is doable and I've got what it takes and this is totally going to happen, then it just needs to be optimized, like it's not your fault. And I just think that message needs to be really, really shared because so many of us carry that stress. Like, I just am not put together. I'm a hot mess. I'm not organized. I'm not respected. That's just that dignity that I want to bring back because most people have lost it and you can get it back.

EMPOWERING YOURSELF

TASHA: Yes. And I think that it is so empowering to break down those actions because you actually realize you're doing a lot more than you think. Like with your book example, if they had gone through all of those steps and then finally checked off their list, that they moved the books out like you said, they got a tape measure and they measured the office walls and they

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ordered the shelves and they moved all the books and they did all these things that led into final project completion. And we all love completing projects. That's awesome.

But not recognizing the steps we took to get there can be part of what leads to all this discouragement because it's just like, oh, well, all I did was move the books into the room. How hard is that?

USE YOUR ENERGY WISELY

APRIL: But that's what gives you . . . you're right. That empowerment, and that's how I want people to feel. And I think you just hit on one of the main points, and that's the reason I keep my emails at zero, is because when you're scanning a list and what you see doesn't match what you need to do, that takes energy.

So, for example, most people probably have, like, 18,000 emails in their inbox. If you're skimming, you're probably only skimming the first hundred, and then you're like, Forget it. It's too hard. The subject line for each of those 100 emails most likely is not the action associated with it.

So, it'll say, like, oh, we're doing this 50% off sale. And you have to remember, oh, it was that store. I wanted to buy that shirt, and I have to order it by this date. That's taking bandwidth for you to have to read through every little subject line and remember what that meant, especially when it's like a RE:::. You're like, wait, what was that?

PROJECTS VS. ACTIONS

APRIL And so, it's the same thing with the Next Actions list. If you have projects on here, like redo the backyard, you're like, I can't do that. Like, with our business, we were going to be starting a business. And we had one that we built that totally flopped. And it's okay, it's a painful experience, but I was postponing it and procrastinating because it just felt too hard. Like, start a business?

Well, I just put three kids to bed. Do you really think I want to go start a business right now? Like, no, I want to watch TV, and I want to eat some ice cream or something. So instead, what I started doing was like, well, okay, if I were to boil that business down, what's one thing I could do in ten minutes? Like, well, we need a logo. And our friend was going to make the logo. Maybe I could just email and ask for a quote on how much it'll cost. Could I just do that? Sure, I could do that. And so, I sent the email, and I thought, I just moved forward on my project.

A STEP AT A TIME

APRIL And then we built the business, and we learned from it, and that one didn't work, and we built another one. But that's how I'd done every single project with our business, with our children, with our family, with moving, with taking care of parents. My mom had Alzheimer's. We had all these things we did, and we just did it with projects and Next Actions, and you do that consistently, and then you look back and you're like, oh, my gosh, I love my life. It's not easy. It's not perfect, but you can feel that excitement.

TASHA: Yes, absolutely. So, I feel like we have scratched the surface of so many things that we could do entire sessions. Like hour long sessions on every aspect of this. So where can people go to dive deeper and learn more? I mean, we've talked about getting your inbox to zero. We've talked about there's more to all of these aspects to your calendar functioning optimally and your Next Actions list. So where can people go just to learn more from you?

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LEARNING MORE

APRIL: Yes. Okay, well, our website, learndobecome.com, I would say the first place is our STEP Command Central is the system. So learndobecome.com/step. That's where we have an introductory training. We actually walk through more about the Current Projects, the Next Actions, how to get them done. It's an on-demand recording right now that you can watch that. Literally we've taught it live over 650 times. This is class that we have taught to so many people because people get results through it. It's super fun.

So, you can go watch that and then really, it's like just if you come to our website and there's simple ways you can just hop on podcast, YouTube channel, we send out an email each week with inspiration. But our goal is just to help you to be able to feel like you can breathe. And so welcome. Glad to know you. I'm glad to be here.

TASHA: Perfect. Yeah. And we'll have links to all of that down below. Your podcast, your website, your STEP program, all of that down below.

So, thank you so much for spending the time today and covering all of this, and I am eager to hear. We'll have a link down below where people can hop over. If you're in the attendee Facebook group you can comment on this session. And I just would love to hear from people who like, take this and start implementing even just one piece of it today. Let us know how it goes for you, because there is so much here that just like you mentioned with your friend, it can make a big difference so fast.

APRIL: Yes, it's so fun. So, thank you for having me. I love being here.

TASHA: Absolutely.

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10 Things To Declutter From Your Kitchen Right Now

ARIANA GRAHAM • TRANSCRIPT

Hello, my name is Ariana Graham, and I am the CEO and professional home organizer at Homemade Neat. We give busy families more quality time by creating neat and clutter free homes. I'm so excited to be here with you today to discuss the topic of kitchen decluttering.

THE HEART OF THE HOME

The kitchen is truly the heart of the home. It's gathering space for most families, and we spend a lot of time in the kitchen. I recently came across this article that mentioned the average American spends about 400 hours per year in their kitchens. That is a lot of time.

And it's not surprising because it's the space where you cook meals for your family, where you pack lunches for your kids. It's also a space where you eat most of your meals, if not all of your meals. And for some, it's a space where your kids do their homework.

Now, because we spend so much time in the kitchen, it is often the space that is most cluttered in our homes. And I come across this a lot with my clients. They struggle with the lack of space in their kitchen, whether it's cabinets, if they don't have enough countertop space, and sometimes they don't have a true pantry.

Sometimes I found that it's not necessarily the fact that you may have a lack of space in your kitchen. It is that you have too much to comfortably fit in that space. From a home organizer's perspective, the kitchen is also one of the most difficult spaces to organize in the home. And it's because every kitchen is unique, from size to layout to space.

TEN THINGS TO DECLUTTER RIGHT NOW

The key to preventing clutter from building up in your kitchen is declutter often. I have for you ten things that you can declutter from your kitchen right now.

1. EXPIRED FOOD

Number one is expired food. First start, if you have a pantry, start with your pantry and pull everything out, keeping grouped items, like like items together and check for expiration dates. Now, my rule of thumb is if something is a year or more passed its expiration date, then it's probably a good idea to toss. If it's within a few months to a year, it's probably still good.

Now, you got to use your best judgment here. So, like, for example, if you have an item that says expired in 2019, well, we're in 2023 currently, so that's definitely an item that you wanted to toss.

So I have a couple of items here I wanted to share. How to check for expiration dates. So this can of black beans actually expires on September 5, 2023. Now, that is soon approaching. So this is something that's probably still good, but I'm going to put this at the front of my pantry so that I know to

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use this first.

Next item that I wanted to show you is actually it expired in January of 2023. And although we're in the summer months, it's still probably good for you to have this and use this. But I'd want to put it at the front of my pantry so that I'll use it first.

MULTIPLE ITEMS

The next thing that you want to look for when you're decluttering your pantry is how much of one item do you have? And if you have an excess of this item, consider donating some of it to a local pantry. You want to do the same thing when you declutter your freezer in your refrigerator. You want to empty everything out and keep all of the like items together. This case, you're also looking for things that may have expired or it's like in the freezer, for example, if you don't remember when you put something in the freezer and it just doesn't look good, I would say toss it.

Now, you have to use your best judgment here too, as well, because not all things that are in the freezer are not necessarily bad past their expiration date, because food in the freezer, obviously, the shelf life of freezer foods is a lot longer than some things.

2. FOOD YOU DON'T LIKE

Number two is food that you don't like. Now, let's be real. We've all been to the grocery store and we've tried a sample of new food, and it tastes good in the grocery store. We decided to buy it, and we took it home, and the week went by, a couple of weeks maybe, or longer, and you haven't pulled out this food item.

Now, that's the case. A lot of the times we want to buy something because it's on sale or because we sampled it at the grocery store and it was good at one point. But we decided we actually don't like this food, or our family doesn't like this food, but we feel guilty about throwing it away because we feel like we're wasting our money when it comes to foods that you don't like.

IT JUST SITS

So I recently purchased this box of Keurig cups for my coffee maker. And originally when I went to the store, I was looking for Caribou, and they didn't have any, but this was on sale, and I had a coupon as well. So I purchased this. Then when I got it home, I started having the coffee, and I realized this really isn't as good as Caribou. And I just said, okay, I need to use this whole box up, because I did buy it.

But all it has done is sit in my pantry for the last couple of months, and I haven't really touched it very much. So this is an example of something that I purchased that I really could just either throw it away if it's past expiration date or donate it, which I'm planning to do. That is if it's expired, just toss it.

Or if it's something that you don't like, consider don't . .. if it's still good, consider donating it to a local pantry for someone else to enjoy. And that way you'll feel good that you're not just throwing out the food but you're actually giving it to someone who needs it or who would better enjoy it.

3. PLASTIC BAGS

Number three is something that I see a lot when I'm organizing kitchens for my clients. It is plastic bags. You will be surprised how many plastic bags we gather from the grocery store because if you go weekly or if

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you go a couple of times a week, you may have a lot of. If you hold on to plastic bags, you can easily accumulate a lot of them.

The key with plastic bags is that you don't really need that many plastic bags. It's okay to keep a few around if you're using it to throw away like small things like when you're cutting up your fruit or if you're cutting up vegetables and you don't want to necessarily waste an entire trash bag. The idea is to keep it to a minimum.

4. SMALL APPLIANCES

Number four is a big one, is small appliances. Now the average person has at least a toaster, a blender, and you may have an Instapot and or a crock pot and a mixer. Now it's when you get beyond that and you have all the latest small appliances and you have to ask yourself, how often do I use these items?

And if it's not something that you use regularly, they take up a lot of space on your countertop and they take up a lot of space in the pantry. So it's often a good idea to pull those all out in one area and one by one decide, how often do I use this?

If I don't use this often, it's really a good idea to donate it to a local charity that accepts that particular item. Now, if it's something that you do use, you just don't use it often. It may be something that you use only like around holidays, I would suggest finding the cabinet on an upper cabinet or putting at the way top of your pantry in the back so that it is not up front and center and is not cluttering your kitchen.

5. KITCHEN APPLIANCE MANUALS

Number five is kitchen appliance manuals. When you get your refrigerator, stove, your dishwasher, your microwave, those often come with a manual that shows you how to operate the appliance. And for like the refrigerator, for example, it will show you what type of filters to purchase for your refrigerator and the type of light bulb to replace that.

So, kitchen operating manuals for your appliances, you really don't refer them to them often. And I found that we keep them, we keep a stack of them in one of our drawers and it takes up so much space. The more and more we hold onto these manuals now we also get them for our small appliances like our toasters and our blenders.

And what I have found is that you really don't need to have the paper version of these manuals. If you go to the manufacturer's website or if you do a simple Google search of the item, include the model number. You'll find that a lot of these are actually available in digital format. When you find these digital format of your appliance manual, I recommend downloading them and saving them to a bookmark on your phone. So that way, when you do need to refer to the appliance manual, you'll have it saved on your phone, you can easily get to it versus having them clutter up drawer space.

6. KITCHEN GADGETS

Number six, kitchen gadgets. Now, this is another area that causes a lot of clutter in your home. When you have a lot of kitchen gadgets outside of your commonly used kitchen gadgets, they can easily clutter your

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space.

So I'm referring to things that you may have purchased just because you saw a commercial ad and it said, oh, this is the kitchen gadget that is going to save you time. I'm referring to things like avocado slicer, a spiralizer, a juicer waffle maker, things like that. So these are not commonly used kitchen gadgets.

So oftentimes we buy them because we think, oh, at some point I will use this spiralizer to use for my vegetables and to make a spaghetti squash, for example. And if it's not something that you use often, kitchen gadgets can quickly cause clutter in your space, especially if you don't have a lot of drawer space.

RULE OF THUMB

So the key with kitchen gadgets is, and my rule of thumb, is only keep what you use regularly. So for example, if you have kitchen gadgets that you've only used it one time and it's literally been sitting at the back of your drawer or your pantry, it might be something that you may want to consider decluttering.

And if it's still in good working condition, I would suggest instead of throwing it away, because we don't want to throw away things that are still usable, you want to gather all these items together and donate them to someone who actually used them.

Now, another thing you can do is too, is that you can also, depending on where you keep your commonly used kitchen gadgets, I recommend creating the drawer just for those commonly used items. So now if you do have a couple that you do use, but you just don't use them regularly, and I mean, like every day, consider keeping them, but keep them outside of your actual kitchen.

Maybe if you have a pantry, you want to put them in like a bin altogether because you still want to be able to use them, you just don't want them to clutter the kitchen that you use on a daily basis.

7. COOKBOOKS

Number seven is one of my favorites. Cookbooks. Now, I absolutely love cooking and I'm in the kitchen a lot. I don't really follow that many recipes. I kind of just go with my own.

But cookbooks really take up a lot of space, especially if you have cookbooks that are like larger, they take up space, let's put it that way. And oftentimes they end up on the counter and take up valuable countertop space. What I found is that when you're referring to a recipe, you may not necessarily refer to these cookbooks daily.

So what I always recommend is finding these cookbooks digitally. So if you go to Amazon or if you go to just do a Google search, search for that cookbook and see if it's available in a digital format. And most of the time you can purchase an eBook version of your favorite cookbook.

So keep a few that you do like if some people enjoy turning the page and seeing the color, the nice colors of the food photograph and having actual book in their hand, that's okay. But I feel like you need to have a minimum. So keep it to no more than four and make sure that these are cookbooks that you refer to regularly. And if they're not, go to download the e-version of the book and declutter, give it to a friend as a gift or take it to a donation center.

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OTHER PLACES FOR RECIPES

I also wanted to mention when it comes to cookbooks, there are so many digital apps that you can download for free onto your phone that have either recipe inspirations, the actual recipes. And what's even better is that a lot of these apps also have an area where you can save grocery lists. So when you go to the grocery store, it's perfect if you're looking to make a new recipe to have all of the items in a grocery list so that while you're shopping, you'll know exactly what you need to pick up from the store. So that is another way to prevent having so many cookbooks in your kitchen and you'll be able to have a multitude of recipes on your phone.

Another thing is when you have a physical cookbook, if you're away from home, then you don't really have access to that cookbook. So that is why it's another good idea to have a digital app where you can get download recipes. You can even go to places like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube and you can find recipes there as well. So there's so many ways to get recipes other than a traditional cookbook.

8. FOOD STORAGE CONTAINERS

Number eight, food storage containers. There's so many types of food and storage containers, whether it's glass, plastic, Tupperware, they're everywhere. And especially if you commute somewhere, whether you're commuting to work or if you have a long day and you want to bring food with you, like lunch, or if you want to bring snacks, you're going to have food storage containers.

And if you're a big meal prepper, then you're going to have a lot of probably going to have different size meal prep containers and also food storage containers for storing things that you want to put in your freezer to hold on to longer. You may also have them for taking your lunch to go to work or out for the picnic.

So the thing with food storage containers is they take up a lot of space. They really do take up a lot of space because they're kind of awkward to store. Some organizers like to store the food containers with the lids on. Some like to store them without so that they claim that it takes up less space. I have found that both ways, they still take up a lot of space. And the key is to only keep what you use regularly.

WHAT TO CHECK FOR

So here's what you want to do when you are ready to declutter your food storage containers. Put everything in one area, like on the countertop, or if you have a kitchen island, even better. And put all the types of the same type of food storage containers together and group them by sizes. If you're missing lids, those most likely you want to get rid of. And if they're not something that you can still use, like in the oven, uncovered, I would say to declutter that.

The next thing you want to look for is, is it damaged? And I mean, for example, if you have a plastic container and you use it often for spaghetti, it's going to be stained over time. So that's something that you want to get rid of. I actually had a client that had a container that they use specifically for when they made spaghetti or pasta because they knew it was going to be stained. And they literally have kept this container for years. And that is something that I don't recommend. I recommend to just toss it and get a glass container, for example. Because when you get a glass container, the pasta and the spaghetti will most likely not

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stain the container versus keeping a plastic container. So you have to use your best judgment here.

But those are the main things you want to look for when you're decluttering your food storage containers. Another thing you want to look for when it comes to food storage containers is excess. Do you have a lot of the same container? And if you do have a lot of it and you don't necessarily use it, let's say you no longer go in the office five days a week. You only go two days a week. You don't really need that many meal prep containers to take your lunch to work. You may want to considering, consider to declutter and keep only what you need to prepare your meals for lunch.

9. BAKEWARE

Number nine is bakeware. Now, bakeware is another big category that causes a lot of clutter in our kitchen. Bakeware that consists of cookie sheets, muffins. We might have special bakeware for making our turkeys during the holidays. There's so many. Just bakeware is like everywhere.

We all have at least a couple of our basic bakeware that we use to bake regularly. So the key with bakeware is that you really only need a few of each item. So if you are someone who likes to bake cookies often, or if you like to bake muffins, then you may have a couple of these.

But the key with bakeware is just like with any other category, you only need but so much. Now, bakeware can take up a lot of space because for obvious reasons, they come in different sizes. Like baking sheets come in various sizes. If you have like glass baking dishes, those also come in different sizes. So oftentimes they do clutter a space very easily.

ASK YOURSELF

So the key with bakeware is you want to really decide when you have all your items in one area. Decide, okay, what items do I use the most? Do I use these regularly to bake? Are they damaged? Is it something that it's pretty much ready, if you've overused it, like it's really gathering a lot of rust, for example, if it's like a baking sheet or if it's really burned.

Those are the types of things you want to think about when you're decluttering your bakeware. And if they fall into any of those categories, I would suggest if it's not in good condition, you're just tossing it. But you may find some bakeware that you just don't use often. Those are the types of things that you can also consider donating to a local charity that they will actually put good use and it helps to keep your space clear of clutter of bakeware.

10. UTENSILS

Lastly, wooden spoons and cooking utensils. Now, we all have these spatulas spoons. You get the picture. Sometimes we have too much of it. We have like a big jar of these sitting on our countertops. Now with these, the rule of thumb is that you really only need to have a couple of each of these items.

Now, the things to look for, just like you would look for anything else that you're decluttering, is, is this in good condition? Is this a utensil that I use often? And if it doesn't, if it's not something that you use often, it may be something that you're just holding on to because you think, oh, I need to have this particular cooking utensil because it was recommended or I only used it to cook a specific meal.

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Now, those are the types of things that you look for when you're thinking about decluttering your cooking utensils. Here is my cooking utensils and pretty much I have a lot, as you can see, but I use these regularly. There is one in here that I don't really use that often and I usually keep it only because it was a gift to me. But it might be something that I want to consider decluttering because I don't really need to hold on to cooking utensils that I don't use. But these are literally all of the cooking utensils that I have. I don't have any more in drawers and I don't have them in my pantry or anything. These are ones that I really do use on a daily, if not weekly, basis.

BONUS: MAGAZINES

So this is another item that can cause clutter in your kitchen: magazines. So I recently picked this up at a festival.

It was a free guide, and it actually has some pretty cool if you look inside, it has some really cool recipes inside that I definitely want to try. It also has coupons as well. So I do want to use this. But can you think if you go to a lot of summer festivals or if you like reading magazines, they can easily cause a lot of clutter in the kitchen.

So what I found is that I can actually download this digitally. So I did a Google search and look, I have it right here. Found it on my iPad. So all I have to do now is I can actually decide to declutter that paper version. And whenever I need to try one of the recipes for the summer, I literally could just go here and click on it.

DON'T GET OVERWHELMED

In conclusion, I hope that you found these tips helpful when it comes to decluttering your kitchen. Now, I know a lot of people come to me and they are overwhelmed by the decluttering process. And really, decluttering is not something that happens overnight. It's a process.

Decluttering your kitchen, it takes time. So I hope that these resources and this guide of these ten things that you can declutter from your kitchen right now is a good basis for you to start decluttering your kitchen.

Now, you may decide that you want to do it all at one time. You might have the energy one day, and you decide to go through each of these categories and follow my recommended tips. But I actually recommend don't try to do it all at one time. You may just want to take one or two of these categories and go through them. You may only have like ten minutes one day or 30 minutes another day. That's great.

Doing decluttering versus not doing it, it prevents from the clutter from building and a little goes a long way. When it comes to decluttering, you'd be surprised how just taking one drawer at a time in your kitchen and just deciding to take ten minutes, and I recommend setting a timer so that you don't go over that ten minutes. And you'll be so proud of yourself that at the end of that ten minutes how much you were able to declutter in your kitchen.

A SEASONAL BASIS

And that's the key. Taking your time, putting out the time, whether it's weekly or whether you do a large decluttering session in your kitchen, that's something you may want to consider doing on a seasonal basis.

So I always like to recommend doing a seasonal declutter at the beginning of the season, so when the season just start. So, like, in the beginning of the fall, spring,

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summer, and wintertime, those are some of the great times to kind of get a refresh.

So, yeah, I hope these tips were helpful and they help you along your journey to declutter your kitchen. Bye.

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How To Assess Your Routine To Avoid Overhauling Your Entire Life

ASHLEY BROWN • TRANSCRIPT

Hi. Welcome. Welcome. My name is Ashley Brown. I am the founder and owner of Routine and Things, which is all about helping you get organized one routine at a time so that you stress less and enjoy the heck out of your life, because that is just so important, right?

ASSESSING YOUR ROUTINES

So what I'm going to be talking to you about today, and we're going to be having this discussion of how to assess your routines to avoid overhauling your entire life. So let's go ahead and get into it.

All right, so why I thought this would be really important to speak on is because what I have found by working with plenty of women is that when women come to me, they're like, my life is chaotic. I'm super stressed. I know things could be smoother. I know I could have more structure, and I feel like that would help.

And what tends to happen is they come with me, or come to me, with a checklist of things that they want to fix. And I will ask them, well, how do you know these areas need improvement? Have you assessed your routines, the current routines that you have in your life? And they're always like, no.

DO YOU NEED A COMPLETE OVERHAUL?

And so one thing that I feel like we can tend to do is try to overhaul everything in our life, which is not necessary. And many times it's just we need to make certain tweaks, really slight tweaks, or it's a specific area in our life that needs to be given much attention in order for things to feel better and for us to have less stress. And so I thought this would be really great to share with you so that you're not making the mistake of trying to correct and overhaul your life before assessing what's actually going on.

So today's intention is to teach you how to assess your current routines, to best identify which routines would be most supportive for you, the routines that are going to be most supportive for you. And specifically today, I want you to focus on trying to identify one routine that will be most important for you to focus on.

Because I know that, through experience as well as through teaching other women, that when we focus on one routine at a time, we have better results. We make more progress in that area of our life.

ASHLEY'S STORY

Before I move on, let me just share my story really briefly with you, because you could be totally new to who I am. Like I said, my name is Ashley Brown. I am a mom of two. I am a nurse educator. I am also the founder of Routine and Things. But Routine and Things didn't always exist in my life. And although I do believe that I am naturally routine oriented, there was a certain point in my life where my routines got flipped upside down, and I didn't know how to get

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back on track. And I had a hard time.

So what you're going to see here is the picture to the left. You'll see me. I'm pregnant with my second daughter. I'm holding my youngest, I mean, my oldest daughter's hand. And we're walking back from a coffee shop. And this was during a time where I had just recently come home to be a stay at home mom. I was so excited about the opportunity to have the privilege to even do this. Because I was raised in a single parent household, I never thought in my life I would even have an opportunity to be a stay at home mom. And so I jumped on the opportunity and was so happy.

THINGS FALL APART

However, after coming home for some time, it was like really quick, I started to feel like, why are things falling apart? Life felt very chaotic. I wasn't keeping up with cleaning. My daughter was always in her PJs watching TV. I was just super frazzled and I didn't know what was going on at the time.

And I'm a huge God girl. And so I prayed about it and I was like, God, please help. And one thing that really popped into my head is, okay, maybe you just need better routines. The routines that were working for you when you were a working mom are not working now. So we need to switch things up. So that's what I did.

SWITCHING IT UP

I started switching things up. I focused on one routine at a time. I started to build those routines and incorporate them into my life. And over time, you will see the picture at the top, I started to feel really great in my role of being a stay at home mom. I could manage things around my home. I felt good.

Me and my partner were doing well, and I just felt like my life had like a huge rainbow in it and just sunshine. Because I really felt and credit routines to being that factor that really helped me from going from feeling as if I wasn't doing well in my life to feeling as if, okay, I got this and I can handle this.

ROUTINE AND THINGS

And so that's when I started the business Routine and Things, and I started helping other women because I saw the power that routines had. And so the picture off to the right is of me and my daughters at an actual market where I was selling products that I used to sell. And I have helped so many women through this business and continue to and hopefully will do the same for you.

And it's just such a privilege and honor that I'm able to do this type of work. The ease and enjoyment that I feel in life right now comes directly from the routines I've put in place, like legit. If I did not have ways to function efficiently, effectively, I don't know what I would be doing. I'm a full time mom. I have a full time job as a nurse educator. I run Routine and Things. And so if I didn't have structure and predictability in my life, I don't know what would be going on right now. I don't know how I would be surviving. And my life started to improve once I learned to solve consistent problems using a consistent solution, which were routines. I am huge on that.

CONSISTENT ROUTINES CAN HELP

If you're having a consistent problem in your life that keeps showing up over and over and over, that is a pattern that is showing. And sometimes we can have patterns in our life that are not healthy, that are not serving us. And so what can help with this

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are routines.

Routine is really helpful in adding a different pattern to your life that is healthier, so that your life can feel better, so that you can be less stressed, so that you can have more predictability and stability in your life. And my routines are the most life giving assets in my life, after God and my kids, of course, and my family. So that is what I wanted to share with you just throughout my journey, the things that I've learned.

And just to share that routines don't have to feel very daunting. They can very much show up in your life with ease, and you can work to progress towards incorporating this routine in a needed routine into your life.

DEFINING ROUTINE

So let's start here, right? We're talking about how to assess your routines to avoid overhauling your entire life. So let's start with the definition of what a routine is. And I pulled this from Google definition, and it says a sequence of actions regularly followed. A sequence of actions regularly followed, right? A consistent set of steps that you do regularly.

That is what this is, a consistent flow of actions that you do regularly, right? There's many ways that you can phrase this, but that is what a routine is, a sequence of actions, a sequence of steps that are regularly followed, right? Because if you want to feel the effects of your routine, you have to be doing that routine often. You need to be doing it as much as you would need in order for you to feel good in your life and feel like you can manage things with ease and with less stress. And so that is what the definition of a routine is.

And so I really want for you to focus on regularly followed, that those actions that are done regularly, because that's how you're going to make the most impact in your life if it's consistently done.

MYTHBUSTING

One myth I feel like I have to debunk here and talk about is the fact that some of us do not believe that we are routine people. You may be watching this right now and you're like, Ashley, this sounds great, I'm here watching this, but I've never felt like I was a routine person. I don't feel as if routines really hold up for me. It's just not my vibe. It's just not my personality. I'm more free flow.

What I want for you to understand today is that everyone has routines, including you. No matter if you are type A, type B, no matter if you are an introvert extrovert, no matter if you are a go getter and high achiever or you're one to be like, you know what, I'm going to do the best that I can, and you going to get what I have right?

It doesn't matter who you are and how you show up in your life. Every one of us have routines. You may not recognize the routines that you have, but if you pay attention to your life, like when you're getting ready in the morning, when you are cleaning your home, when you are tucking your children into bed, if you have kids or even you're going to bed yourself. If you think about those areas of your life, you're going to start to notice, oh, I do have routines.

A MENTAL ROADBLOCK

Now, let me say this. Maybe the routine is not healthy. Maybe it's not a routine that is really beneficial to your life. Maybe it does need to be tweaked. But you do have

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routines that you follow in your life, and I want for you to start to identify that.

Because one thing that can hold you up when it comes to creating routines in your life and also incorporating them in your life is if you believe that you are not a routine person, that is a mental roadblock that is going to hinder you from being successful with routines.

So knowing that all of us have routines, including yourself, is really helpful in undoing that mental roadblock so that you can be successful with the routine and routines that you start.

ASSESSING FIVE AREAS OF ROUTINES

So here's the process for assessing your routines. Let's talk about it. You're going to be assessing these five areas of your life. So this is my method of assessing routines. These are five areas in your life that you will assess: cooking, cleaning, children, self-care, and planning. You are assessing these five areas.

Why? Because these five areas of your life are typically staples in your life if they are applicable to you. Because maybe you don't have children, but maybe you can insert pets. Because maybe your pets are like your kids. Maybe you don't have pets or kids. You can just eliminate this area or this category. But many times these are the areas of our life and the things that we're doing repeatedly in our life that are going to keep showing up or we need to tend to in order for us to feel like we are managing life as best as possible.

METHODS OF ASSESSMENT

There are two methods that you can use to assess your routines, okay? So you can think about using feelings, right? You can really tap into your emotions to how you feel to decide which routine or which area of your life would be best to have a routine to support you. Or you can use fact, which is information data, to help you to conclude which area of your life will be most supportive by using routine.

HOW DO YOU FEEL?

Okay, so these are two methods and I'm going to talk through each of these. So when it comes to using feelings, which is aka how you feel, right, it's best to use this method when you're not overwhelmed or not in a rush to start your routine, okay? Because if you were to use the feeling method to assess your current routines, to assess the areas of your life when you are overwhelmed or in a rush, you're going to not make the best decision.

Your decision making is going to be led by how you feel. And sometimes if we are in high stress seasons, if we are in a rush and trying to move as quickly as possible, we are going to probably make a decision that isn't the most thoughtful decision, isn't the most thought out decision. And so this is a great method to use, is to tune into how you feel, right, and to ask yourself some questions based upon how you feel, but only if you're not overwhelmed or in a rush.

BEWARE TOO MUCH STRESS

Okay, maybe you can be, maybe you're like, oh, I'm just a little stressed. Okay, well, if you're a little stressed, you can use this. However, if you're super stressed, you know you've been overwhelmed, you're burned out, you're like, I need this now, and I don't have time to really think too much about this, don't use the feeling method.

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The fact method would be best used when you are overwhelmed in a rush to start your routine. So this is, like I said, using information to guide you, asking yourself some questions. This is a really great method to use if you are super stressed, like in a high stress season, if you are overwhelmed, if you know you need a routine like tomorrow. This is a really great method to use because the information and the questioning is going to guide you versus just solely thinking about like, oh, how do I feel right now? It's like, I feel stressed, I feel overwhelmed.

But this method is really great when you are overwhelmed because the questions help to bring about information for you that's going to be helpful for you when you're making your decision about which routine you need or which area you need to strengthen your life by using routine.

FEELING QUESTIONS TO ASK

So some questions that you can use to guide you when it comes to assessing your routines is does this area of my life feel chaotic or out of control? Okay, so these are three questions that you can ask does this area of my life feel chaotic or out of control? And you'll go through each of the five areas and ask yourself these questions. You can also ask how or have I been struggling to manage this area of my life? Yes, or no. And then you can also ask yourself, does thinking about this area of my life cause me to feel anxious or stressed? Right?

If you're answering yes to these three questions for any specific category, that is a huge flag that this category, this area of your life, may really be useful to have a routine to support you, right? And maybe you are like Ash, all of the areas of my life feel like this. They feel chaotic, I'm struggling, I feel anxious or stressed when I think about this area of my life.

WHICH AREA TO START WITH?

And if that's the case, then my piece of advice is always start with the routine or the area and category that is going to be the easiest for you to get up and going. If you find that there are multiple categories or multiple routines that you need, you want to think about starting with the one that is the easiest to get up and going because you build that momentum and you can start to make progress with that and then you can move on to the next.

Like I said, these five areas of your life, I like to call them routine categories cooking, cleaning, children, self-care and planning. You will be assessing these if you are right now feeling overwhelmed, super stressed, in a rush to start a routine because you know you need one, you know it would be helpful for you.

CHECKING WITH FACTS

Use the fact method, ask yourself those questions and go through each of these categories if each category is applicable to you. So what you'll see right now is that I have the categories up top, but then underneath these are specific routines in each category.

Because here's the key. Once you identify which routine category needs improvement, needs support, you need to get more specific about which routine you're going to start. You can't just say, oh, I need a cleaning routine. That is not specific enough because there's so many things you could be cleaning. You don't want to overwhelm yourself in that way.

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GET SPECIFIC

So what about cleaning? What do you need a routine in? Like, do you need a laundry routine? Do you need a declutter routine? Do you need a tidy routine that you do before you go to bed each night? What could that look like for you?

Do you need a Sunday cleaning routine to kind of refresh your home and clean bathrooms? I know I have a routine that I do. It's a Sunday reset routine and that really helps me to get bathrooms clean and floors vacuumed and swept before the week starts. And so maybe you want something like that, but you do want to get more specific within the category and decide what specific routine you need within that category and then that's when you can start the routine. So I just wanted to put that out there. But these are some examples for you. This is not an exhaustive list whatsoever, but this is a starting place.

LEAD WITH CURIOSITY

Before I go, I want for you to know that it is so important, as you're going through assessing your routines, that you lead with curiosity. That when you're assessing your routines, that you're not beating up on yourself because you find that each category needs improvement. That you understand that this is about identifying what you need, getting curious about your days and how things feel for you that is so important.

Start to pay attention to how you move within your days. Start to pay attention to how things feel like in the morning. How do things feel when you go to work, or once you get back from work, maybe with your family. How your routines feel when you are about to go to bed? How does it feel when you're cleaning? Right? To keep up with cleaning throughout the week, how are you feeling?

This is really important for you to do, to lead with curiosity. This is not about you being judgmental or placing judgment on yourself or fault on yourself. I do not need you doing that. I really want for you to come into assessing your routines with being curious about what's going on. Where are you having a lot of stress? Where do you need improvement that is going to be really beneficial for you?

FREE ASSESSMENT

And to wrap this up, you can grab this free routine assessment. It is available below. You can grab this from my website, routineandthings.com/assessment. Or like I said, it should be linked below. And this is a free routine assessment that takes you through the five routine categories.

And I ask you a series of questions. You're going to answer them and at the end you're going to know which routines are in green, yellow or red. And that is going to give you what you need to conclude and identify which area of your life needs a routine.

And like I said, if you are getting hung up because you see multiple routines in red, start with the routine that is the easiest to get up and going, so that you get that momentum, motivation going and you start to make progress in your life.

So I hope that this was really helpful for you. Thank you for joining me and I hope that you will follow along with me on Instagram at routineandthings. It's a lot of good things. And also check out the website routineandthings.com, but continue to enjoy the summit. Bye.

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3 Simple Steps to a Sparkling Home (even if you haven't cleaned all week!)

BECKY RAPINCHUK • TRANSCRIPT

Hello, my name is Becky and I am thrilled to be with you here today. We are going to be talking about three simple steps that you can implement today for a sparkling clean home, even if you haven't cleaned all week.

So you can find me at Clean Mama or cleanmama.com, cleanmama on social. But anywhere you see me online, you will know that I love a cleaning routine. I love having specific things each day that we do, but I also love a lot of flexibility.

DO SOMETHING

And when I tell people about the routine and invite others to try it, a lot of times it can be a little bit overwhelming. Or my house is a mess. I haven't cleaned in a week or two weeks or a month. I'm not sure where to start. And that overwhelm leads us to a place where we aren't even ready to do anything. So today my encouragement to you is to just start, do something.

THREE SIMPLE STEPS

I have three simple steps that I want to share with you. And the reason I want to share these simple steps with you is because I know that they will take you from that overwhelmed feeling and you don't know what to do or when to do it to, oh, I can do this. This isn't that hard. This might be something I could even continue doing.

So it's just three things. You can start while I'm talking if you would like to. As soon as we're done talking, you can go and implement them. Literally, you can start this today. It's not going to take you long. It's going to be simple and easy. I promise you'll feel better and your house will have that sparkling clean feeling that you probably are looking for or hoping for.

So let me tell you those three things. Quick declutter, you're going to clean the kitchen sink and you're going to do a laundry catch up. Those three things tend to be the areas in everyone's home that show signs of I've kind of let those things slide or I've gotten behind on something. So let's take care of those right away so we can move into feeling like we could actually clean a little bit every day.

QUICK DECLUTTER

So first of all, when you are thinking about a quick declutter, this is not intended to be like the decluttering of your whole house. So you can stop right there and realize that it's not going to be, that you are just going to do something quick.

INSTANT GRATIFICATION

This is something you will get like that instant gratification for, because you will realize that you've done something and you've moved into a direction where you know that you can do this. So grab three garbage bags, set a timer for ten to 15 minutes, and then I want you to walk quickly through your home and collect anything

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that can be tossed or donated.

THREE BAGS FULL

You could have these bags be three different things. Like one bag could be for garbage. One bag could be for donations, and one bag could be to relocate them. You can use paper grocery bags. You can use the big white garbage bags, big black garbage bags. But whatever you do, you're going to do three of them so that you can quickly move through your house. And you're taking a lot of stuff and getting rid of it.

HOW IT HELPS

This is going to help you because you're going to be saving time, because you won't have to be moving through that clutter. You're going to save money. Because if you're on a journey to declutter your house, you are not going to be spending money on things that you already have. And you're going to gain space. So by getting rid of some of that excess things we don't need, you will have a little bit of extra space in your home.

And to me, the most important is less stress. It's proven that clutter equals stress. And if you have less stress in your home or less clutter in your home, you will also have less stress. You're going to feel more organized, and you're also going to want to welcome people into your home.

IT'S A START

So just because you've gone through your home and gotten rid of three bags of stuff, you're not going to be all the way down that line. But remembering that those are the things that really help us with our homes and getting rid of the clutter, this is going to help you get started.

So that's it. Three bags. Fill them up, get them out of your home. And that's your first step to feeling like you have a sparkling clean home.

CLEAN THE KITCHEN SINK

The second step is to clean your kitchen sink. Now you could just clean that sink and that would be it. But in order to clean the sink well, you definitely need to remove any dishes. If you have to wash dishes or put them in the dishwasher, you're going to do that.

If you have a counter next to your sink, which you probably do when it's piled with dishes, you want to take care of those so that you have that clean counter area, nothing's in your sink, and then you're going to scrub that sink.

SCRUBBY SCRUBBY

I have a little ritual that I've been doing well over 20 years, and it's super simple. You can do this today. You're just going to sprinkle a little bit of baking soda in your sink, add a little dish soap into your sink, scrub with a scrub brush or a sponge, and you're going to scrub that sink clean. Then you are going to rinse it, wipe it dry, and you can stand back and admire that clean sink.

KITCHEN CALM

So you've cleaned the counter area, you've cleaned the sink, and hopefully just that little spot of your kitchen feels calm, relaxed, you're ready to do something else. So it's super simple. You can do that every night. That's usually what I tend to do when we've cleaned up the kitchen and put things away.

We scrub the sink and kind of like close the

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kitchen for the night and that feels really good. But that is your second tip for that sparkly clean home.

LAUNDRY CATCH UP

And then the third one is to do a laundry catch up. So laundry is for me personally, it's my nemesis, it's why I do laundry, at least one load of laundry every single day, because if I don't, it piles up. And that's overwhelming to me. It might not be overwhelming to you. You might be the kind of person that wants to do all your laundry on laundry day. And if that's your personality and that works well for you, that's great.

I'm not telling you to change that, but I think that by catching up on all the laundry and then moving forward, doing a load a day, that to me is the path forward for a clean and organized home.

PILES AND PILES

Because you're not going to end up with those laundry piles. You know where that laundry is, you know what's clean, what's dirty. Someone's not coming to you needing something washed at the last minute, like a uniform or sports clothing, whatever it might be. You have things washed, folded, put away, but it's really hard to get to that point.

So let's talk about how to actually do a laundry catch up. You want to plan on a day that you're home because it's going to be a lot of laundry. And if you can enlist any help, I would suggest doing that. If you're someone that does laundry frequently and doesn't get behind on it, this is not going to take you long.

LINE UP THE BASKETS

But what I do is we gather all the laundry in the house and I put them in baskets outside our laundry room. So I have three kids. Each kid has their own laundry basket that they keep in their closet in their room. So I will say bring your laundry basket out to the laundry room and we will line them up and then we put one load in.

ASSEMBLY LINE

I'll always do a quick wash on that first load just to get it started, put it in the dryer, and then put the second load in. Once the first load is dry, you're adding the second load to your dryer and starting with your third load. So you're just doing an assembly line and trying to move through that laundry as quickly as possible. If you have anyone in your house that can help, and let's help so that you are doing this together and it does not all fall on you because that's even more overwhelming.

Once you've gone through your laundry, you've done your laundry, your kids' laundry, your spouse's laundry, whoever is in your home and you've caught up on that laundry, then you're going to be putting that laundry away. But you can also do towels and sheets. So you'll get those washed, put back on the beds, or the towels folded and put away.

SPLIT IT UP

This can be a little bit of a lot. So you could split this into like two days where you're doing the kids on one day and then adults on another day, sheets and towels on another day. You could switch that or you can combine it into two days. But if you have a lot to catch up on, there might just not be time to do all of it in one day.

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Because washers and dryers do take time to actually complete that. And then finally I will do like cleaning cloths or kitchen towels. I'll wash those and then dry them, put them away.

And then I will do the clean cycle on my washing machine after the cleaning cloths have gone through. And then the washer is sanitized and clean and ready for the next day.

KEEP UP WITH IT

Moving forward, instead of letting it pile up, then I'm going to try to do a load a day from start to finish. This is such a helpful tip, especially if you have more than one person in your household. If you are thinking to yourself, there's no way I would ever have a load of laundry a day, then check your laundry every day and just check is there a load to be done?

You could go three days and then you have a load. Or you might be like me and you could probably do two loads of laundry a day just by sheer quantity of clothing and uniforms and everything else that we have. Gauge that on your personal needs and what makes sense for your household.

Those are the three things that I recommend doing so that you are feeling like you have a sparkling clean home. It is ready for your next step, even if you haven't cleaned all week.

WHAT NEXT?

So you've gone through and you've tackled those three trouble spots. You've tackled clutter, you've tackled the kitchen sink, kitchen counters, and then you've caught up on your laundry. Once you have those three things done, I think you're ready to move on to more of a cleaning routine.

THE CLEAN MAMA ROUTINE

And that is where the Clean Mama routine comes in. That's something that I talk about all the time and I talk about it a lot because I know how impactful it is and how it can change a household and really make a difference in your home.

It's just a couple of minutes a day. It is not cleaning your home for hours or anything like that. This is like quick, easy, and something that's going to be easy for you to follow. And it's also flexible. So if you are thinking, well, I work twelve hour shifts three days a week and I'm not home to clean on Mondays when you're telling me to clean my bathrooms, or Tuesdays to dust, whatever it might be, you can be flexible with it and you can move things around. You can double up on days. There are all sorts of ways that you can make it work for you.

But once you have just that little glimmer of that sparkle in your home, you're going to want to keep up with that. And a routine is what's going to help you with that. It's consistency. You're doing the same thing every day and you are just building on those little habits. And once you have those habits and you're building on them and making them part of your day, it's so much easier moving forward.

A GAME CHANGER

So let me just tell you really quickly about the Clean Mama routine because I know that it's a game changer for so many people, and I know that it could be life changing for you, too. So you can also go to my blog, it's cleanmama.com, subscribe, and you can get a free 19 page PDF that has everything you'd ever want to know about

the Clean Mama routine, all the ways that you can make it work for you. All my favorite products, lots of goodies on there. It's free.

FIVE DAILY TASKS

Just go to that cleanmama.com. Subscribe. You'll find all this information there too. But I do five daily tasks. Now, you're going to notice that I've already talked about three of those, because three of those daily tasks were part of our three things that you can do for that sparkling home.

MAKE YOUR BED

The first one is to make beds. If you have children, do not make their beds for them. Teach them how to make their beds and don't go back and fix it for them. Just let them make their beds. You can help them, you can show them tips for it. But that's simple, that's easy. It makes your bedroom look tidy and inviting when you do get back into it.

CHECK FLOORS

At the end of the day, check floors is the second one. That just means if there's any crumbs under the kitchen table, cobwebs in a corner, like anything that you see during the day, do a quick sweep or quick vacuum. That's what check floors is.

WIPE COUNTERS

The third one is to wipe counters that falls under our cleaning the kitchen sink. Because in order to clean the sink, you've got to have those counters clean. Doing a quick spray and wipe of your kitchen counters is great, at least after dinner, so that you've reset that kitchen for the next morning. Coming into a clean kitchen in the morning is so much better than walking into the kitchen with a sink full of dishes. And I know that you know that too, I'm sure. It's definitely one of those things that makes that day start a little bit better.

TACKLE CLUTTER

And then the fourth one is to tackle clutter. So you are putting things away if you've taken them out, you are helping other family members do the same. I will usually tackle like a little clutter spot or take care of mail, those sorts of things just as like a little habit.

DO A LOAD OF LAUNDRY

And then doing a load of laundry. So those are the five daily tasks that I recommend. Start with those. You don't have to move on to anything else. Those things will help you get that sparkling clean home that you are looking for.

Once you start with them, it makes it just so much easier. And you'll definitely find you might be already completing those in some way. But once you decide that those are the habits that I'm going to start to instill into our home, it makes it that much easier.

ADD WEEKLY TASKS

So once you've got a handle on those daily tasks, then I recommend adding the weekly tasks. Simple. Every day of the week is assigned a task. So Monday is bathrooms. Tuesday is dusting. Wednesday is vacuuming. Thursday is washing floors. Friday is a catch all day. That's a day to catch up. Saturday is sheets and towels. The reason that I implemented that was years ago, I was thinking about my kids and teaching them how to change sheets, put sheets on their bed. And Saturday is a great

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day to do that because they're home from school and we can do that together or they can do that themselves. And then Sunday we relax, we get ready for the week and we just worry about those five daily tasks.

So those are the two things I would recommend starting with. You start with the five daily tasks and then you go to the weekly tasks. Those can take ten to 30 minutes. It really depends. Vacuuming is going to take you a little bit longer. Washing floors takes longer. But that's why I split those up into two days so that you are not having to do them all in the same day. In the PDF that I talked to you about, I share my 15 Minutes Quick Clean Bathroom method, which will change your life for how to clean bathrooms. It takes 15 minutes to clean your bathrooms, but we're not doing the floors because we save those for Wednesday and Thursday. So there's all sorts of little tweaks that I've already made in the routine to help you keep your home sparkling clean all week long and also to help you feel like you want to come home and you want to invite people into your home.

These are things that can make you feel accomplished and they can also be implemented regardless of your schedule. Like if you are a stay at home mom, a work at home mom, a work outside the home mom, there are so many things that you can do to make the routine a part of your day in really simple, easy steps.

CONSISTENCY IS KEY

I always say the consistency is the key because with that consistency, everything gets easier. So if you start today and you start by cleaning your bathrooms this week, it's going to take you a while if you haven't cleaned your bathroom in three weeks. But then next week when you clean your bathroom, it's going to take you less time. So as you work the routine, you'll notice that everything takes less time, everything's easier. You're starting to declutter in your home and things are just so much different in how you handle these tasks and they're less overwhelming.

You have specific things that you can share with family members to do so that you are not like, it's not all falling on you. You can have other people help you as well. And I just think that it's really helpful just to think about that long term goal with the routine and how it's going to change your home in the long term. So sometimes I'll think about, well, okay, I don't want to clean the kitchen tonight, but if I do this tonight, how will I feel tomorrow morning? I'm going to do that for myself tomorrow morning because I know I'll feel better in the morning if I'm not walking into a kitchen full of dishes.

So even with someone like me that's been, that created the routine, has been doing this routine for 20 some years, I still have to tell myself to like, yeah, you probably should do that. I still have to motivate myself in ways, I guess is what I'm saying.

GET STARTED TODAY

So my encouragement to you is to try it, see what you think. Just start with those three simple things that quick declutter, the clean kitchen sink and then the laundry catch up. That's all you need to start with. See what you can do with those.

And then as you accomplish those three things, then start with the daily tasks. Add one every day for a week or add them all at once and watch your home start to sparkle. And cleaning will be easier and more

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enjoyable as you move through your days.

So thank you so much for letting me share this with you. I'm so thrilled to actually meet you and I would love for you to connect with me outside of here. You can find me at cleanmama.com, on social as @cleanmama. And also don't forget to download your free 19 page guide that's at cleanmama.com/subscribe.

So thanks so much and I hope to see you real soon.

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How to Use Airtable to Organize your Craft Supplies

BRANDI MAHON • TRANSCRIPT

Hi there and welcome to the Get Organized HQ summit. We are going to have so much fun today. I'm Brandi Mahon the creative owner of Stamp Me Some Love Blog Shop and Academy, and I love teaching crafters how to live their most creative life. I do this through free tutorials on my website, social media, and our semiannual Card Maker Success Summit and Cricut Card Summit. I'm also the course creator of Craft Business Box, where I teach you how to create a business you love with your craft hobby.

Today, I'm going to show you how to organize your craft supplies. Having a system that allows you to easily find what you're looking for saves you money in the long run, because you're not going to be purchasing items you already have in your stash, and you're not going to be wasting the supplies that you currently have. We're going to learn how to use a free digital database called AirTable to organize all of your craft supplies.

A SPECIAL INVITE

Before we get too far into the project, though, I do want to invite you to my Cricut Card Summit, which will take place December 5 through 7th. This is a free summit where you're going to learn from over 20 different card maker experts who use their Cricut machine to create beautiful handcrafted greeting cards.

We have fabulous giveaways, live stream content from our sponsors, and so much more. There is something for everyone.

Registration is not open just yet, but you can sign up for the VIP waitlist by going to cricutcardsummit.com. I cannot wait to see you there.

WHAT IS AIRTABLE?

All right, let's get back into today's project. Okay, let's take a look at what AirTable is and what it can do for you in terms of organizing your craft supplies or any other type of supply that you need to keep inventory of.

All right, so I am right here in AirTable, and you can sign up for a free account, and I'm just going to go ahead and sign into mine now. There are a paid version as well as a free version to AirTable. Everything that I'm going to be showing you today, you can do with a free version.

BRANDI'S AIRTABLE

And right away, we see our home screen, and this will show you all of the databases that I currently use, and it's a lot. You can also organize them by workspaces, which is where I typically work. I've got workspaces for all of the different types of events that I create, and then I've just got a general one, which is where we are going to be looking at today. Let's see here.

All right, so we are going to be looking at my craft supply database, and I'm going to show you what mine looks like first, and then we are going to go over and actually create one for yourself. So let's go in and

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click on our craft supply database here, and let's just change the view here so we make it a little bit easier for us to see.

MULTIPLE TABS

So I have my craft supplies kind of organized in these different tabs. And these tabs are what I would consider the major categories of different types of supplies. This first one is going to be the tab where I keep all of my stamps, stencils, dies, embossing folders. This is what I would consider as non-consumable type supplies, things that I can use over and over again.

And then these next couple of tabs here are more of your consumable type stuff. Primarily my inks. And I have different types of inks organized. The beauty about having a database like this is that you can organize it in any way you want. This is just a way that helped me.

LIKE A SPREADSHEET

So I've got my first tab here. This is essentially like a spreadsheet. And then I've got my Tim Holtz here, and I've got my pigment ink here, my alcohol ink, which clearly I cannot spell correctly. I've got dye ink and then embossing ink. And then we've got solvent ink. And then we've got our Copic colors.

These are my markers and I have them here because I have a bit of full color, full set syndrome where I have to have every color that anyone has ever brought out on a particular product that I love. And of course, Copic is one of them.

NON-CONSUMABLES

All right, so let's go back to the first tab where we've got the non-consumable type items. This is probably what most folks are going to be using this type of database for. And this is essentially all of my supplies listed in one place.

And for me, I like to be able to find my supplies easily. Now, as you can see, I have a ton of stamp supplies, tons of dies, tons of just all kinds of things. So, like, we've got 365 entries here. That means I have 365 different pieces of supply that I have at my fingertips to be able to use when I'm creating my cards.

Now, it can be a little bit overwhelming, I don't know if you can see, but behind me I have just a table full of bins where all of my stamp supplies, my embossing folders, all of those live. And when I want to go and make, let's say, a birthday card, it can be a little bit difficult trying to go through all of those and finding the correct one.

MANY WAYS TO ORGANIZE

One of the things that I like about AirTable is that you have so many different ways to organize, so many different ways to filter. And my favorite feature is to be able to search for a particular sentiment or a particular theme of card, I mean, theme of supply. And so that's why I have kind of developed this system so that when I get a new stamp set, we will take a picture of it, we will enter it into the database, and then we will categorize it.

Obviously, as you can see on the screen here, I have the name of the product. That's the name that the manufacturer has given to it. We have the brand, we've got the type of product, I have photographs of the product. Then we have listed out what type of theme is on the particular supply.

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WAYS TO CATEGORIZE

And then I've got something else here that I just started using is shaped descriptor. So sometimes when I create cards I like to have like a floral image or I like to have butterflies or something. So I have been meticulously every time I come across one of my stamp sets and I think, oh, we should really try to categorize that even further. So that when I go to create a card, if I've got a specific shape or theme or even the words, the sentiments, I can search by that.

And so we've got our shape descriptor here and then we've got the sentiments. And this is basically every sentiment or letter. Some of them are just letters that are in the stamp set itself and all of that is written out.

Now if it doesn't have any kind of sentiment on it's, probably because it's a die and so there's no words attached to it. But occasionally you'll see that I've got a word die here that has a specific sentiment. And then if we scroll down, we'll just continue to see embossing folders. Embossing folders typically don't have words on them, they're usually just some sort of shape. But sometimes we do have that.

SEARCHING FOR SOMETHING

So how exciting is this that I get everything in one place I can be able to search for it. So I'm just going to give you an example here. So here's a little search bar right here and I can type the word birthday and it's going to point out to me everywhere the word birthday is listed in that record.

So this line right here is a record in the database. So this pen sketch product here, it is considered a birthday theme because there must be some sort of birthday sentiment in it. And if we look over here and let me just close that right there, there should be a word that says birthday in there and sure enough it is there. So that'll just give me the quick ability to look to see, okay, which one of these has the word birthday? And then I don't have to hunt and peck for it. I can just easily bring it up like that.

VARIOUS VIEWS

The other thing that I like about Air Table is that I can create different types of views. This is considered the grid view, which is what our standard spreadsheet type view is. I can also have a gallery view. This is kind of nice so I can quickly scroll through and go, oh yeah, I remember that was a great stamp set. Or I remember using that image before so I can search it this way.

I can also filter by certain things. So, for example, I've got this filtered grid here. And right now I've got it filtered with just the sentiments that contain the word love. So all of these so that was 365 different entries. We had only 64 of them have the word love. So then I can just focus on this. I can just focus on these products to determine which one I'm going to use. Although, 64 different stamp sets that have the word love is a lot anyway.

BRAND NAME ITEMS

So this just kind of gives you an idea. The other thing that I personally like about it is that I do a lot of sponsored type product, sponsored type promotion and content creation. And so let's say I wanted to create something for Altenew or Catherine Pooler or whatever. I could go to my filtered grid here and I could change this to say the brand is and then I would say Altenew. And so this is going to show me all of Altenew

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products that I currently have. And so then I can go ahead and find it that way.

LOCATING YOUR SUPPLIES

Now, I also have plans to create certain bins. I haven't quite done this yet because I'm still working on reorganizing my craft room. But this is just giving you an idea of what could be done with this thing. With this table, you could also create an extra column, if you will, and indicate where the product is located. So right now I have them all in bins in the back of my craft studio here. And they're all alphabetized. Well, I should say they're organized by brands because that's the way I work, because I typically work with different brands. But you could organize it by theme, you could organize it by however you want.

What I have found, though, is that a lot of stamp sets cross over into different themes. So then it's difficult. Do I put this in birthday or do I put this in Christmas or what? So I have found for me it's easier just to organize it by brand and then inside that they are alphabetically organized by the name of the product.

But what my plans are, is to add another column and actually indicate which bin or which drawer or both that they are located in. So that when I get my new craft room with the new cabinets and stuff, I'm really excited about it, that I will be able to go straight to that particular bin where that product is located and be able to find it a lot quicker. A lot quicker.

Right now, what I currently do is find out which brand it is, I go to that bin and then I search for it anyway. That's just another idea of how you could actually further organize your craft supplies or whatever it is that you are organizing.

KEEPING TRACK OF PURCHASES

All right, so let's kind of just quickly look through the other tabs here. I've got a Tim Holtz folder or Tim Holtz tab here. This table here and what I've done with it is that I have organized it in the type of ink pad or reinker that Tim Holtz carries. So Tim Holtz has a line for distressed ink and distressed oxide ink. So within those two, then there is the full size pad, and then there's the mini cube. Then they also have sprays.

I think they have crayons and stuff. I don't get into all that. So I just basically focus on the full ink pad, the reinker, and the mini cube and the spray. And so that's what we're looking at here. And so I indicate to myself if I have the full ink pad, if I have the reinker, if I've got the spray, if it's in the mini cube that I have, and so forth and so on.

And what I'll do is I will use this when I go to purchase products. So if I'm looking for something that I need in reinkers, so let's say, for example, I've decided I'm going to invest in some reinkers, then I can go ahead and sort by which distressed inkers I don't have. And so I could go here and I could change the sort field where it is. Let's see, we want to look for the distressed ink reinker.

And then it tells me right off the bat, these are the ones that I don't have the reinker. So I could choose to go ahead and buy the reinker for this. And these, where it says yes, I don't need to buy because I already have it.

KEEPING TRACK OF REFILLS

Now, obviously, that's a consumable product. So once I empty out that bottle of reinker, I need to go in here and then change the yes to a no so that I go and purchase that in the future.

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Now, the rest of these tabs are not terribly exciting because there's not too much there. I do have a lot of alcohol ink, and so I do have it situated here. We've got some dye ink, and I've organized them as well in the full pad size, the mini cube size, and the reinker.

Now, the Copic colors, this is something here that I have. And all of these colors on the left hand side are colors that I currently have. What I need to go in and do is actually update it with the colors I don't have. And there are so many Copic colors. I haven't finished that. But here I've got it says status, and it actually should say type of marker.

And Copic colors come in Ciao or "cayo", I'm not sure how to say that, Sketch marker in the original. And then I indicate if I've got the refill. And I know I've got to go back and update this because I just bought a ton of refills for my Nashville craft retreat, which I went to a couple of weeks ago. And I actually went and purchased refills for a lot of these.

All right, you guys. So that, in a nutshell, is basically how I have organized my craft supplies.

CREATING YOUR OWN DATABASE

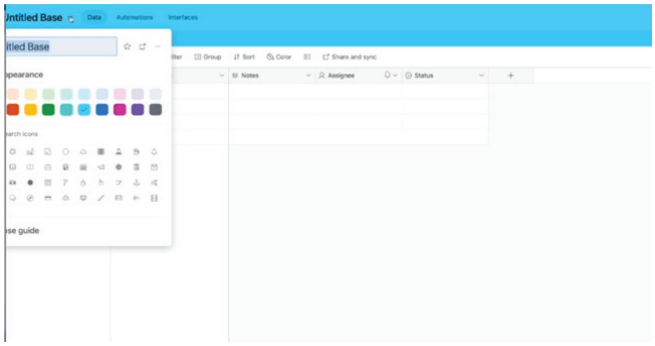
Now let's get into how we can create a database from scratch. And we are essentially going to use the table here that I've got for the stamp stencils embossing as our example.

All right, so let's go back and we're going to close that out. I am going to create a new base. That's what these guys are called. They're called bases. And let's see, I'm just going to choose let's choose this one. Oh, that's the pro plan. Let me use my generic one here. Let's see here. And you can see that my generic Stamp Me Some Love workspace is on the free plan, so everything that I'm going to show you will work on the free.

All right, so we're going to go ahead and create a base. All right. And we can just start working here. The first thing I want to do here is change the title of it. So I'm just going to say Demo Supply Database. You can call it whatever you want.

STARTING FRESH

Then we can go ahead and change the color of it. I want to change it to pink, and then there are some different icons. You can assign it. And I usually like to... I thought there was a scissors here somewhere. Let me just dig in a little bit closer. Oh, hello. You got to scroll, Brandi. All right, let's see here. You can actually search let's go ahead and search for scissors. Well, I guess there is not. All right, let's just look here. I'll just use pencil. How's that? Okay.

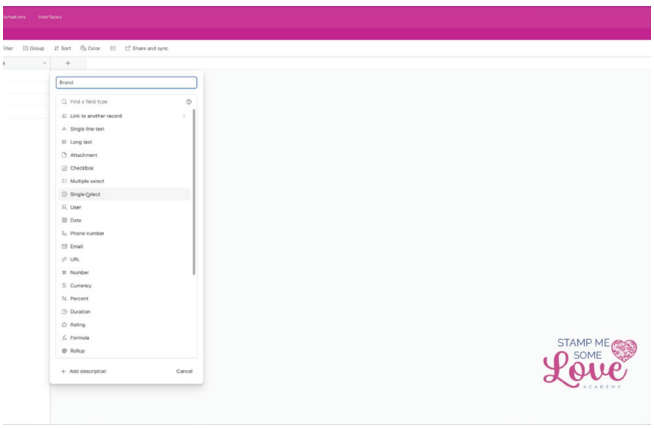


All right, so the database or the table inside the database will come with some predetermined columns here. You could consider it fields in database terms, but it's basically a spreadsheet. I'm going to go ahead and close this so this does not distract me. All right, so Name. I'm going to leave the word Name the same because this is what I'm going to have as the name of the

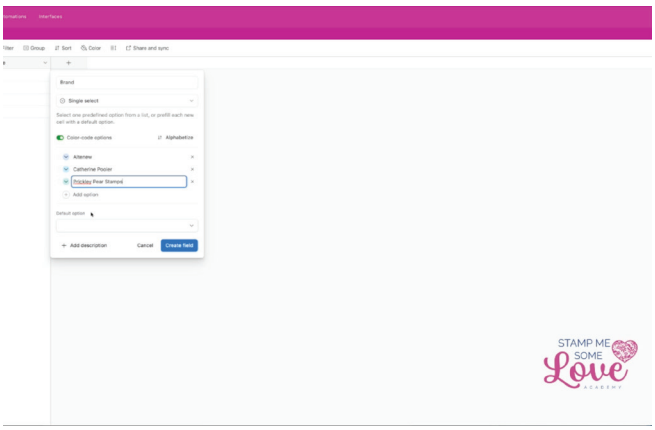
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product.

And let's go ahead and just delete these fields. We're going to start from scratch. All right, so the first field I want is going to be Brand. All right? And then I'm going to use it as Single Select. So Single Select is going to give me an option for me to put predetermined items or lists in here.



And then when I go to enter the information, then I only have one option that I can select from. So let's just go ahead and type a couple of items here. So Altenew. Catherine Pooler. Let's see what's another one? Prickly Pear. Let's just do that. These are stamps companies that I typically use.



And then we'll go Create Field. Before I Create Field, you can also rearrange in which these show up. You can choose to alphabetize them. You can also change the color that you want it to show up as. And if you have the paid version, I think there are more colors that are available. So we'll just leave it at that.

ADDING MORE FIELDS

And then we're going to Create Field. And so now when I click in here, I've got these choices that I can choose from. All right, now let's choose the Type of Product, Type of Product. And this time I'm going to do Multi Select because sometimes, at least for me, in the products that I use, I could have a stamp set, a stencil, a die all in one product. So I want to be able to create a field or I want to be able to choose multiple things for one product. So let's go ahead and do that. So I'm going to call this Stamp Set, Stencil, Die, Embossing Folder, et cetera.

All right, now let's choose a Theme. Now this is also going to be a Multi Select type field. So I'm going to say Theme. And then I'm going to choose multi select. And then this is where I'm going to say like Christmas, Birthday, Anniversary, what else? I have usually a generic field called Just A Note, Valentine's Day, et cetera, et cetera. And again, we can change the colors if we want to. We can just click Theme. All right.

And so let's see here. We are going to go and do a Sentiment. And then this one is going to actually be a long text field because we want to be able to create whatever we want there. So this just kind of gives you an idea. There's a lot more things that you could do here. Again, you could also do where it's going to be located.

So you could create a column that says Location. And in that you could do like a Multi Select. You could do one that has the drawer and one that has the bin that it's in.

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ADDING PHOTOS

Oh, photograph. We need to do a photograph. So we need to do Photo. And then for this one, we are going to use the let's see, where is it? Attachment. So that's where we're going to attach. All right, so let's go ahead and let's look at entering in some information. So I'm going to pull a stamp set for us to work with. All right, so I have just taken a picture of the file or taken a picture of the stamp set. And I'm going to go ahead and enter that in first so you guys can see. So I'm just going to select the file. It's not the best picture, but you'll kind of get the idea. All right, we can double click on that and take a closer look.

And so what I want to capture is the name here and then all of these sentiments. I'm also going to indicate that it's a Christmas and that sort of thing. So let's go ahead and do that. So I'm just going to go ahead and type here. So this one is called a Polar Bear Christmas and it's a Picket Fence brand. And I actually went ahead and added that in and the Type of Product. So this is going to be a Stamp Set only and this is primarily a Christmas.

And here are the Sentiments. Let's go ahead and type this out. So, have a merry season, comma, warm hugs and frosty kisses headed your way, comma, ho ho snow. We can't bear being so far apart during the holiday season. Happy holidays to all, to and from. And I've separated these so that when I go to search for these terms, I can quickly see that they are separate sentiments. All right, so I'm going to head and oops... Let's go ahead and click out.

And there you have it. It's as easy as that. Now, the only time consuming part after you have created the database is to go ahead and input all this stuff. But I will tell you that if you've got a kid around, this is a pretty easy task to do. And it's kind of fun, actually.

ALTERNATE VIEWS

And so we could also create another view. Let's go ahead and do a Gallery view. So remember in my example here, we had all of these different views on the side. It is so easy to create a different view by just clicking right here where it says Gallery.

And then I'll just keep it as Gallery. You can change the name if you want, click New View. And now it's going to give you that view with the image so you can quickly look at the different images. We could also do another Grid View if we wanted to. And I'm going to say I'm going to call this a filtered grid. And we can filter it by adding Conditions. So we could add a Conditions that say with a theme is exactly Christmas. So then it's only going to show me. Now we only have one field or one record in this database, so obviously it's going to show us just the one, but it's going to unfilter it by Christmas or filter it by any other way that we want.

So that is it. I hope that this has helped you get excited about how to organize your crafty supplies or any other type of supplies that you might need to organize. All right, take care. I hope you've enjoyed this tutorial using AirTable to digitally organize your craft supplies.

But let's not end it there, shall we? Be sure to follow me on all social medias at Stamp Me Some Love and don't forget to join the waitlist for the Cricut Card Summit. I'll put link down below.

Take care and enjoy the Get Organized HQ summit.

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Using Notion to Organize Your Life

BRI DOES THINGS • TRANSCRIPT

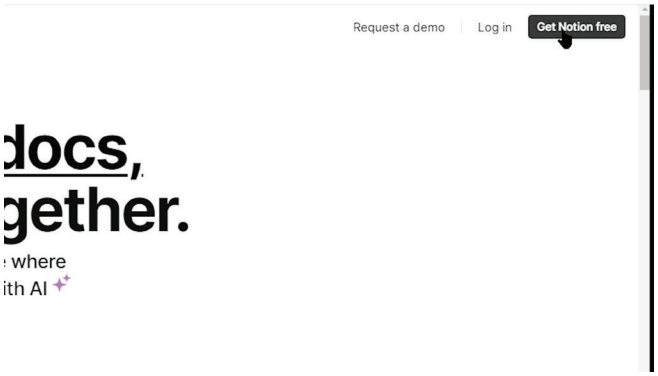
WHAT IS NOTION?

This is Notion, an incredibly powerful digital tool that, if used right, can completely transform the way you organize your entire life. From managing your household to creating meal plans, to tracking your goals and habits, Notion is capable of doing pretty much anything that you can think of. You can access Notion on your phone, your laptop, your computer, making using it wherever you go extremely accessible. And the best part is you don't even have to break out your wallet to get started using the app, since Notion offers a completely free plan with the next tier up only being $5 per month.

And it gets better. You can invite your entire family or anyone that you want into your workspace to do collaborative projects or just to manage tasks or activities together. For instance, if you want your family to stay in the loop as to who needs to be doing what chores and when, you can create a shared board where everyone can see and update their tasks and assign a time and date to it. And that's just one example of using Notion collaboratively.

GETTING STARTED

There are many, many ways to use this app, both individually and with other people. To get started using Notion, you can go to notion.so and click Get Notion for Free. All you need is an email address to get started using it.

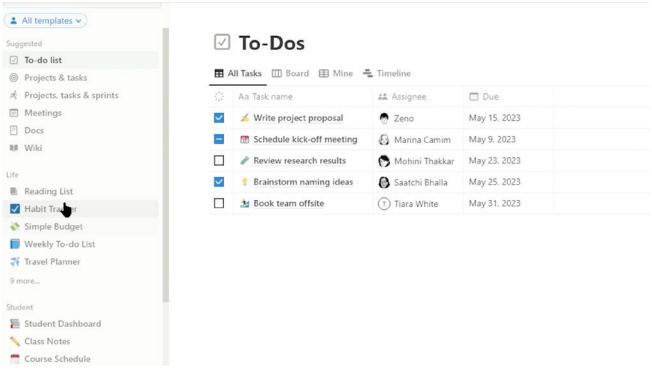


You can choose to either use Notion for teams, for personal use, or for school. Depending on the option you choose, you'll be brought to a Notion workspace that has prefilled templates to help you get started. You can either decide to keep these templates or you can clear them all and build up your own workspace.

TEMPLATE GALLERY

Either way, whenever you create a new page inside of Notion, you'll have the option to click on this template button here to be brought to Notion's Custom Template Gallery, where you can choose from a variety of templates that can help you out in life, like a reading list, habit tracker, simple budget. Or you can get templates for students, project management and so on.

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So, to give you a better idea of what Notion is and what it can do, I'm going to guide you through some of this app's various features and how it can help you manage your busy life, free up some of your brain space and save you loads of time.

LEARNING CURVE

The first thing you want to be prepared for when you start using Notion is the learning curve that you have to get over to start using the app and everything it has to offer. There are a lot of features Notion has to get familiar with, and it may seem pretty overwhelming at first, but dedicating time to learn the software is extremely worth it because of its many benefits in helping you organize your life.

Seriously, the first time I took a look at a Notion page, I felt like a little kid going to school for the first time. I was extremely scared and didn't really know what I was doing. But after watching a lot of YouTube tutorials, I eventually got the hang of the app and it has completely changed my life.

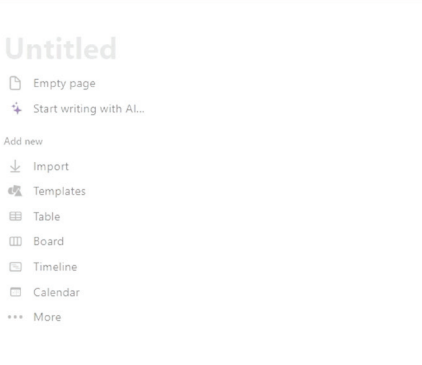
VERY CUSTOMIZABLE

And the great thing about Notion is you can create your own personal workspace to be as simple or complex as you want it to be. It is extremely customizable, giving you the freedom to create a space that actually works for you.

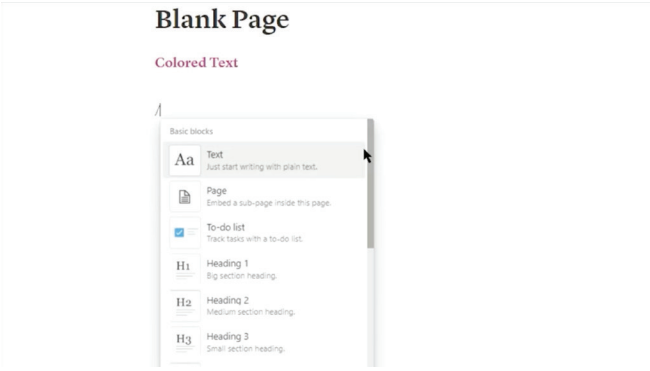
Now, since I don't want to bore you to death by going into an in depth tutorial on how to use the app, I'm just going to briefly go over some of its basic features. And then afterward, I will go a little more into some of Notion's practical uses and how you can use it in your everyday life. Sound good? Great.

BLANK PAGE

So first things first, let's look at a blank Notion page. You'll most likely be using a lot of these.

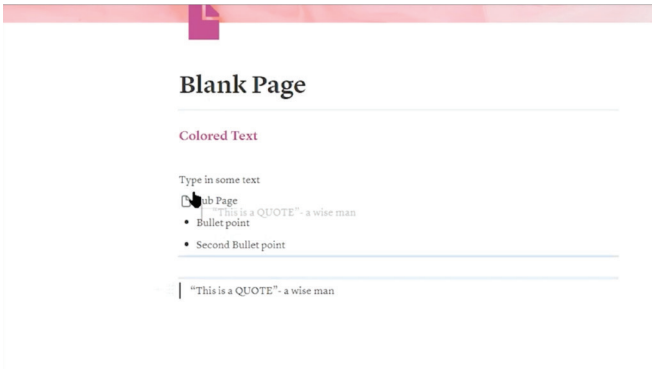


This page is like a blank canvas that you can paint to look how you want with custom emojis, cover images, color text and a variety of fonts within the page. Typing a simple slash command will offer a plethora of options for you to add text, create subpages, bulleted lists, or even fun elements like quotes and fighters.



You can also drag any of these blocks

is what they call it, around the page by clicking on the dots here and then dropping it once you see a blue line, adding to the customizability of Notion. But these are just some of the most basic features of Notion.



POWERFUL DATABASES

What actually makes this software so powerful lies in its databases, which are basically just tools for organizing and sorting information in a structured way. So there are five main databases in Notion. A table database, which is similar to a spreadsheet and is great for managing loss of detailed information. A list database that is useful for seeing information at a glance. A gallery database where you can show an entry as a card. A board database which is useful for tracking progress, like the steps in a project or to do list. And a calendar database, which is pretty self-explanatory.

Each one has its own pros and cons, but what you end up using will really come down to personal preference and what you're trying to do. Either way, no matter what database you decide to use, you can name it and add a variety of properties that allow you to show information in different ways. There are multiple properties like text, number, date, status, checkbox, email, phone, URL. Then there are ones like Select and Multi-Select where you can create tags.

Then there are some more advanced ones like Formula, Relation and Roll Up, which are extremely useful for showing specific bits of information but aren't really necessary for getting started using Notion. So don't even worry about them for now.

Additionally, you can also add embeds to your pages like images, videos, audio, code files, bookmarks, and you can even connect embeds such as Google Drive, Google Maps, Zoom, and so on to have right there in your workspace. Okay. Wow, that was a mouthful.

So by now, you're probably starting to understand why I gave you a warning about Notion's learning curve. But don't be discouraged, this all becomes second nature to you the more that you use the app.

USES OF NOTION

Anyway, enough on the features of Notion. Let's get into the good stuff and talk about how this app can actually help you in your everyday life.

HOUSE MAINTENANCE

So the first way we can use Notion is for helping us manage our house maintenance. Here, I have created a Notion page with three different databases: a table database for my daily cleaning, a gallery database for my weekly cleaning, and a board database for the items I use to maintain my house.

In the first table database, I have added a variety of entries for my daily cleaning tasks, such as make the bed and wash dishes, with checkbox properties that I have named for each day of the week, Monday through Sunday. Every time I complete a task, I can check it off to know if it's done or not and have a visual overview of what I've done during the week.

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And then once the week is over, I can just uncheck all the boxes and start over again.

Then down here, I have my gallery view database where each card is its own section of the house. And I've added a select property to show what day I do that chore on, and a checkbox property to know if I've done it or not. So on my cleaning day dedicated to this part of the house, I can open it up and have a simple checklist that I wrote down where I can again just tick it off once I'm done and then check off the week done property to show that I'm finished.

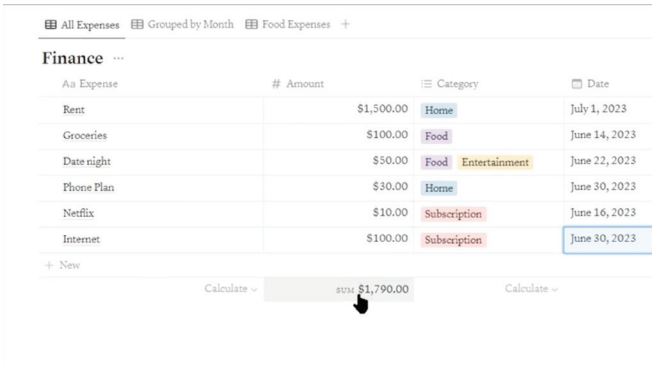
Then, for the database down here, I have a board view for showing what items I'm running out on and what ones I need to buy. Now, I can simply drag the entries into the different categories whenever I need to, and I can also open up any of the entries to add notes inside, specifying to buy a specific brand or how many I need to buy, or literally anything else.

And with that, we have a simple page for managing our house maintenance. There are a lot more advanced ways to make this page even more efficient, like recurring tasks and checklists and whatnot. But for now, this is a beginner friendly way we can use Notion to handle all of our house and home responsibilities.

FINANCES

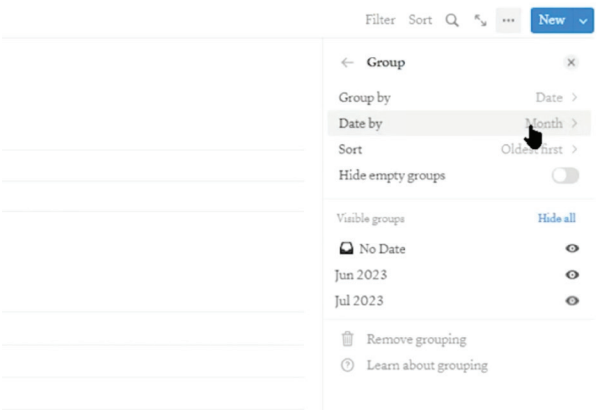
And with that, let's move on to the next way Notion can help us manage our life, and that is by helping us with our finances. We can do this by creating a simple page dedicated toward finance and adding a table view database inside. We can add a variety of properties that we need such as a number property for our expenses, a multi-select property for the type of expense, and a date property to show when the expense needs to be paid.

Then we can add all of our monthly expenses to the database and calculate how much all of it will add up to at the bottom of the database. By clicking sum, we can also write down our monthly budget right above the database so we know how much we have left to spend.



Another useful way to show this information is with a feature Notion has called grouping, where we can group the information in a specific way via one of the properties we added.

So I created another view of this database which basically allows me to view the information in a different way without changing the original view that we had. And then I just grouped the view by date and then chose month so I can now see how much I am spending on a monthly basis.



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You can also use filters or sort the information in your database views. So I added yet another view called Food Expenses and used a filter to only show the entries where I added a food tag and now I have a view that shows only my food related expenses. It can look pretty complicated at first, but learning how to use features such as grouping, sorting and filtering is a really helpful way of visualizing information in a way that best fits your needs. So that is one way you could use Notion to potentially manage your finances. Again, this is a very beginner friendly, straightforward way of doing it. You can go a lot more in depth, but this is good enough for now.

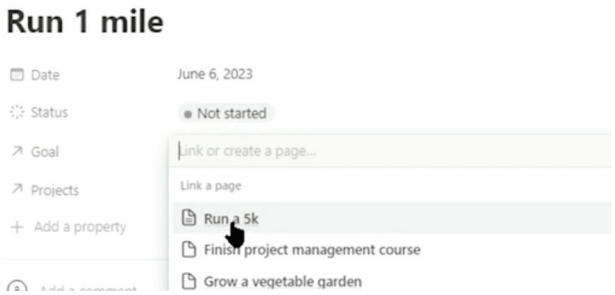
GOALS

Up next for the other way we can use Notion is by helping us manage our goals. Notion is a really great tool for helping you manage your goals because you can create your workspace in a way where you can have all of your goals at the forefront of your workspace. So every time you log in you can see them and be reminded of them using a feature that I will explain in just a second.

So first and foremost, we have to create a database to actually input all of our goals. I like to use the gallery view since I can add cover images to make it look more aesthetic. I also added a date property where I can assign a date I want to achieve the goal by and a select property so I can add tags to show what type of goal it is. Like a personal goal, a career goal, a health and fitness goal and so on.

And then inside of each of these cards I can write down anything that will help me achieve it. Like my goal plan, when and where I'm going to do it, the smart method or anything else that works for me, supplementing my goals page.

I also like to create a database for all of my tasks that will help me get closer to achieving my goal. I add a date property, a status property where I can show if a task is not started in progress or finished, and then I add one of the more advanced properties called a relation. So this property basically allows me to pull in information from another database connecting the two, which allows for even greater possibilities in the information we can show. So I related my task database to my Goals database, so every time I add a new task, I can connect it to the relevant goal to show that I am actually working toward it.



Once the goal page is done, we can then move on and use one of the most handy features of Notion, which allows you to copy a database and paste it across any other page in your Notion workspace. So we can copy the link of our goals database and then go back to our home page and paste it in. This will show all of our goals on the front page of our workspace, so whenever we log in, we will see them and be constantly reminded of them so they are always on the top of our mind.

And any edits we make to this copied database will also reflect in the source database. So in the same way that I copied the goals database, I'm going to copy the task database and create a new page dedicated toward all of the tasks that I have to do and paste it in. Now I can add more views to show the tasks that I have to do

today, this week, and to show a view of all of the tasks I have to get done.

I can also add a calendar view to see a monthly overview of everything that I have to do, which is extremely useful. Lastly, on this page, I added a simple Monday to Sunday checklist to write down my three main tasks on that day.

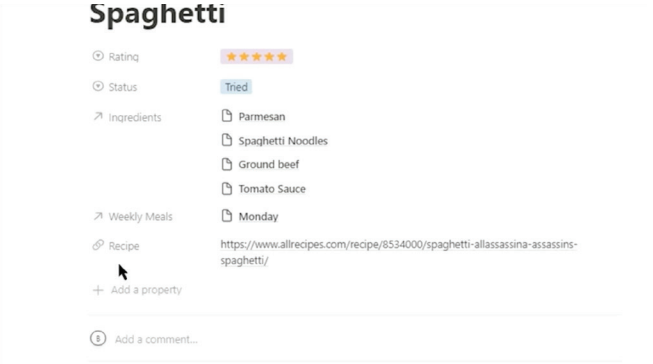
So if the database is a little too overwhelming for you. You can go this more simple route instead and simply check off each task like this as you go.

MEAL PLANNING

Moving on to the next way Notion can help you organize your life. Let's talk about meal planning with Notion. Planning your weekly or monthly meals is super easy. On this page, I have created three different databases. One is dedicated to all the meals I have tried, like or want to try, another to this week's meals, and a third for individual ingredients.

MEALS (RECIPES)

In the meals page, I have created a gallery view database to input all of the meals I like to eat or want to try. As you can see, I've also added properties where I can rate the meal after I tried it and where I can change the status of the meal to see if I've tried it or want to try it. I've also added a relational property to my ingredients database so I can add all of the ingredients needed for this meal. And I've also added a URL property so I can just simply click on the URL here at the front of this card and be brought to the website.



And of course I can write anything I want inside of the individual card, like my thoughts on a meal, if I needed more or less of a certain ingredient and so on.

WEEKLY MEALS

Then in our other page, weekly meals, I've added another gallery view with a card for each day of the week and then added a relational property so I can attach a meal from my meals database to know what I'll be eating. I can just click on the linked meal here to be brought to the page with our specific recipe.

INGREDIENTS

And then lastly, we also have an Ingredients page where I've added a simple table database where I can add any ingredients I need to with a number property so I can write down the price of the item if I want. And then I've also added another relational property to the meals database so I can connect the ingredients to the meals I'm cooking. And when I need to go out and buy groceries, I can simply add a view to my ingredients database and also add a filter to show only the ingredients related to, let's say, my spaghetti recipe so I'll know exactly what to pick up and I will get an estimate of how much it will cost.

And going back to the main meal planner

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page, I also linked the ingredients database and changed the view to a board view and added a status property to show what I'm running low on and what I need to pick up. Just like our cleaning Items database that I showed you earlier.

Now when you go out grocery shopping you can simply open up this Notion page on your phone to know what ingredients you need to pick up and once you get them, you can simply drag it back into the relevant category.

WIKI CONTACTS

The next way you can use Notion is as a sort of wiki page for all of your contacts. This is super easy to set up. All you have to do is create a table database and add a few properties such as text for their name, email, phone and maybe another text property so you can describe your relationship to them.

You may also want to add a date property for your contact's birthday. And then with this you'll be able to set up reminders where you can get a notification to be reminded of it the week before, two days before, the day of, and so on.

You can even add a file property and upload a profile picture of the person which allows you to change the view of the table database to a gatherer view. Then you can show the card with that person's face by going to layout and choosing file.

OTHER WIKIS

Of course this can go beyond contacts and you can create a wiki of stuff like all of your self care products that you want to take note of. Or maybe you want to have a table view database of all of your plants with reminders of when to water them or how to take care of them. Alternatively, you can also create a reading list and input all of the books you want to read or the books you have read.

JOURNALING

Okay, so another super useful way to use Notion is for journaling. Journaling is a great activity for mental health and self-reflection. So setting up a journaling page in Notion is a great way to practice some self-care. We can create a journal space in our Notion workspace by creating a page dedicated to it and then adding a gallery view database.

The main thing we're going to do here is add some simple properties we can fill out to use as data about our day. We can add a date property, text properties to fill out our intention for the day, what we were grateful for, wins or celebrations along with lows or challenges. We can add a select property to rate our day's effectiveness, or we can do another select property for our energy levels.

HABIT TRACKING

And then lastly, we can create multiple properties to turn this journal database into not just a journal but a habit tracker. We can do that by creating a checkbox property and renaming it to a daily habit that we want to keep up. And then we just rinse and repeat that process for all of our habits.

Then once we are done with that, we can go to the main view of the database, click these three dots and go to properties. This is where we have the option to choose what properties actually show up on our database cards. So we can choose to show any of these properties. But the main

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thing that I want to show is selecting the checkbox properties for each of the habits that we just created. This gives us the ability to one, easily check off the habit once it's completed and two, the ability to see what habits we have done on a day to day basis and what ones we have not at a glance.

VAST COMPILATION OF DATA

And building on top of that, we can also write inside of any of these journal entries about our day, what we did, any thoughts we had, and so on. And over time, the more you create these journal entries, the more you'll build up a vast library of data on how your days, weeks and months have been going, which gives you the ability to look critically back on them, to see where you can improve or what things can be changed. And that is another way you can use Notion to help organize your life.

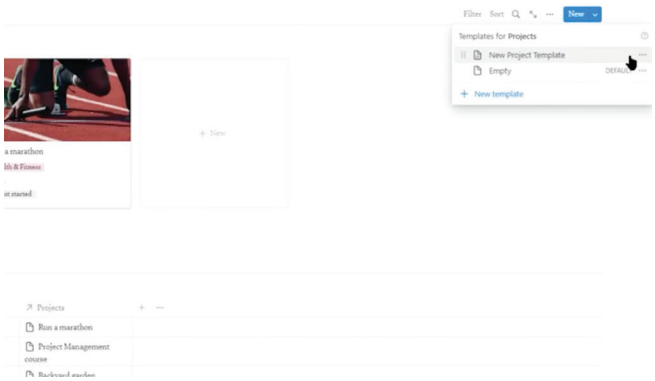
PROJECT MANAGEMENT

And now the last way that I'm going to show you as to how Notion can help you organize your life is probably the most useful one. And that is for helping you manage projects. Whatever you are working on that involves multiple steps like renovating a room or finishing an online course, you can track and manage it all inside of Notion.

So I've created a page dedicated toward projects and added a gatherer view with each project I'm currently working on. Inside of the database, I've added a date property so I can assign a due date for the property, a select property so I can assign it a tag such as home, personal, career and so on, a status property to know whether it's not started in progress or complete. And then I've added a relational property to my task database so I can add all of the tasks associated with this project.

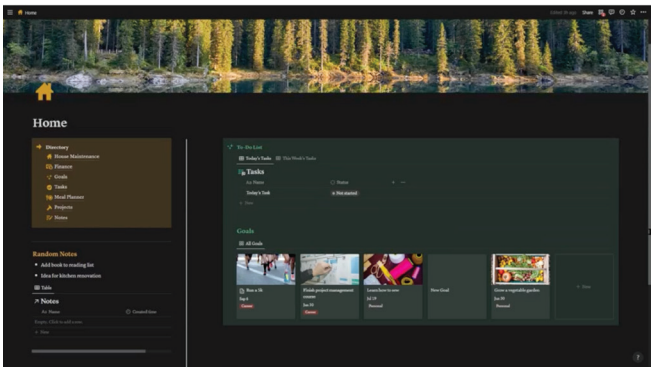
MOST USEFUL FEATURE

Now, these properties alone are great for helping us manage our projects inside of Notion, but I have to say the most useful feature of Notion for project management comes down to the ability to create templates for our database pages. So for this project database, I've created a template where I linked to the task database and added a filter where it will only show tasks related to that project. So if I click on this new project template button here, the page will fill out with my task database and be filtered to show only tasks related to this project.



So if I add an entry to my task database, it will automatically be linked to this specific project. Alternatively, inside of my database templates for projects, I can also jot down routine or repetitive tasks, checklists or notes and have it all there. So when I start a new project, I don't have to waste time retyping out all of that information and I can save myself loads of time.

And then lastly, using all of the features that I mentioned at the beginning of this video, we can create a home page that looks something like this.



We have our tasks and goals database linked for easy access and visibility on our homepage and all of our main pages in a call loop block that we can easily click into whenever we want, as well as a little section for adding any random notes that we need to jot down with a linked notes database below. So we can always drag any important notes from above into this database later if we need to keep them long term.

So as you can see, Notion has a ton of powerful features that can help you organize your life and projects in multiple ways. I've only shown you the tip of the iceberg as to what Notion can do. There is a lot more to discover that can make this software even that much more powerful.

On top of all of the uses I've shown you today as to what Notion can do, you can also use it for things like writing down any notes, saving links from the web so you can distill them or fetch them later. You can use it to track habits via a simple table database, or you can use it to manage schoolwork or school notes, or you can use it like I do to manage your business and YouTube channel. Either way, once you start using Notion, before you know it, you'll end up with your entire life being inside of this app.

NOTION AI

All right, so one last thing before we go that I thought I needed to mention, and that is Notion's new feature Notion AI. Now, inside of our Notion workspace, we can use Notion AI in any page to help us translate things, write things, summarize text, improve our writing, create to do lists, meeting agendas, and so, so much more. This only adds to the powers Notion already has and is tremendously helpful for life.

Things such as creating a meal plan, writing an email, helping you brainstorm, and so on. If you want to use Notion AI with unlimited responses, you'll have to purchase it by going to Notion's plans and by clicking Purchase AI. Otherwise, you'll only have 40 available AI responses before you have to upgrade. Either way to use Notion AI, you can go to any page and type the slash command and type in AI to see all of the AI options. As you can see, there are a lot of different options to choose from, but for now, I'm just going to try out a couple of them to give you a brief idea of what Notion AI can do.

AI TEXT SUMMARY

So the first way you can use Notion AI is for summarizing any text on a page. So I've copied an article from the web on how to be more organized, and because I am too lazy to read all of this, I am going to ask the AI to summarize the text for me. And as you can see, the AI will take this article and condense it. And then afterward we have the option to either give it more information to do something else, we can ask it to rewrite it, or we can ask it to continue writing or make this summary longer. Additionally, I can ask it to write the summary in bullet points or in a numbered list according to each individual point's

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importance.

AI PROJECT LISTS

Another way to use Notion AI is to create a to do list for your day or for a project you are working on. For example, if I'm working on renovating my kitchen, I can ask Notion AI to create a to do list of all the tasks associated with renovating my kitchen. Then it will spit out all of the tasks I need to do for this specific project. And since I didn't answer using checkboxes, I can simply go ahead and ask it to rewrite each task as a checklist and get it rewritten in a much more useful format.

AI MEAL PLANNING

Another way to use AI, and one of my personal favorites is for creating a meal plan. You can tell the AI any dietary restrictions you have, how many calories you can eat, specific meals you want, or anything else, and then you can ask it to create a weekly meal plan for you. Once you send out the prompt, it will create a meal plan in a table format with different meals for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

You can even go a step further and ask it to write a grocery list with each item required in the meal plan it just created above. And then in seconds you'll have a meal plan ready for the week and a grocery list already at your disposal.

AI PROS AND CONS LISTS

The last way I'm going to show you on how you can use Notion AI is for creating a pros and cons list. This is super easy to do already, as it's already a built in option for Notion AI. So you can just click on the pros and cons list option and get it to say something like write a pros and cons list about Notion, and then Notion will spit out a pros and cons list on the pros and cons of using Notion.

Obviously you can actually use this for more serious things like a pros and cons list about changing your career, moving to another area, education decisions, home renovation stuff, and so on. The pros and cons list is super helpful for organizing your thoughts and comparing options, and all you have to do is literally write a single sentence.

There's a lot more that Notion AI has to offer and a lot more options to explore, but these are some of the more basic options that can be immediately helpful to you.

NOTION IN A NUTSHELL

And there you have it. That is Notion in a nutshell. Hopefully I didn't scare you away with how overwhelming and technical some of this may sound, because it really is a great software for helping keep you more organized and get more done with ease of mind.

Anyway, thank you so much, Get Organized HQ for giving me the opportunity to speak about Notion here. I hope this is the start of some people's obsession with Notion because it only gets better from here. And yeah, that is it for me. Good luck and happy Notioning.

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How the Discipline of Journaling can Help You Thrive

BRIANA BARRIOS • TRANSCRIPT

Hey guys, my name is Bri and I'm the owner of Growth Roots Co. And we are a journal company that sells growth books. And I can't wait to share a little bit more about that later.

But first I wanted to say I'm so excited to be speaking here today. Get Organized looks like an amazing event. I personally can't wait to learn myself. There is so much room for improvement over here.

BRI'S STORY

So anyway, I'm excited and I hope you guys are too. So I can't wait to share a little bit more. Okay, so who am I? My name is Bri, I said that earlier. I am a wife, a mama of four kiddos. I love them. I have a girl, three boys. They are always, always keeping life exciting and taking me on wonderful adventures. So it has been truly such a blessing.

But like I said, we own a small business and me and my husband run it together and he helped me design the journals and it's just been awesome. It's been such a great growing experience for us. And so that's just a little bit about that.

THE BACKGROUND STORY

So why we started I want to share a little bit about why we started Growth Roots Co. Just to give a little context and background. A long, long time ago, I was having a super stagnant year. Wasn't growing at all, wasn't growing in my walk with the Lord, wasn't accomplishing any of my goals and dreams. I literally felt like I was standing still in time, doing nothing with my life, even going backwards a little bit.

And so I was sharing about that with my friend and she felt exactly the same. She was going through the exact same season. And so we decided to be each other's accountability partner. We decided to pick a book every month and read it together separately in our own homes, but to talk about it and then to journal and kind of just document this walk in this year with the Lord.

A LIFE-CHANGING TOOL

And even if it was like we're learning a new recipe, we would write it in there. We're reading a book, we're listening to a sermon. It was just everything. It was our one journal to hold everything from that entire year. And by the end of the year, it was literally our most transformational year of life.

And from then forward, it has just been a tool that has literally changed my life, honestly. I know it's something that the Lord has given me that I feel like I really needed in that time. And it's just been a practice that he has blessed me with over and over and over again. So I can't wait to tell you why I'm talking about this though.

Okay, so why does all of that matter? The reason that I say all of that backstory is because we're going to be approaching this learning session from a little bit of a

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different angle. And that is how journaling can be a transformational tool in your life. Okay? And I'm going to talk about all the ways that that can be, how it can benefit you, and how to incorporate it daily into your life.

WHAT JOURNALING IS NOT

So what is journaling? I'm sure that you guys have all heard what journaling is. So I'm not going to go too much into what it is, but I'm going to go into what it isn't. Which is that we all tend to think that in order to do these sort of activities like journaling, it needs to be a calm day. Nothing's going on in the house, we have candles playing.

I don't know, maybe you guys don't think that, but I tend to think, or I used to think that all the right circumstances had to be there in order to have a great journaling session, but that's not the case at all.

So how I like to use my journal is I like to have it in a common place, and if I'm doing the dishes, even I'll have it nearby. If I'm listening to a podcast on the go, I'll have it right next to me. I'll jot down a few things. So it doesn't have to be this perfect situation for you to be able to benefit from journaling.

RESEARCH SHOWS BENEFITS

Now we can move forward with, okay, so how do we apply this to our life? And first of all, how do we even know journaling is good for us? So if you do any sort of research at all, you're going to find zero things on is writing things down bad for you? Everything that you find are going to be these amazing studies done about why writing things down is good for you, how it affects your brain, and how it really helps you to clarify thoughts, move in a certain direction, and kind of know where you're headed.

LESS STRESS

So one of the studies that they did was at the University of Princeton, and they actually took nurses. And nurses are kind of in a high stress environment. They're always on the go, it's fast paced. They took two groups of nurses, split them apart, and they had one of them journal pretty much every day. I can't remember all the details. And then the other group wasn't journaling at all.

The journaling group came out of it with way more clarity. They had a way better way of dealing with their emotions and their feelings. They made more reasonable decisions. They were less stressed. And so it was just a really awesome study that they did, and it was pretty effective in managing just all the stress that they went through on a normal, everyday level.

I don't know about you, but sometimes I do feel like I'm a little bit stressed. And so journaling has helped me to really evaluate my thoughts and my feelings, what's going on in my brain. It helps you to slow down, helps you to focus.

SLOW DOWN DECISIONS

And then too, sometimes it helps you to just think about things before you act on them. I know that we're kind of a reactionary. We tend to react in the moment, right, instead of processing and thinking things through in the best way we can handle a situation. So journaling helps slow us down in that way.

RETENTION OF INFORMATION

There have been so many other studies,

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studies about how children or college students that were sitting in class, the notetakers, the actual people that physically wrote on a piece of paper tested way better than any of the people that typed on their laptop or used electronics. And that is because they actually had to take the information, they had to transcribe, kind of sort it through in their mind themselves and pick out the little bits and pieces that they wanted to remember or call the memory. And then they would jot those down really quick.

Whereas the people on the computers, they were actually just typing everything verbatim and then they weren't able to synthesize the information as well as the people that were handwriting it. So they were using more of their senses when they were handwriting it. It helped them to process it better. It helped them to encode it and store it in their mind using kind of terminology and words that were kind of in their wheelhouse, right?

And so all of those people actually pass the test better than the people that were using their computers. But not only that, the people with their computers were actually given an extra whole week to study and the people that were journalers or physically writing things down were able to remember things even better without that extra week and they actually passed this test better than the others.

HIGHER COGNATIVE FUNCTION

Okay, so writing also shows up really differently in brain scans. They actually show that a lot more areas of the brain are working in tandem during the active writing, which creates a super strong neural connection. The practice of writing can enhance the brain's intake, processing, retaining and retrieving of information and physically touching the paper and moving the pen. Being able to go back and forth stimulate so many more senses and that you remember it so much better.

BRINGING IT INTO OUR LIVES

So with all that being said, maybe you're not going to college, maybe you're not a nurse, right? So how would that apply to you in everyday situations in everyday life? We're put into moments of stress or moments that we need to really just sort through in our mind. Maybe a friend upset us, maybe we got bad news at work or something like that. Maybe, I don't know. Maybe you just have to make a list for something to get it off your mind so that you can feel like you're able to actually take action on that.

So just to recap, journaling can help with your stress level. Journaling can help you sort through thoughts that you're thinking in your mind. It can help you deal with emotions that you're having, it can help you slow down, process information, helps you process information better. It helps you to remember things better and it just helps you to kind of organize thoughts.

So I don't know about you, but I think I could really benefit from all of those things in my everyday life. And I think that's why it was so transformational for me, because in that year that I was super stagnant, I was processing a lot of information like, what am I learning? What am I trying to soak in here? And then it really helped me to live it out in a practical way throughout my life because I had these notes to go back to and refer to as far as what I was being taught.

PRODUCING RESULTS

Okay, so just like with all these other

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courses you're going to be learning about with Get Organized, like decluttering organization, journaling in a way helps you do that in a different way in the sense of how can I unload my brain, how can I better prepare for my day? How can I start my day off right, knowing what it is that I need to do or how it is that I can achieve something.

So journaling writing pen to paper really helps you to process everything that you're going to be doing that day or even your week, or where are you headed exactly? Like, what's your end goal? What do you hope to accomplish by the end of the year if you write these things down, if you could get them on paper? Statistics show that you are, I forget the percentage, but you are far more likely to succeed at doing them than somebody who doesn't write anything down.

So journaling can help you organize your thoughts. It can help you get your day started right. It can help you finish your day strong. It can help give a direction for your year. Let's say you're planning as a family. What decisions should you be making as a family to reach your end goal by the end of the year? Do you want to be a stronger family? Okay, so then go back to your list that you journaled about. What are some things that you want to grow in? How can you foster that?

And when we're writing pen to paper, it helps us to sort through those things so that we're making the wisest choices that we can in our life. And that is really why it is so transformational.

MORNING JOURNAL TIME

Okay, so now that we've gone over the why, why it's beneficial for you to journal, why it's important for your life, how it's actually fruitful for you. Now we're going to talk about some practical ways that you could go about doing it every single day.

So let's start with the morning time. Okay, we all know, we've heard that it's important to wake up early in the morning. Don't go straight to your phone right away. That would be a perfect time to just start the morning in prayer or journaling just your thoughts and reflections of the day. Maybe jot down a little prayer. Maybe make a quick list about what you need to accomplish that day. Get some thoughts out of your mind. Maybe write a little declaration over yourself. Like, today is going to be an awesome day. I know that I have strength to get through this day, that the Lord is going to bless us and that he is going to guide our path, things like that.

Just things that can start out your day, right, and that maybe even will be little anchors that you could go back to. Let's say your day is kind of spiraling out of control. Go back to that journal, read the verse that you wrote down over your day in the morning.

JOURNALING YOU

Okay, so what can this look like for you personally? This could look like you waking up early in the morning. Jotting down a few things for your day. What do you need to accomplish? What do you need to do? Maybe writing down a verse to speak over your day. A verse that you want to guide you and lead you throughout your day. Maybe a declaration. This day is going to be amazing because it's the day that the Lord has made, and I will rejoice and be glad in it. And just start there.

Start personally for yourself. Maybe do a little devotion in the morning. Jot it down

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in your growth book and set your day up for success. They say that the best day starts the night before. So I am also firm, believer in maybe just sitting down at nighttime, journaling before you go to bed, brain dumping everything from that day, looking ahead to the next day.

The Lord says his mercies are new every morning. So maybe you just can write down everything from that day, let it go. Pray over your next day as you enter into the next day and write down the things that you need to do going into the next day, how you want the Lord to guide you throughout that day and just see how that helps you. So that's a personal way that you can apply it to your life.

JOURNALING YOUR FAMILY

Now let's move into family. So for me, I'm going to give you a little example. I actually have a list on each of my kids and on my husband. And what I do with that list is that as I'm going throughout my week, I'm noticing them, I'm studying them. I am their mom. I care deeply for them. I want to make sure I'm serving them in the best way that I can.

So all throughout my week, I'm writing down little things about them, like, oh, Eland likes to do this. Oh, Leah loves this. She feels loved in this way. Ezra feels loved in that way. Like, Emmett my little baby. He's still little, but just little things that I notice and catch so that I can be mindful of who they are as people, maybe even struggles that they're going through, that I need to help them with ways that I can pour into them better.

And then just things like, what do I notice that my husband loves? How can I serve him better? Right? Who is he? What's his love language? And so I use my growth book, my Journal, to write all of those things down to better serve my family. So you can really use it personally. You can use it to serve your family better.

JOURNALING YOUR BUSINESS

Let's talk about business. How can you use journaling to benefit your business? There is so much going on when you run your own business. There's so much to sort through, things you need to get lined up in order to accomplish something else, right? And it oftentimes just can become this spiral of endless to-dos, right?

And so journaling can really help you reevaluate what's your company's mission. Write your mission at the top of the page. What is it that you want your company to stand for? What is it that you want to be led by but driven by? Sure, I'm sure you want to make a profit, right? But is it about that? Does your company see profit as your only goal? Or is it a goal to serve people better?

JOURNALING SCHOOL

So journaling can really help you kind of noodle those things out in your brain, my dad would say. And it just can be really beneficial for all aspects of your life, whether that's just you at home, whether it's you growing your business, whether it's you going to school.

How do you use it for school? Journaling can help you process your thoughts as you're going through your day to day. It's a lot when you're going to school, you're studying constantly, you're taking tests, you're trying to grow in all of this knowledge, right? And like I said earlier, you can use your journal while you're taking your notes because it's going to help you to

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remember and recall information better.

SPRINGBOARD FOR LIFE

And all of these things just create such a wonderful foundation for the rest of your life because you want to get things done right? You're going to learn in all of these other courses. Like, you want to organize your drawers better, you want to meal plan better. I really hope there's one for that because I need it.

But foundationally, I think journaling is such a good springboard because it really helps you get your mind on paper. It helps you reevaluate who you are, who you're living for. What is it that you want to accomplish in this short life that you're given?

KEEPING THE BIG PICTURE IN MIND

We tend to get so bogged down in the day to day that we forget the bigger picture of, okay, what is the Lord trying to do here? Where is he trying to grow me personally? And how can I serve others better than just getting, through the day, like, oh, I just got through the day, Thank the Lord. If you're not careful, that can spiral into an everyday mindset.

And that has happened to me, too. And so just slowing down, even just writing about your day, oh, we did this today. We did this today. I felt a little bit discouraged, or I was so encouraged by this. It gives you kind of like a all right, I just released it. I'm going to move forward. I'm going to see what the Lord has for me tomorrow.

KEEPING RECORD

Okay. Another thing that I wanted to talk about with Journaling, which has been so transformational for me, and I think why I also had success in that very first year is that journaling gives you something to come back to. And what I mean by that is that you're recording these little moments throughout your day, throughout your life, right?

Maybe something awesome happens with the kids, and you jot it down really quick right after you're doing the dishes, right? Or let's say something awesome happens to you at class, and you just had this amazing moment with the Lord, and God just directed your steps perfectly, and so you jot that down, right?

And then the following week, we all get back involved in life and things happen, and maybe you're feeling particularly discouraged about something, and so you go back to your growth book and you're able to read. Okay, look, this was a moment where God had me, where I felt that he was there, where I know that he was present in that moment that he got me through and that it was such a special day.

And you can apply it to those days where you feel like, God, where are you? I'm really struggling, like I'm hurting. And it just gives you encouragement and hope to continue on, because it can be really easy to just go in and out of your day to day life, right? Like, you wake up in the morning, you do the same routine. You go to bed, you wake up in the morning, you got through your day, you go to bed, right?

ANCHOR MOMENTS

But if you have these moments to go back to where they're almost like little anchor moments, right? Like, I saw God here, I saw God here, I saw Him here and here, right? So

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in those in between moments where God is still with you, but you don't feel it or see it for yourself, you're able to read back, okay, I know he still has me, and I know he never left me. And he did these special, amazing things in my life that I'm able to recall to memory so that I can have hope in this time where I don't necessarily feel Him as much, right? And that has been huge for me.

There have been times where I have written down a prayer for someone. Oh, I'll pray for you, write it down, right? You pray for them and then you kind of just go on with your life. And not to say that you forgot about them, but let's say you go back and you read your prayer list and you're like, Lord, I didn't even realize this was answered. I didn't even realize that this prayer that I had been fervently praying over for months had gotten answered. It just slipped right through the cracks.

And having a journal to go back to and see these moments, these pillars in life where you're like, wow, God did something amazing. And I would have not even noticed had I not gone back and read this. So journaling can just be such an awesome way to see your life unfolding in the sense of where the Lord has you, where he's taking you and what he's doing in you, right?

A YEAR'S REFLECTION

And so also, it's easy. I don't know if you ever get to an end of the year and you're like, where did this year go? What did I do? I don't even remember what I ate for breakfast yesterday. But journaling has this effect where you've captured your entire year at a glance. In a sense, in this one journal, you've captured your year and you're able to see the progress. Like, oh wow, in May I did that, I totally forgot. That was like a huge blessing. I didn't even realize.

Or like in June, like, oh, I totally forgot that that person brought me a meal at night and they just surprised me, right? Because like I said, 365 days go by and you're focused on what am I going to accomplish next year? Not even reflecting back on your year and those little tiny moments. So journaling can hugely impact you in so many ways.

A FOUNDATION FOR LIFE

It's so foundational for your life, I would say. Of course, apart from reading your Bible and praying, those are main foundations. Get those in for sure because that will keep you successful in all that you do, whether your drawers are organized or not. You want the wisdom from the Lord, you want the direction from the Lord, right? And I think adding in journaling just helps you grow in those ways and just it's a great tool to lay in your foundation to set you up for success as you go into your day.

People think that maybe journaling is you're writing your feelings like, I feel this way, I feel that way. And to be honest, my growth book is filled mostly with lists. Lists about my family, lists about what the Lord is teaching me, what he's highlighting. I've even written dreams in my growth book just to pray about. Does this have meaning? Like, is this something I need to be thinking on in the future? Right?

SETTING UP FOR SUCCESS

And so just those little things can really help you set your day up for success. And like I said, not just your day, your week. Because you can have the foresight to look ahead at what it is you want to accomplish and jot that down and then what it is that you want to accomplish for your year, what

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direction do you want to go with your whole family?

And so it's just honestly been a great thing that I've added into my life, and I think that it would be great for you guys to implement it in your life so that you can have all of these great systems and strategies for your home.

FOLLOW BRIANA

All right, guys, we are going to wrap up our time here together, and I am just so grateful that you guys have stuck around. And while I think that the most transformational thing that you could ever do in your life is to follow the Lord and to pray and seek his face for all things, for wisdom and discernment, I do think he's given amazing people so many talents and skills and ability to teach and to encourage us along our journey.

So I'm there with you guys. I have not arrived. I'm never going to arrive. But this has really transformed my life, and I pray, and I hope that this tool can transform your life and that all the other speaking sessions that you guys listen to today as well, will just continue to lead you to a fruitful, thriving life.

So thank you so much for being with me today, and I can't wait to hopefully meet some of you. So head on over to Instagram and follow me on growthrootsco and I would just love to chat with you guys and see how the Lord is working in your life.

See you later.

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The Power of Self-Compassion and Nature

BRITTANY CRANE • TRANSCRIPT

Hi, ladies. I'm Brittany Crane, and I like to call myself a recovering perfectionist. I have been married for 16 years. Feels weird even saying that. Long went by fast, and I actually have five kids ranging from ages fifteen all the way to one. I had a surprise baby. I live in Utah, and I own a women's adventure company where I take women on monthly hikes and quarterly adventure retreats.

THE DEPTHS OF DESPAIR

I love what I do with all of the amazing things that are and have been a part of my life. I've also been to the depths of despair with postpartum depression and back again. I thought that there was no hope for me, that the world would be better without me. I knew of my struggle, and I hated myself even more for struggling.

I knew the weight that I was asking my husband to carry, and I didn't want to be a burden to him. The thought that saved me was actually thinking about my kids and how they needed my love. As imperfect and as flawed as I was, I had a love for them that nobody else could imitate because I was their mom. That thought saved me.

CHOOSING TO LIVE

I chose to live, and I chose to get help from professionals. Now, this wasn't my first experience getting sad. Life is full of sad times. Times where you feel hopeless and times where you doubt. Emotions are important. Those sad emotions, we're going to talk about those more today. But they play a role. They play a part.

If you would have told me during my postpartum depression days and that struggle that I would come out of that stronger and able to help other people, I would have probably hugged you. One of the tools that has impacted me the most was learning the tool of self-compassion. I learned about it from my therapist, and at the beginning, I was very skeptical.

INITIALLY SKEPTICAL

I couldn't see how being kinder to myself would motivate me. I thought, oh, sure, that'll feel nice, but that won't motivate me to get anything done and to change. All I could envision was me sitting on the couch day after day, thinking, it's okay. You didn't get anything done today, Brittany. You've been struggling. Life isn't easy, so it's good to rest.

I didn't have time for that. I needed to be productive. I had children to take care of. Despite my reservations, I followed her advice, and I tried it.

And you know what? It actually had the opposite effect on me than what I thought it would. Instead of feeling sorry for myself and making excuses to sit on the couch and do nothing because my life was hard, I felt validated and empowered. It was amazing.

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WANTING TO KNOW MORE

I got more done, and my positivity was genuine because I was compassionate towards myself. After experiencing that, I dove into learning all I could about self-compassion. I was blown away at the results, and I wanted to understand how it worked.

I found a woman named Kristen Ness and I read all of her books. I loved everything I learned, and it all ringed true for me. I became a self-compassion advocate, and I started preaching it from the rooftops to everyone I knew. It changed my life, and I wanted to share it with as many people as possible.

The second tool that has completely changed my life is also free, easy, and single handedly one of the most beneficial things that you can do for your overall health and well-being. It's getting outside. I actually have a really cool story about how I learned that I needed to prioritize getting outside.

But for now, I want to walk you through the steps of self-compassion because I want you to leave today knowing how to be kinder to yourself. And I'm going to walk you through step by step by step. Then I'm going to swing back around and we're going to talk about prioritizing outside and the benefits of that.

SELF-COMPASSION QUIZ

So let's head over to self-compassion. This is a self-compassion quiz that I want us to take together. You're going to score yourself one through five. One being never and five being always. If you have a piece of paper, you can write down your score Otherwise you can put it in your phone or just remember it. But I'm going to go through these questions and then I want you to answer them.

So number one, when I'm emotional, I stop and give myself time to express why I feel a certain way. Remember, rate yourself one never and five always. I tend to see my weaknesses as opportunities for improvement. One never, all the way to five always. After I fail at something, I look forward to trying again. What would you say you do that? Next question. I try to be understanding and accepting of my flaws. I embrace portions of my personality that I do not like with love. When I experience a difficult situation, I am thankful to learn new coping skills. I feel that my worth is not determined by my successes. I value feedback from others as beneficial to me. When discouraged, I treat myself the way I would treat a friend in the same situation. And last question. When I describe myself, I use positive words.

Okay, here's the score. How did you do? You're going to add up your score and you're going to see where you are in your self-compassion journey. Now, I don't want you to write yourself off. This is just kind of a starting point. We're going to talk about the steps of self-compassion and we're going to dive into things today. But I kind of wanted you to see where you landed.

DENIGRATION VS. ADULATION

Okay, the next thing I want to talk to you about is denigration versus adulation and where self-compassion fits into that. So denigration is where you think yourself less than you compare yourself to other people and you're like, oh, I'm not as good as so and so. Like, if I were to think about playing basketball, I'd be like, oh, I'd go into denigration for sure, 100%. Because I'm like, oh, I'm suck at basketball. Denigration. I'm

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never going to be good at it. I'm less than that kind of thing.

Adulation is on the other side of the scale. Adulation means you perceive yourself as better than other people, better than people at certain things. So naturally, what we do is we swing from adulation to denigration and back again.

There are certain things where you feel better than other people at, and there are other things that you feel worse than other people at. And we swing that pendulum back and forth all day long. All day long. You go back and forth, back and forth, and it's exhausting.

FOCUSING ON YOU

So here's where self-compassion comes in. Self-compassion comes in and it takes you off of that scale because self-compassion makes it so that you don't compare yourself. It gets you out of that comparison trap. And so that you can just focus on you. You can give yourself kindness. You know why? You feel the certain emotions. You allow yourself to feel those emotions and you're not swinging back and forth.

You're just focusing on you, completely separate from anybody else. It's pretty amazing. I mentioned a minute ago how I didn't believe that self-compassion could really work before I tried it. And once I did try it, I didn't understand how it could provide the outcome that it did.

RELEASING SELF-HATRED

A quote that really made self-compassion click for me was from a woman named Tara Brock. She said, feeling compassion for ourselves in no way releases us from the responsibility of our actions. Rather, it releases us from the self-hatred that prevents us from responding to our life with clarity and balance.

After reading that, it all made sense to me. And I understood how self-compassion could produce the results that it did. I didn't need to be worried about spending all day every day on the couch making up excuses because I was being kind to myself. That's not how self-compassion worked.

What it meant was that I could see myself clearly because I wasn't blinded by hatred. Remember how I mentioned earlier when I was depressed and I was actually struggling more because I hated myself for struggling? Self-compassion took away that self-hatred.

I could look at myself as an objective human being who was incapable of perfection and who was doing her best. I was fighting something difficult. And after losing that self-hatred, depression became something that I could actually fight.

IMPACTING EVERYTHING

I found that the way that I viewed myself impacted everything in my life. My relationships, my work ethic, my motivation. Everything that I'm going to teach you today can be found in my self-compassion workbook. Yes, I wrote a workbook. I took everything that I've learned the past decade and I put it into a workbook to try to help you digest self-compassion and implement it.

This is a 15 day journal and guide experience to help you accept yourself and to build inner strength. I'll include a link to it at the end of my presentation today.

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STEPS OF SELF-COMPASSION

The first three steps of self-compassion are first, awareness. Notice when you are emotional. The second one is mindfulness. Make some time to allow yourself to feel your emotions. And third, acceptance. Recognize that all people feel pain. It's part of life, it's part of humanity.

This is a pattern that you can start implementing today. Once you get to the acceptance step, you are choosing to give yourself compassion.

AWARENESS

Step one. Once I tried the first step and took the time to notice my thoughts and emotions, I realized just how often I was being unkind to myself. It was several times a day. It had become so natural to me that I had stopped noticing. That's what happens.

As humans, we are feeling emotions constantly throughout the day, but we often push them aside with busyness so that we don't have to acknowledge them. I invite you to notice your emotions and your self-talk. That's step one.

ALLOW EMOTIONS

Step two. Allow yourself to feel those emotions that you notice. Emotions are meant to be felt and experienced. When we hold them in, they don't go away. They just lay dormant until they are triggered into action. Usually stress, anger, worry.

Maybe you've experienced this. You find yourself snapping at a family member or a friend, unsure how you snap so quickly. I guarantee at the core is an emotion that you've been trying to avoid. So make time to feel your emotions. Don't push them aside because they are uncomfortable. Emotions are messengers trying to teach you something. The amazing thing about them is once you allow them to teach you something, and once you allow yourself to feel a particular emotion, you learn from it. The emotion passes and it moves on. I'm going to tell you an example of this in just a minute.

ACCEPTANCE

Acceptance is the third step of self-compassion. Now, I have this quote on the screen. It says pain is inevitable, suffering is optional and suffering is pain times resistance. So let that sink in for a second.

Pain is inevitable. We're humans, but suffering is optional. We choose if we suffer or not. And suffering is when we have our pain. That's natural, right? Inevitable. And we resist it. So resistance is the struggle that occurs when we think that an experience should be different or something other than what it is, or when we tell ourselves that we shouldn't feel a certain way and fight the emotions that our body brings up.

A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING

I want you to think about an emotion that you often resist and what makes you want to resist it. What do you tell yourself about that emotion? What do you think about it. Let me give you an example from my life. I'm 100% a people pleaser. I found that out when I was reading a book about people pleasers. And I could check every single thing off the list. I was like, oh, Brittany, you might be a people pleaser. It's true.

I feel deeply uncomfortable when other people are uncomfortable. I tell myself that it's better for me to be uncomfortable than

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it is for someone else to be uncomfortable. It's been eye opening for me to see all of the instances where this trait shows up. I've been learning to invite that emotion to teach me rather than to run from it. I've learned to ask myself why it makes me uncomfortable when other people are uncomfortable.

It's led me to a deeper understanding of myself, not in a critical or a judgmental way. Because I use self-compassion, I see why I do things the way that I do, and I can decide whether I want to work on changing that or if I want to accept it and live with it. It's actually very empowering. I love this quote from Kristen Neff. When we fully accept the reality that we are imperfect human beings, prone to making mistakes and struggling, our hearts naturally begin to soften. We still feel pain, but we also feel the love holding the pain, and it's more bearable.

REFRAME YOUR THOUGHTS

Once you accept yourself and your inability to be perfect, you can start to reframe your thoughts into more productive and motivational thoughts. This is something that won't come naturally at first. It will take work, but it will become easier the more you do it.

A REAL LIFE EXAMPLE

Let me share an example from my own life and show you how naturally self-compassion has started to impact me. I had scheduled an amazing photo shoot. I got the opportunity to do a photo shoot, and at first, I was scared to dream big. I almost talked myself out of dreaming big, but I went for it. I shot for the stars, and I hired my favorite photographer.

I booked my favorite location, which included a significant amount of travel. I booked my favorite makeup artist. You name it, I went for it. On this photo shoot, I was so excited. I was literally having dreams about this photo shoot. Well, I found out that I would have to change things drastically. Actually, everything almost. I was so disappointed. I was so disappointed. My heart was crushed. And actually, one of the first thoughts that I had was, Brittany, of course you shouldn't have let yourself dream big. You should have just been realistic from the beginning, and you would have avoided this heartache. That's what I told myself.

But then I thought things through, and I thought, okay, why am I so disappointed? Well, of course I'm disappointed. Anybody would be disappointed in this. I was so excited. The excitement was genuine. So now the disappointment is genuine as well. After going through the first three steps, I looked for the good in my new situation, and there was so much good to be found.

SWITCHING TO GRATITUDE

I reframed my thoughts to gratitude. I saw all of the benefits of switching gears. I felt peace about the whole situation. I was still bummed that my original version was going to have to wait to be carried out. But I was able to stay positive and create a new vision that I'm also very excited about. I didn't need to spend any time wishing things were different. And I certainly won't spoil the new photo shoot day, showing up wishing I were somewhere else.

I worked through my emotions and my thoughts. Reframing is so powerful. But did you also catch that I gave myself time to feel my emotion? I didn't resist being upset or sad, and I never told myself that I shouldn't feel those ways. I didn't force

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myself into gratitude. I allowed myself to feel sad and let down, and I gave myself compassion for feeling that way.

After I felt the emotion, it passed. I was aware of my emotions and I worked through them. I didn't get stuck. I didn't ignore them or bottle them up so that I exploded on one of my children later on in the day, which sometimes happens.

A POWERFUL TOOL

Self-compassion is a powerful tool that belongs in your tool belt. It has the power to not only transform your relationship with yourself, but also your relationships with your spouse, your children, your coworkers, everyone. Don't wait to learn self-compassion. Don't believe the lie that when you are older, you'll naturally be kinder to yourself. The critical voice that is inside you now will be the inner voice that you have when you're 90. If you don't train it to be kind.

GRANDMA'S STORY

Let me share with you a story of my beautiful grandma. A few years ago, we were at a family reunion with some of my extended family. My grandma was there, and she had several of her great grandchildren there to love on and snuggle and spend time with. One of the days we were there, my grandma and my mom went shopping. My grandma didn't want to try on any of the clothes, so she went ahead and bought them, and then she brought them back to the house that we were staying at to try them on. None of them fit. She spiraled mentally. She didn't come out of her room for the rest of the trip, which was several days. She missed out on her opportunity to be with her family because she was upset about the way her clothes fit.

Ladies, she does this at 85 because she did it at 65. And she did it at 65 because she did it at 45. And she did it at 45 because she did it at 25. Get where I'm going with this. My grandma never learned self-compassion. She never learned to reframe her thoughts and to focus on more than what her body looked like. I swore after that experience with my grandma and a handful of other memories just like that that I was not going to be an 85 year old grandma, beating myself up and missing opportunities to be with my family.

START NOW

If I don't want to be that type of grandma, then I better start spending some time learning the tools to change it. Now, ladies, take the time to learn to be kind to yourself. I know life is busy, but be mindful and aware of the way you speak to yourself. Let's soften that inner voice to be more compassionate. You'll reap the benefits for the rest of your life.

GETTING OUTSIDE

Okay, let's switch gears and start talking about getting outside. I promised earlier that I would share the story of how I learned that I needed to get outside more. So I mentioned earlier that I had severe postpartum depression. That was after my third child. So when it came time for my fourth baby to be born naturally, I was paranoid.

I was actually scared to death to go back to that dark place that I had pulled myself out of and worked so hard for. I knew I had the tool of self-compassion. And I knew that I had a handful of other things from my therapist and that I could reach out for help if I needed to. But thoughts of depression were on my mind constantly. I was scared.

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A BIG IMPACT

So my baby comes, and shortly after he came, we decided to go on a spontaneous trip to Moab. Kind of crazy, right? With a newborn. While we did it. And while we were driving around, I had this moment that I will remember forever. God told me to start spending time outside doing things that I loved. It was so clear that I can still remember the feeling and that impact on me.

And ever since then, I've made it a priority to spend time outside. Nature is healing. It easily gives you the opportunity to be present and mindful. You breathe the fresh air, and it helps put things in perspective.

NATURE IS KEY TO MENTAL HEALTH

Nature is not just important to mental health, it's key. Getting outside helps me feel closer to my maker. It also helps me feel closest to my truest self. I often get distracted with who I'm in and what I'm supposed to be. But when I go out to nature, I feel that naturally, and I start aligning myself better with that.

I find that when I don't spend time in nature, I think my problems are bigger than they really are. I get tunnel vision. Spending time outside in nature helps me put things in perspective.

Okay, I have this definition on the screen. This is a term called biophilia. It means our innate human instinct is to connect with nature. Our instinct. Isn't that amazing across the board, being outdoors helps us as humans feel better. Thousands of studies have been completed all over the world about the benefits of getting outside.

BENEFITS OF OUTSIDE TIME

Because of those studies, I can say that science has proven that spending time outside in nature is beneficial for your health in the following ways: so it fuels your brain. Being outside activates your brain in complex ways that a computer screen can never imitate. You recover from stress, and I'm going to add almost immediately. It reduces inflammation. You get vitamin D, improves focus and memory. You sleep better, lowers blood pressure, and eases depression and anxiety.

Now, if you consider yourself an indoorsy person, don't panic. This doesn't mean that you need to go camping once a month, which I actually think sounds like a great idea. But you don't have to do that. Research says that even a small amount of green space every day has more benefits than an annual camping trip. This is doable, even if you are indoorsy.

IDEAS FOR INDOORSY FOLKS

So here are a few ideas: spend ten to 15 minutes in the morning meditating outdoors. Take your pup on a walk around the block. Take your regular activities, like working on your laptop or reading, outside. If you don't have a mobile job, take your lunch break outside or go on a lunchtime walk. Try an outdoor workout class. Have a picnic lunch or dinner. Take up gardening. Move your desk by a window where you can see greenery. Invest in a few indoor plants, as some research suggests the color green has a calming effect on the mind.

Or my favorite, come on an adventure with me. I'll post a link at the end so you can see all the adventures I have coming up. All of these are ways to get outside a little more and reap the amazing benefits nature

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has on the physical body and also your emotional well-being.

DON'T LET YOUR KIDS STOP YOU

This leads me to my next point. Don't stop going on adventures because you had kids. Don't use kids as an excuse to stop following your passions and your interests. Your kids don't need that burden on their shoulders. How terrible is it to say to your kids, I used to be fun, but then I had you and you made it so that I don't have fun anymore?

Now, that might not be the message that you say to your kids, but that is the exact message that they are going to receive when you stop following your interests and your passions. Stop using motherhood as martyrdom.

Now, don't get me wrong. Motherhood changes everything. Having children is a valid excuse to do less. I have five of them. Remember, life is drastically different than it was before. They require so much time, effort and energy, but they're worth every ounce. I love my children. I told you earlier how they saved my life.

But as much as children change your life, they're not an excuse to not have a life outside of them. Schedule. Schedule. I said schedule. Schedule your adventure and getting out of your comfort zone. Schedule time for social connection. Schedule time to get outdoors. Schedule time to take care of yourself. Your current circumstances are never a reason to hate your life. They may be a reason to change things and reevaluate.

PUT YOURSELF IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT

But your circumstances aren't a reason to stay unhappy and with the way things are. Ladies, sit in the driver's seat of your life. Grab that steering wheel and steer your life in the direction that you want it to go.

Set goals and be compassionate along the way. Because you will fail at some of them and you will fall short. But when you do, you apply self-compassion. You dust yourself off and you keep moving in the right direction.

I once thought that life wasn't worth living. I know better now. Every day is a beautiful gift. Whether you choose to acknowledge it or not. I invite you to acknowledge it. See the beauty in each day. See the beauty in your imperfect humanness and get outside and see the beauty of nature. The gift of nature is that it's impossible to feel the beauty and expanse of nature and to not feel that same about yourself.

GET IN TOUCH WITH BRITTANY

If you want to get in touch with me, please sign up for my newsletter. I sent the link below. I send out all of my adventure details and emails. You can also follow me on Instagram, where I'm most active, or TikTok, and Facebook as well. And the links to purchase my workbook, like I promised, are below. I want to end with this beautiful song, You're Going to Be Okay. Listen to the words and let them speak to you.

Thanks for spending 30 minutes of your day with me. Our human nature connects us to each other. And my sincere wish for each of you is to have the tools that you need to live a life you love. Bye.

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The Best Hacks for School Lunch Prep

BRITTNEY HANKS • TRANSCRIPT

Hello. Hello. I am Brittany Hanks. I'm the founder of Home and Kind, which is a home and lifestyle company that gives you really awesome tools, tips, recipes, organization, ideas to simplify your life as a mom and allow you to find more joy in your life at home. So who doesn't want that, right?

You can find me over on Instagram, mostly sharing content at Home and Kind and also homeandkind.com. And I am really excited to jump in today and talk all about school lunch prep because this is something that I am passionate about because I feel like it doesn't need to be as hard as we make it sometimes.

SUPER MOM HACKS

And I have found a few tricks of the trade, mom hacks, whatever you want to call it over the many years that I have been a mom. I've got four kids, fifteen down to eight, and it has really made our school lunch prep so much easier.

And at this point, my kids do it all themselves. So my number one time saving hack for you that will really help organize your lunch game is to prep and freeze main dish items for your kids' lunches, mostly sandwiches, but you can do some non-sandwich stuff as well.

THREE DIFFERENT SANDWICHES

So our very favorites and the thing that I have received the most positive feedback about from both my kids and as I've shared this idea with friends and family and people online, is Hawaiian roll sandwiches. You can get this huge twin pack at Costco, or you can get Hawaiian rolls at most grocery stores. It's just going to be a slightly smaller pack.

But we are going to assemble these, and I'm going to show you a very simple way to assemble them. My kids favorite right now is turkey and pepper jack, but you can use whatever kind of meat and cheese you want. And we are going to freeze them, portion them out, and then they're ready to go in the morning.

This is a huge time saver, and I'll talk all about the logistics, what kind of bags you put them in, how you freeze them, what else do you put into the lunch. But right now, we're going to focus on creating all these sandwiches, and then we'll work through the process.

The next thing I'm going to prep is bagels and cream cheese, another super easy lunch idea that my kids love. And it freezes and thaws super well. So I've got plain bagels here, and we've got strawberry cream cheese, and then I have the mini bagels. These are awesome for younger kids who maybe a full bagel is too big for them, and plain cream cheese.

SUBSTITUTIONS ALLOWED

And then we're going to do some peanut

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butter and jelly sandwiches. So you can obviously replace peanut butter with any kind of nut butter or nut butter alternative. So if peanut butter is not allowed at your school or you have a peanut allergy, sun butter is a great alternative. There are several non-peanut or non nut kind of butter alternatives that you can use there.

And there's a lot of options with this sandwich as well. You can turn it into an uncrustable. I'll link this uncrustable maker. I'll link everything tool wise that I'm sharing in the notes so that you can very easily reference. If you have kids that love uncrustables, you can make your own uncrustables, which is really fun.

Today I'm just going to make the full peanut butter and jelly sandwich. So really you can customize all of these things to your kids' preferences. Make whatever kind of butter and jelly sandwiches they like, choose whatever combination of bagels and cream cheese they like, put whatever meat and cheese combinations that they like on the Hawaiian rolls.

PERFECT FREEZING AND THAWING

And you just want to be aware of what freezes and thaws. Well, all of this stuff is going to freeze and thaw amazing. I'm even going to put a thin layer of mayo and mustard on the Hawaiian roll sandwiches. I've tested out these things so many times. My kids have been taking these for years. They do not get soggy. They do not get soggy, and they are perfectly thawed by lunchtime.

You just don't put a freezer pack into their lunch. Right from the freezer into their lunch bag. And then in a couple of hours, they're perfectly thawed and ready to go.

So I promise it doesn't affect the quality, it doesn't affect the texture. It is a game saving hack. It really is going to change your school lunch game.

FIFTEEN MINUTES FOR 36 SERVINGS

So let's make some sandwiches. Okay, we did it. This is about 36 servings of sandwiches and that is awesome. So let me just kind of go through a couple of the different options of things that I used to give you guys some ideas to be able to customize this for yourself. So as far as the baggies and packaging, you've got a bunch of options and I've tried so many different things.

AIRTIGHT CONTAINERS

First of all, I found that for the longest shelf life of these sandwiches in the freezer, you want to package them all up separately in an airtight container. So I have tried those sandwich bags, like almost the paper kind of waxy bags that you can use, and I noticed that those did not keep the sandwiches fresh for more than a couple of days just because they're not airtight.

And then another option if you know you're going to be eating the sandwiches within a few days is, for instance, with the Hawaiian roll sandwiches, you can make up the whole batch of Hawaiian roll sandwiches, put them back into the original packaging. Same with the bagels. You could make the bagels, stack them on top of each other. You would just want to separate them with either a piece of parchment paper or something so that they don't freeze together. But that's another packaging option. It just doesn't keep them fresh as long in the freezer.

When they're individually bagged in an

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airtight bag like all of these are, they will last a couple of months. So I like to just prep a ton at one time and put them in the individual baggies so that they'll last a couple of months and I don't need to do it for the next couple of months, which is so nice to not have to worry about it.

A TRUE TIMESAVER

And in real time, assembling all of these took about 15 minutes. So it was super quick. And you may think, well, is it really going to save me that much time? Yes, it will save you so much time. Because think about even just getting out all the ingredients, opening up the bag of bread, pulling out the condiments, getting out the meat and cheese, packaging them up when they're done, putting them back in the fridge, like in the moment. You may not think that it takes that long and it doesn't. And that's a fine way to do it if it's working for you. But if you truly want to save time, this will save you time.

Because you're getting out all the ingredients, once you're making them all at one time, not having to get the ingredients, put them back multiple times and then you're set. So it's a huge, huge time saver.

So airtight containers or airtight baggies, individually portion sized for the longest freezer shelf life.

SANDWICH BAGS

So for these Hawaiian roll sandwiches, I just used normal plastic sandwich bags, and you want to customize the portion sizes as well, based on your kids ages and appetites. So my kids usually like to have two Hawaiian roll sandwiches. A toddler may just want one, a teenager might want four, in which case you could probably fit four in a sandwich size bag or get a quartz size bag. So totally customizable on the portion sizing based on your kids and their preferences. So these are normal sandwich baggies, as are the mini bagels.

REUSUABLE BAGS

These are some really cool reusable bags that I got at Target. These are much cheaper than like the Stasher bags or other reusable bags that you get at other places. These are about a dollar a bag. So these are awesome. I love that they expand at the bottom so that they can stand, as you can see. And then they have several different sizes. This is the sandwich size. So these are awesome. They're dishwasher safe, they're freezer safe, and they keep whatever's in them really fresh. And they're reusable, obviously, which is great.

So these come in an eight pack from Target. Like I said, I think they're around a dollar apiece. You just want to make sure if you're using these reusable bags, you want to make sure your kids know that they're reusable so that they don't throw them away when they're throwing away all the trash or extra food from their lunch. Make sure that they leave this in their lunchbox and bring it home because you do not want to be paying a dollar per bag and having them throw them away every time. That kind of defeats the whole purpose of a reusable bag. So these are great. Again, just make sure your kids know to bring them home dishwasher safe, on the top rack, reuse them. Awesome option.

COMPOSTABLE BAGS

Another option if you're worried about kids not being able to remember that something is reusable, is compostable bags. So I actually did a big compostable

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sandwich bag experiment and I tested out a bunch of the most popular compostable sandwich bags and the Matter compostable sandwich bags were by far my favorite and also happened to be the most affordable. So these you can get online. I will link them in the notes, but these are great for a more earth friendly option. Any compostable bag is not going to be quite as transparent as a normal sandwich baggie, so that's just something to consider. Also, the Ziploc part of it is slightly harder to open and close. So just a couple of things to be aware of.

But my whole purpose of this presentation is to give you options and to really allow you to take the principles that I'm teaching and customize it for your family, your preferences, your needs. But freezing sandwiches bagels is a huge time saver and I know you're going to love it.

FREEZER STORAGE

Okay, so we've got all our sandwiches. Now we're going to get ready to put them in the freezer. Everyone's set up is going to be a little bit different, but I like to dedicate the entire top drawer of my freezer to sandwich prep just so everything is all in one place. It does force you to kind of shuffle other things around. I do have an extra freezer in my garage, so that is helpful.

But I have vegetables over here, I have fruits over here. And then I try to reserve these top containers for the lunch sandwiches. It's also helpful to be able to divide out and create kind of different sections in your freezer. So I just got these containers at Target. I'll link them in my notes.

You'll want to measure your freezer to make sure that containers will fit before you buy them because every freezer drawer is a little bit different. You can see there's a little bit of extra space here, but not much. And then this is like a divider that the freezer drawer already had. But that's really helpful to just keep different items portioned out so that it's very easy to see what you have at first glance.

SCHOOL LUNCH CART

Okay, we have all the sandwiches in the freezer and now what's next? Your child is not going to take just a sandwich to lunch, to school lunch, obviously. So one thing that I have found super helpful, especially when you want to incentivize or entice kids or set them up for success in putting together their own school lunch, is setting up a school lunch cart. So this is just a rolling cart that I grabbed from Target, and I stock this with all of the stuff that they can put into their school lunch.

So they grab their sandwich and then they grab several things from the school lunch cart. Throw that together, and honestly, my kids can put together their lunch in two minutes. So you want to stock this with whatever your favorites are. Obviously you can see we need a good restocking. So I will restock our rolling lunch cart and then we'll take a look.

STOCKING THE CART

Okay, so let me show you what we've gotten here. Again, this is totally just inspiration. You can fill your cart with whatever you prefer for your kids. I like to put a fruit up here, apples or Clementines. Apples and peanut butter is a great option. We love these Chomps beef sticks, applesauce pouches. And then down here, we've got some fig bars and granola bars. We've got some Goldfish, some Ritz crackers, some popcorn, and some veggie straws.

Now, because I have shared this idea before, I know what some of you may be thinking, which is if I had a cart like this in my house, it would never last until school lunch. Were you thinking that? Be honest. Were you thinking that? It's fine if you were. I get it.

CLEAR BOUNDARIES

If you have a perfectly curated, everything's out cart of school lunch snack items, it may be tempting for kids to just come up and grab. And maybe you're okay with that, maybe you're not. I personally am not because I have four kids, and this would be gone in a couple of days if we allowed that. So I just set very clear boundaries with it. I say I'm going to stock this. This is for your school lunches only. We have other snacks on the counter, in the fridge, in the pantry that you're welcome to have at any time. This is specifically for school lunches.

It is helpful if it's not just right out in your kitchen. I keep it in my laundry room and I roll it out in the morning when the kids are putting their lunches together so it's not somewhere that they're walking past it all the time. It's tucked away. And then I pull it out when they're preparing lunches and then put it back when we're done, which is great to have it on wheels.

SCHOOL LUNCH ONLY

But you're making lunches and you're putting something in their lunch every day. So whatever those items are, it's nice to just put them in one place so that then you can have everything easy to grab and put into their lunch. So I'm not saying go out and buy a bunch of treats or snacks that is going to tempt them all day long. Whatever you're used to putting in their lunches, put it all into a cart so that they can help assembling their lunches.

And also, I like that it allows these things to stay separate for school lunch only, as opposed to just free game snacks like everything else in our pantry and fridge seems to be. Because kids love to eat, right? They get hungry. So I love having these set aside as hey, these are the things that are special for lunches You're welcome to eat whatever else you want in the kitchen. Once these are out, I'm not restocking until next month or whatever the frequency is. So let's save them just for school lunches if possible.

CUPBOARD DRAWER

It's also nice to have a drawer or a cupboard in your kitchen that is also designated for all your lunch stuff. So I've got lunch like school water bottles and thermoses in here. I've got easy lunch boxes which are nice if they are packing something like a dip or they want to just have something that's a little more organized. All their lunch bags in here so that everything is all in one easy to access drawer.

So there you have it. All of my best hacks and tips and tricks for making school lunch packing as easy as possible. Like I said, I will link to all of my favorite lunch packing supplies in the notes of this section and I would love to catch up with you over on Instagram. You can follow me there at homeandkind.

So fun to chat with you today and I hope it was helpful.

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Weekly Planning System to Ditch the Overwhelm

CARA HARVEY • TRANSCRIPT

Hi, I'm Cara Harvey, and I'm super excited to chat with you at today's session on Weekly Planning to Ditch the Overwhelm. I don't know about you, but I am a busy mom who understands what it's like to have a million things running through your brain all the time and never feeling like you have enough time. If you can identify with that statement, you or me are going to have a good time today.

YOUR OWN PLAN

Listen, I love this quote to kick us off. It's by Jim Rohn, and it says, if you don't design your own life plan, chances are you'll fall into someone else's plan. And as moms, man, doesn't our plan often feel like it's never in our hands? This system I'm going to talk to you about today, you can do it in about 30 minutes a week. I do it on Sundays to get set up for the week, and it allows me to have as much control as possible until life throws me a million curveballs. But it also sets me up to be able to pivot around it.

TODAY'S GOALS

These are the things we're going to talk about today. What a system is, why you need it, how we're going to preplan. I'm going to show you the entire thing. We're talking about delegating and priorities. And before we jump in, I'm going to tell you I talk very fast, so hopefully you can pause. You've gotten the replay on this - go and splurge for that pass for yourself, because this is going to be one that you're going to want to watch every single week.

THIS IS CARA

Let me Cliff Notes my story, because you're not here to hear about me. You're here to get your planning under control. I'm Cara Harvey. My kids are six – goodness, nope, five, seven, and sixteen. I am a former burnt out schoolteacher turned entrepreneur, and I am the host of the Purpose Driver Mom podcast. I am the author of the book the 15 Minute Formula, and I am a productivity coach for work at home moms to help you ditch the shame and hustle.

And it happened because I was tired of burning out. I was tired of feeling like I had to put everyone first. And I was tired of the world telling moms that they didn't want it bad enough because they weren't willing to sacrifice their sleep to work on their goals. And today we're going to talk about how you don't have to do any of that.

You don't have to sacrifice your sleep. You don't have to hustle all the time. But instead, you can create a proactive plan that will set you up for success. Even when life is as it is, absolutely imperfect. We call it intentional imperfectionism. Today I'm going to talk about what a planning system is and how you can implement it.

DITCH THE MONDAY MENTALITY

So if you ever sat down at the end of the

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week and just throwing your hands up in the air, been like, what the heck just happened? This is going to help you a ton. The weekly planning system will help you prevent that. It is something that you're going to incorporate each week and then a mini micro version of it each night to make sure that your day is intentional.

If you've ever started a Monday without a plan, you probably know that scattered feeling what am I doing? Where am I going? And I noticed the thing about the moms that I work with, and I've worked with thousands of moms in my programs, is that if they don't do their planning, they struggle to know how to bounce back. They're like, the week just got ahead away from me and I'll just try it again on Monday.

We call it the Monday mentality. And this system will help you ditch that. You maybe know it right where you're going to get excited and you're going to start a new workout plan. So I'm going to go to the gym for like 3 hours a day and run a marathon, and all that crazy stuff that the world tells us we're supposed to do. And then on Monday you're excited, maybe you hit the gym up, it's great. Tuesday you hit snooze and you miss the spot you said you were going to work out. So instead of having a backup plan, you just say, oh well I'll just do it again on Monday.

Well this planning system is going to help you ditch that mentality. Because the thing is friends, the calendar is just a calendar. It is not a be all, end all. It is a tool. And it is a tool you can learn to use to stop with the perfectionism and instead say, what can I do with the life that I have?

WHY YOU NEED THIS

So why do you need it? Listen, if you are tired of coming in last on your list, if you feel like you're triaging life and doing everything for everyone else and not enough for you, this is going to help you. And if you're feeling reactive instead of proactive, you feel like you're just kind of drowning a little bit and treading water in motherhood, this is going to help as well. If you forget appointments or over scheduling things, if you don't have time for your goals, if you've heard yourself saying, oh my goodness, I'll just work on that when I have time, but when am I going to have time for it? This is going to help you not float through your week. We're going to talk about progress and how we can get things done. Okay?

PREPLANNING AND ROUTINES

So this planning system is going to show you how pre planning is going to be the key. Your life and your week is not going to show up exactly like you plan. But when you have a plan, you go in less stress, you're more in control. And instead of saying, I'll just fit this in where I have time, you're going to be intentional.

This is the key here, friend. Not about perfection, about intention.

It's also going to have you working with routines and habits and predictability in your home that are good for you. They're good for your kids, they're good for your mindset. And it also is going to let your family help you out, because you don't need to be the one doing everything all the time.

QUICK OVERVIEW

So how does this system work? We're going to go through it step by step, but here's an overview. About 30 minutes a week, you're going to create a brain dump. You're going to look at last week's goals. We're going to

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make a priority based plan to make sure you don't miss those tasks. Again, 30 minutes a week, that's all it's going to take to set your week up for success. And then on each night for about five minutes, you're going to do the same thing. You're going to say, what happened, what didn't happen, and where can I adjust?

STEP 1: CREATE WEEKLY BRAINDUMP

So let's start with our first step, because we have a lot that we're going to cover in a very short period of time. Again, if you can go back and watch a replay here, I highly recommend it. You sit and plan with me each week. Before you even sit down, I want you to check in with your people. This could be your partner. This could be if you have, like, a grandma who comes watch your kids, if you do, like, co-ops in homeschooling where you're carpooling with someone else, et cetera, check in with them.

What do we have going on this week? What do we need? I am a Girl Scout leader, and I am a cheer coach, and I check in with - I'm the only leader, I don't have a co leader – but I would check in with my plans. But for cheer, I have an assistant coach. I would check in and say, hey, here's where we're at. This is what's going on. What sort of things do we need?

I check in with my husband. Hey, where are you? I have three kids. I mentioned that, right? Three kids who do multiple activities at three different schools. At the moment, we are all over the place. So if I don't check into our Google Calendar, something's going to get missed. Maybe someone doesn't get dropped off or picked up, especially because I coach and I cheer. I don't get to drop my kids off. I'm the one running it. I need my husband to be with my other two kids while I'm with my daughter at practice. And so those are really important things.

If you have any places where you've been tracking your goals, you want your calendar, and you want to also be able to sit and just kind of reflect on your week, then you're going to jump into step one, which is a weekly brain dump.

EISENHOWER MATRIX

I'm going to talk to you about this. It's called the Eisenhower Matrix. If you've never seen it, each week, I recommend you sit and do a brain dump of all the tasks that are running through your head that need to get done. But you're going to go through with the context of this needs to get done by the end of the week. So in this urgent is the following Sunday, end of day. Okay? Why does this matter? Because we will often say that everything is urgent and important when in reality it is not. It can be pushed off. It can replace something else.

So the four quadrants we're going to talk about, and I'm going to go into detail of all of them. As you can see here, this is going to be where you grab a piece of paper, and I want you to write it down on paper. Don't do this in your phone.

Why do we do it in paper? You draw your little cross in the middle. You've got your four sections because on paper, there is an end on your phone, in your notepad, on a Google doc. You can just keep typing. I want you to have some parameters of saying I've got too much in this quadrant. We're going to talk about that in a second.

1st, let's talk about the different quadrants. Okay, so you'll want to split your paper up like this, and then we'll move into our four

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quadrants. Okay?

QUADRANT ONE

Quad one. These are activities that are urgent and important for the week, urgent being the key due by the next week. This is deadlines, meetings, last minute tasks, emergencies. I'm going to give you some examples. My son has kindergarten registration on Monday. A Q1 activity for me this week is to drop off the paperwork at the doctor because I need it done before I go hand in the paperwork, right? Like the vaccinations and all that. That is a Q1 activity. Now, I did know about this for, like, three weeks, so a couple of weeks ago, it might not have been a Q1, but I didn't do it. So here it is. It's now a Q1.

I also mentioned I'm a cheer coach. We have a competition this weekend. I need to run and get, like, little snacks and treats for the girls so I can make them a little goodie bag. That is a Q1. It is urgent. It must be done by the end, and it is also important. We're going to talk about delegating in a second, but right now it's a Q1 for me.

So what do you have this week that are Q1s? Don't just think about things that are tasks to do, but also think about things that are goal related. We're going to talk about putting your goals in in a minute. Say you're on a plan to declutter your house. That's one of the goals that you have. And you have created this plan that says if I clean or declutter two sections of my house a day, by the end of the month, I'll finish decluttering my kitchen.

I want you to write those two sections under Q1. If I don't declutter the spice cabinet and the Tupperware by the end of the week, I'm going to get thrown off. It is urgent and it is important.

Self-imposed deadlines are also urgent. A lot of times we think the only deadlines we write here are the deadlines from other people. But no, it's also those self-imposed ones. So put those in your Q1s.

QUADRANT TWO

Then you're going to go to your Q2. These are things that are important but not urgent for this week. So some proactive, self, current care, learning, relationship building projects, for example. I know that I want to get little gifts for all five of our competitions, right? A Q1 would be going to get the gifts, the candy or whatever for this week's competition.

A Q2 would be getting the candy for the next four competitions. It's not urgent because it doesn't need to be done this week. It's still important.

A lot of times, Q2 activities become Q1 activities if we don't do them with enough space. I mentioned the kindergarten registration I had wrote on my list three weeks ago. A Q2 activity drop off papers at doctor. It didn't get done. So it now is a Q1.

Do you see the difference now? This is also if maybe you have some goals that you're working on that aren't the most pressing. You're trying to get ahead. You're trying to plan your kid's birthday party for two months out. An example for me would be we just went to Disney World a couple of months ago. I want to make a Disney World photo album. It's not Q1 because it's not really due at any day, but it's still important. So I'm going to write that under Q2. Do you understand the difference?

QUADRANT THREE

Now we get to these Q3s. These are things

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that are urgent but not important that you do. I call this the delegate. So, Q1, this is my do it now. Q2, this is my do it later. Q3 is my delegate.

These are other people's things that they need. These are things that other people can do. So here's an example. If under my Q1 activities, I get to the end of the line - and this is why I said to do it on paper - and I realize that I have so many tasks there under Q1 that I can't fit anything else. This is when I'm going to ask myself, is this a Q2, a Q3 or a Q4?

Does it really have to be done this week? If it does, it stays there. But then I'm going to ask myself, is it something I can delegate? If it's something I can delegate, I'm going to take it off my plate and move it down to the Q3 quadrant.

So, for example, I have an assistant coach. I also have a team mom getting the candy for cheer. It's a Q1 right now, so it stays there. But do I have to do it? No. I could text my team mom and say, hey, can you get these done for us? It's urgent, but it doesn't need to be done by me. So look at your Q1s for each week and say, does this actually have to be done by the end of the week? If not, move it to Q2 or can somebody else do it? Then you can move it down.

I don't need to be that. My husband can drop the paperwork off and fill it out just as good as I can. Right, so what are some things you can put there?

QUADRANT FOUR

Our final category. These are Q4. These are things that are not urgent nor important this week. This might be like TV or phone or time wasters, some social media, but again, I am not anti-TV. I like TV. But if I know I have a really busy week and my Q1 is really heavy, I might for the week put going back to re binge Gilmore Girls as a Q4.

It's fun. I want to do it, but I can't fit it in this week. I'm a big reader, so I might put reading for the week as a Q4 for me because it has to go there until I finish my Q1s. Now, if I get through my list and I finish all my Q1s, I can move things around. I can be like, hey, what do I want to do now? I can go to my time wasters because I'm allowed to. I'm a human being.

REEVALUATE

So looking through your week and say, is this something that is not urgent or not important to get done this week? And at the end of the week for next week, when you do your planning, you're going to pull this bad boy out and you're going to rotate everything to the next week. And then you're going to say, hey, what's still in Q1? Do I keep it there or can I move it? What's in Q2 that needs to get moved to Q1, et cetera? And you go through.

This first brain dump is going to get your brain in a good space to actually start to plan. It's, going to get the thoughts out of your head and look at your paper and say, is this actually urgent?

STEP 2: CREATE THEMED BLOCKS

Now, once you've done that, we're going to talk about time blocking. You're going to create theme time blocks. Now, this whole session is not a time blocking . . . I have a whole detailed system. But I'm going to give you some basic general gists on how you can use this for your planning.

Step one, make time blocks. So you can see

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here on the side, I have them listed. Time blocks are about three to four hour chunks. Some of mine are two. As you can see, these are my real time blocks that are built around natural anchors of your day. So, like, I wake up around 5:30, but I put five. That's my dream. 9:00, I take my kids to school. 12:00, I eat lunch. 3:00, I pick them up. Right?

WHERE TASKS GO

And then you're going to put themes down. Now, themes do not say, this is the only thing I work on during this time block. Themes say, this is where my tasks will go, and I'm going to show you that in a minute. So, for example, I've put some work blocks in. You might want to block out work six to nine.

I mentioned Girl Scouts and cheer. We have three days in a row of activities. I put that in as an activities block. Saturday morning activities. I put a self-care block in. Now, this says from five to nine, I'm going to work on my self-care goals. I still have to get my kids ready for school. We still have to get out the door. I'm not ignoring them. I'm just saying this is where it's going to go.

So based on the quadrant that you just made, you're going to make themes that fit that if you have a Q1 that's decluttering your house, you better have - sorry, this is very bossy, I put my bossy pants on - I suggest you have a home block. This setup block, that's my evening routine. I have a goal that's like keeping on track with my loading my dishwasher. I need a place for it to go.

You're going to map those out and you can change them each week. They can be different every day. You can see I have a relationships block here. I don't have one anywhere else. You can choose.

STEP 3: ADD UNCHANGEABLE COMMITMENTS

Now, once you've got your themed blocks, now we're going to add it, fill in stuff. Step one is the things you can't change because we're going to miss them, right? So I put these in this purpley color. If you have a doctor's appointment, we go to church on Sundays. We have Girl Scouts, we have cheer, et cetera. If you have a date night, whenever, if you're at work, whatever your activities are, the stuff that can't change goes in first.

Why? Because we can't miss it. Right? Other people are relying on us to show up, so you have to put those in.

BUILD IN BUFFER

Now, I want to say something about your time blocks. When we move to the next step and when you're adding in goals, et cetera, I suggest you do not fill your time blocks with more than half the allotted time. Why?

Because life's going to happen. Things are going to throw you off. So, for example, if twelve to three, that's 3 hours. I don't want to plan more than 90 minutes of activities for myself to do during that time. Why? Because my doctor's appointment that is a 30 minutes appointment could take an hour. The goal I put there could take longer. Built in buffer, building in buffer leaves you less stressed because you're not worrying about fitting it all in. So when you're going to plan, for example, six to nine, I write Girl Scouts in there. So realistically, three hour block, I shouldn't plan more than 90 minutes. Well, Girl Scouts is an hour, but I get there a half hour early. I talk to parents. I stay an hour late. I still have other things. On days where we have Girl Scouts. I don't

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put anything else in this block. Why? Because I need the buffer time.

Now, if I want to work on other stuff, I can, but I just don't. And that's why my setup, which is like my evening routine, happens after. On days like this, I might do it earlier because we don't have those things. So I'm going to show you that in a second. So start with things you can't change.

STEP 4: TIME FOR YOUR GOALS

Then what we're going to do is add in time for your goals, specifically in 15 minutes chunks. My book I mentioned is called the 15 Minute Formula. I teach a 15 minutes principle.

15 MINUTE CHUNKS

Why 15 minutes? Our brains can wrap around 15 minutes better than anything else. 15 minutes is enough time that I can get lost in TikTok, or I could unload my dishwasher. 15 minutes is enough to say, fine, I'll just put on a timer and do it for 15 minutes. But it's also enough to declutter your whole spice cabinet. If you beat the clock, you can get more done than you think.

MICROTASKS

Now, I mentioned using that buffer time of only having half the block. But the other tip here is micro tasks. So when I am filling up my blocks, I do a couple of things. One, I only try to attempt for half the time of something.

I also do three micro tasks. You might have heard of the concept of the big three, right? Like do your top three priorities. The thing is, if I was to ask you as a busy mom, what your top three priorities are, you're probably going to say, like, your kids and your home, blah, blah, blah.

Where do you fit in? You don't. And if you're only ever working on your big three, then those goals that you have for yourself don't fit anywhere. So here's an example of what I'm talking about on this slide. Let me go back up here. I told you that self-care was my theme in the mornings. So what I put here is I'm going to take a 15 minute walk. Now, again, my walk. I walk about 20 minutes. So it's not 15 minutes, but around. We're not here for perfection.

And then I do a meditation. Okay? Those are the two things I have. I can add a third thing in. I just literally ran out of space on this little thing. But you can see how that's where I add in my self-care tasks. Again, it's not saying I'm only doing self-care. It's saying self-care fits here.

This is my setup block, okay? I'm going to make lunches and I'm going to load my dishes. Those are my tasks. I've pre planned them. I'm not just going to write evening routine down. I'm going to write specifically in 15 minutes or less, what am I going to do? Why? Because I'm tired. And at 9:00 p.m., I just want to sit on my couch and curl up with a book.

But I know that if I make lunches and load my dishes before bed, Tomorrow Cara is going to be like, thank you, Last Night Cara. Right. And I could say to myself, Cara, I know you're tired. We just got home. But it will only take you 15 minutes. Just get it done. Put on a timer. I could put on a podcast. I can talk myself into it.

So you're going to go in and then you're going to go to those goals that you wanted to put on your plate. Maybe they were Q1s. Maybe some of them are even Q2s. And

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you're going to drop them in. I didn't do them all, but I wanted to show you some examples.

STEP 5: LEARNING TIME

All right, we're breezing through. Like I said, I know we were fast and furious today, but I want to show you the whole system because our next step is adding in time for learning.

Learning is so important, and this could be skill based mindset work. We have some moms in my community that are learning languages or how to play. One of them is playing the mandolin, like it's super fun. We have a lot of work at home, moms learning how to start a podcast, a blog, et cetera. Could be I also am working on my confidence or my parenting. You're taking a course, et cetera.

You want to do this in 15 minute chunks. You're not just going to say, I'm going to read a book. You're going to say, I'm going to read chapter one. I'm going to read chapter two, 15 minutes. You notice it's also not the same all week long. That's okay. It doesn't have to be the same. You don't have to do something every day.

MYTH OF CONSISTENCY

Let's talk the myth of what consistency is right now. Everybody thinks consistency is doing something seven days a week. That's the definition of perfection. Consistency is doing something as planned for your plan.

So if you say you want to load, make your lunches four nights a week, and that feels good to you for consistency, that's your consistency. So three nights a week is great. I will never suggest seven times a week.

So see how we're starting to fill these blocks in. Now, again, look at this. Monday block ready from three to six. And I said that was home focused, right? So maybe I'm listening to chapter one and I can add in a couple of tasks while I'm - I've got 90 minutes of task I want to fill - while I'm doing the laundry, while I'm doing my decluttering goal, et cetera. I can pile those together.

45 MINUTES A DAY

Now, we add in everything else. But here's what I'm going to say. You're going to have plenty of time for all the things that other people need from you. But by putting in just 45 minutes a day, you're going to be able to better meet the needs of everyone else because you're filling your cup. You're doing the things for you. You're working on your goals. You're not worrying about, do I do everything for everyone and nothing for me?

My plan is a little backwards, right? Like, yeah, we're adding in the things that need to get done appointment wise, but then we're saying, what do you need in 15 minutes chunks. Now, I also want to say this. It's just 45 minutes, right? If you say you add one goal, one habit, or one routine, it's not a lot of time.

You're worth more than that. You're worth way more than that. But for a lot of us moms, it can feel overwhelming and daunting to put in time to work on a ton of goals. So I want you to actually start smaller.

FLEXIBILITY

The other thing this allows you to do is move things around as needed. You've crafted out your buffer time because you're

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not going to fill the whole 3 hours with stuff. So when your kid gets sick or the dog throws up on the carpet and you have to take extra time to clean it up, you have space for that and you're not jamming it.

I used to love hourly scheduling, and hourly scheduling worked when I was a school teacher. I taught special education. I was doing resource room. I was pushing support, pull out support, running meetings. I was a 9th grade team lead. I was on a 15 minutes schedule as a busy work at home mom.

My life is not like that. My kids do not care. So this allows me to make a schedule that works for me. And the other thing that's great about the time blocking is you've got urgency. You're not saying, I'm going to get this walk done by the end of the day, and then it becomes lunch, and then it becomes dinner. And then you're like, I'll do it tomorrow. You're saying, I'm going to do it by the end of the block.

If you're homeschooling, this is a great way to do your homeschool blocks. You theme them out, you decide what you're doing. This gives you flexibility as well. Sometimes I'll make a goal and maybe my morning is, like Bible reading, walk, meditation. And I get up and I'm like, oh, my God, I do not feel like doing this meditation. And I will just sit and complain and be like, oh, I'm not doing it, I'm not doing it. And then I do none of my morning routine because in my head, well, meditation was first on the list. Of course I need to do it first.

CLAIMING THE POWER

But in actuality, I'm a human being. So what if instead, you said, these are the three tasks I want to get done by the end of the block? I don't care what order I do them in, I'm just going to do them at some point in that walk. Well, now you've claimed your power back. Now. You're like? Heck, yeah. I know when I'm going to get this done and I can start my walk.

And then by the time I'm done with my walk, maybe I'm inspired and the meditation doesn't feel so hard. So you see how you're giving yourself. I know some people are like, oh, my gosh, I don't want to do this. Think of these as your own routines and rhythms. This is not boxing you in. It's saying, listen, by the end of the block, get these things done. You've got extra time for it, you've got buffer, and it's all going to be set for you.

STEP 6: Q1 & Q2 TASKS

Now, what about all those other things we wrote on that quadrant brain dump? They're all going to come into play now. So now that you've set out the things that you want to get done, you're going to look at your list and you're going to say, do I have three? If I don't have three in these tasks, where can I fit in my Q1s?

So you're going to go into your Q1, you're going to look over here at this schedule and you're going to start plopping them in. I got to go drop off the paperwork, right? Well, maybe this was an errands block. I'm going to get it all done there. I recommend having an admin block once a week where you're working on paperwork, where you're making the phone calls to the doctor, et cetera, right?

You're going to go through and do all those things. You're going to say, what other Q1s need to get done? What did I mention was the Q1? Those little candy bags for cheer, right? I have to get those done. Where am I going to fit them? And now you start to fit in the stuff for everybody else and you make

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sure your Q1s have a place here.

Again, try not to put more than half of the time right? Again, in this block, don't put more than 2 hours of tasks. And three, I feel like, is a good number, but you can obviously put more or less, depending on how long stuff takes.

But now you fill the Q1s in, then once the Q1s are filled in, you go to your Q2s. Okay? These things don't need to be done by the end of this week, but if I don't do them by the end of this week, eventually they'll be Q1s.

So the Disney album, it's a Q2 for me, could actually be a Q3. I could probably delegate that. But I don't have 2 hours to sit and work on this album. But can I put 15 minutes to work on it somewhere? It's a Q2. Yeah, sure. So maybe in my home block, I might put 15 minutes to work on Disney album, where I'm just going to scroll through the pictures and favorite the ones I want to add, and then maybe I have another 15 minutes block here where I'll add them up to Shutterfly or whatever. And so I'm slowly moving on those Q2s so that the Q2s do not become Q1s.

KEEPING PRIORITIES

I hope this system lets you see that you can fit stuff in. You're not going to fit everything in. You don't need to jam your schedule. Just because there's a line in your planner doesn't mean you need to fill it. But if you look intentionally at your week, you're going to start to reclaim the time, the stress, the frustration, all of those things that we often feel when we're triaging life as a busy mom.

Here's the thing. This will help you with you and your priorities. What isn't your Q1s for the week, right? The things you want to get working on, the themes that are important to you in this season. Just because I had a relationships block does not mean you need to have one. Just because I have a setup block doesn't mean you need to have one. What do you need?

A lot of times we try to go to Pinterest and we want to find this beautiful Pinterest chart or this perfect planner that's going to save our lives. The planner is not going to save you. The plan is. The plan is going to help you feel more in control of your time.

OFFER FROM CARA

So I know this was fast and furious. I'm around if you have questions. And here's the thing, I'd love to connect more. So you can go to the15 inuteformula.com/free, you can get a copy of well, you can get a workbook that is attached to my book. So if you want to buy the book audio version, Kindle or paperback or hardcover, it's all linked over there.

But I have a whole free workbook that you can get, whether you get the book or not, that helps you with these sort of things. And as you're managing your time, let me know if you have any questions. And thank you for spending time with me today.

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3 Easy Things to Declutter in Each Room

CARLA • TRANSCRIPT

Well, hello there and welcome to today's class. I'm very excited to talk with you today about the easier items to declutter and help you come up with a game plan, a strategy for how to move through your home room by room, finding the easiest things to let go of.

THE CARLA PROJECT

My name is Carla. I have a YouTube channel and a blog called The Carla Project. And I live in a 550, approximately, square foot apartment, a one bedroom in beautiful sunny Los Angeles, California. And I started my decluttering journey, I'd say, two years ago. I have always been someone who is naturally messy at heart. I think I inherited it, honestly.

I grew up in a very messy home with hoarders. Actually, my parents are absolutely hoarders and the house was never in a state where we could have company over. And when I moved out on my own, I think I just adopted that way of life. I had a lot of stuff in my small apartment and it was never tidy. I didn't know how to keep it tidy. I would get it cleaned up if something was happening, if I had people coming over for dinner or an event, I'd figure out how to get it clean and it might last for about 5 seconds and then somehow it would magically implode right back to a set point of just complete pretty much like disaster zone.

And so a couple of years ago, I really had... for years I'd had this deep intention. I wanted a clean, orderly, beautiful home. I wanted that so badly for myself and I couldn't figure out how to make it happen. And I started to document my journey on YouTube and I sort of intuitively started to figure out that I needed less stuff.

OVERFLOWING CONTAINER

I pictured a container and things just overflowing. If things are just overflowing, you can't put the lid on the container, it's just too much. And I thought, okay, I'm going to figure out how to get my place into a tidy set point that is maintainable for me.

And I took into account my lifestyle, my strengths, my weaknesses. I live alone, I have a dog, although I do have a dog and he's very important. If you've ever seen my videos, you've met my dog Samson. He's amazing and I feel like he is my son. He really is my son. And he has a lot of requirements. So yeah, we're both high maintenance, but in this one bedroom, it was just too much stuff for this small of a space. And also I'm someone who doesn't really have a high threshold for managing a lot of things.

GAME PLAN FOR YOU

But whatever point you are in your life, if you're living in a home with multiple kids, if you have elderly parents that you take care of, which I've also been a caretaker for my dad for the last several years. And then prior to that, I was a caretaker for my mom before

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she passed. So I understand that life comes with a lot of responsibilities, and we all have a lot on our plates, and we're trying to find ways to simplify our homes and our lives.

So I want to talk about that and give you a game plan and a strategy for making that happen in your own home, in your own lives, because life is so much better on the other side.

And the way that I work is I went room by room, and I'm going to talk to you today about the easiest items to declutter, room by room in your house so that you can leave today's class, take action. That's what I really want for you.

MAGIC IN TAKING ACTION

I love learning as much as the next person. I truly love learning, and it feels so good to sit and get the information. But the real change in magic happens when you take action and you implement what we're going to talk about today.

And so when I started my decluttering journey, I started in the smallest room in my home, which is the bathroom. And so I now have gone on to help a lot of other people. I've worked with about 40 different people, some of whom have allowed me to film for my channel, some of whom are friends for many, many years.

ANYONE CAN DO IT

And I've learned method and strategies that really work best depending on however you're coming to this decluttering journey. If you're overwhelmed and you have piles and mountains of items and you don't know how you're ever going to get through it, I'm here to tell you that it is possible. It is doable. I have decluttered everything from a complete hoarder household. And I was able to do that as just me, one person, with some help here and there for my friends.

But it doesn't matter what state you're in, you can get to a new place. And before, I would say my home was clean and organized, maybe five to 10% of the time, and now it's the opposite. I'd say my home is clean and organized, I'd say more like 80% of the time, it's clean and organized and life happens. I have chronic pain conditions. Some days I don't feel well and I'm not able to do my tidy routine.

DECLUTTER, ORGANIZE, MAINTAIN

But I'd say the first step always is decluttering. If you have less to manage, it's going to be easy. The second step is to find a home for everything, which is organizing. And then the third step is those maintenance routines and habits to keep things in a clean, orderly, beautiful way that makes you happy.

So here's what I want you to do. You can take out a pen and paper if you want, but I have a checklist that I've created. You can go to thecarlaproject.com/checklist and get it. It's totally free. You can print that out and use it to start your own decluttering journey. But I want to challenge you when you're ready, hopefully within the next 24 hours. Grab a box, grab a bag, get a couple of bags or boxes. It's really all you need to start decluttering and you can set a timer.

BATHROOM DECLUTTERING

I want you to start earlier in the day, if possible, when you have energy, maybe you have your coffee to give you that little extra jolt of energy. I want you to grab your bags and boxes and we're going to

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start in the bathroom. So I like to start in the bathroom because typically it's one of the smaller rooms in the home, smaller contained room. And I find that the items in the bathroom are easy to let go of. We're not going to start with sentimental items or anything that you're really going to have to have a lot of decision making process around.

We want things that are an easy yes no. And the bathroom contains a lot of items that are basically they're either going to go into the trash or you're going to keep them and organize them, but it's not too much in between. And of course, there's items that you can recycle, dispose of, responsibly, like medications, et cetera. But I want you to start in the bathroom and here's the challenge.

FIND 25 THINGS

I want you to go in there and find 25 items to declutter. And I'm going to talk about some of the easier ones to let go of. But I bet you can find 25 items. So the first obvious thing that you can find in your bathroom, if you have anything in your bathroom that's still in the package or in the box, there's so much packaging now with items nowadays, I've realized you can decant your products. Like, I get my contact lenses delivered and they come in a box and then another box and another box. And so I like to take all of that apart. It's like doing Rubik's Cube, taking all of this apart and just getting to my contact lenses and putting them in a simple pouch, open container that I can just grab my lenses from.

1. TRASH AND PACKAGING

So basically the first thing is any trash, anything that's just the packaging. I feel like that's an easy thing and it can make such a big difference in terms of space. These items, just, it lets them breathe. So decant your products, get them out of their packaging, the excess packaging, and get that out of the bathroom, that's one easy thing.

2. EXPIRED ITEMS

The other really easy thing is anything expired, anything basically past its used date. And I mean, I have found products that were five, six, seven years expired in my own home. And when I decluttered my parents' home, I found items from the 90s, even items that were decades old that were still sitting on the shelf in the bathroom. So anything expired, we want to let go of, and that definitely counts.

And expired medications you can always drop off at your local drugstore. They usually have some sort of recycling program, but a lot of these items in your bathroom can really go into the trash.

3. PRODUCTS YOU DON'T LIKE

The next thing I'd say that's very easy is anything you don't like. I want to give you permission to let go of those things that you bought that were mistakes that you don't like. I have done that so many times. And in the bathroom, I had a huge makeup declutter I did before I even started documenting my journey. I've gotten so sensitive with what felt good on my skin. And that's the thing. It's like we change over time, so our homes should be allowed to change with us. And I'm, someone who now really doesn't like to wear makeup, actually don't really like to wear a lot of makeup at all. I'll do some lip gloss, and I got to draw on my eyebrows because they've disappeared.

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I never had much to begin with, but I got rid of so much makeup that I had bought over the years and a lot I'm sure of, which was expired, but I just held onto because I spent money on it. And that logic of spending money on something and not wanting to let go of it, it's like I've already done the transaction. It's already done. Why am I going to turn my limited bathroom space into a storage area so I can hold on to something that I just am not going to use?

So if you have things, if you have products in your bathroom that you don't like the smell of, that you don't like the feel of that, don't do what they say they're going to do, that you just know it was a mistake. You can let go of those items. I think you can let go of them.

4. SAMPLES

The other item that I find easy, or actually, I should say a lot of people find easy to let go of . . . I, for some reason, have a hard time letting go of samples, but hotel size samples, samples of anything in the bathroom. What I like to do is give myself a 30 day deadline to use the samples up. And I understand if you want to hold on to a couple of sample sizes for when you take your trip or your holiday, but get honest with yourself. Be real. Do you really need a ton of sample size shampoos and conditioners and bars of soap? Probably not. So I think that's an easy thing to also let go of.

Just a few ideas to get you started, but the main thing I want you to do, 25 items. Start in the bathroom. Decluttered into bag or box, and we're ultimately going to get these items out the door, out of the house. Okay, so that's my bathroom decluttering first.

CLOSET DECLUTTERING

The next room I want you to move on to is the closet. Closet, bedroom area, my closet. I have a small closet behind me, but I want you to start in your closet that contains your clothing. You might live in a home where you have a linen closet, storage closet. I also have a hallway closet, but I want you to start with your clothing next. After you've done your bathroom, we're going to move on to the closet where all the clothes are, because I find this is an area where, this area requires us also to get honest. You got to love it.

Decluttering is so much about being honest with what your truth is, really finding what's true for you now today, not true for who you used to be and not true for who you fantasized you might be, but who you really are and what your life currently looks like.

YOU IN REALITY

Now, I've done three closet declutters. It took several passes. That's something I want to say, is just because you're maybe starting on a decluttering journey or maybe you've been on one for a while, I really think it's a lifestyle. I think it's a way of life to constantly edit and curate what is a fit for us at any given time. And our closets are a really great exercise in seeing who are you authentically right now. And do the clothes in your closet reflect who you are in reality?

And I want to look at this on a scale because I think there's who I am when I'm feeling my best and I'm dressed up. Like today, I'm wearing my nice fancy top, and I feel great in this. It's just a nice simple wrap top with sort of like, balloon sleeves. So this is great when I feel like I want to dress up for something special, like today's lesson.

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But then there's who I am on a day where I'm running errands. I'm taking my dog to the vet. I'm bringing food to my dad. I'm getting my car washed, filling it up with gas. And on that day, in reality, I'm probably going to be wearing leggings or sweatpants and a T shirt. But I still can look and feel good.

It's just that I used to have these perfectionistic ideas of what my wardrobe would look like, and I was shopping so much based on not really having a clear idea of what my style was. I had so many random items that I was buying, I wasn't really thinking of building a wardrobe. But I've let go of all of these perfectionistic ideas, and I've just gotten real about my current life. Okay.

What do I do? For the most part, I work from home. I take care of myself. I take care of my dog. I help take care of family members. My dad and I like to work out. That's a new thing in the last few months. So I've added activewear, where I'm not just wearing it. I used to wear active wear and just wear it. I wouldn't actually be active in it, but now I'm working out. So that's a big part of my life. And now I have a little bit more activewear.

I'll meet up with friends for dinner occasionally. Sometimes I'm dating, so I might want a couple of date night outfits, but I don't need evening gowns. It's not really my life. So think about your life. Think about clothes that make you feel good. And then I want you to go into your closet and see if the clothes in there are a match.

1. WHAT DOESN'T FIT

And the first things we're looking for items that don't fit. Anything that doesn't fit. I'm someone who's been on a weight loss journey, and I have been on the roller coaster of up and down, up and down over many, many years. Honestly. Oh, my gosh, so many years. But I did lose 50 pounds about, I think, almost three years now.

And I have been someone who's always held onto dream clothes that I might fit into someday one day. And the truth is, it's like whenever that someday comes, if it comes, I could just buy myself a pair of jeans. Then I don't need to hold on to seven or eight pairs of jeans from when I was in my 20s, hoping that they fit again or might fit. And no, it just doesn't feel good.

So letting go of clothes that don't fit, I think that's a big one. And it's a big breakthrough when you let go of those items, because it feels really good to have clothes that you know, fit. Even though our bodies can fluctuate, which my body definitely fluctuates. So depending on where I'm at in the month, items will fit better than some. But those items that you can't even get past your knee, like jeans that don't even go up your thighs, anything like that, I think it's time to say goodbye. Say goodbye. Thank you and goodbye. And step into the truth of who you are and find clothes that make you feel so good right now.

2. ITEMS IN BAD SHAPE

The other thing to look for in your closet, clothing items that are worn out, things that are torn, with holes, permanently stained, pilled, just in really bad shape, bad condition. That's another thing I found I was doing, was holding on to clothes that were not really in a wearable state. And for some reason, I either operated in these extremes of dressing like schlumpidink, just totally embracing dressing, hobo, chic, not even chic, just super run down. Or if I had something to do, getting super dressed up. There was no in between.

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So I really had to almost force myself to let go of that crutch of these clothes that were just so threadbare, it was time to let go of those. So if you have items, you might not have the disparity that I had between those two, but if you have items that you don't feel good in, that you don't like, that don't fit and that are worn out, I want them to go and just go through your closet and see if you can find 25 items to donate or to recycle.

There are a lot of different stores that offer recycling programs. I know H and M does. I believe Zara does. Here in Los Angeles there's a place called Sway LA. But if you look online clothing recycle, you'll be able to find somewhere.

And check in with your accessories. See if there are belts, scarves, purses that you might not ever use that you're also ready and willing to let go of.

KITCHEN AND PANTRY DECLUTTERING

Next up, let's talk kitchen and pantry. Also, some of my favorite areas to declutter.

1. CLEAN OUT FRIDGE

Okay, so with the kitchen, I want you to start with your fridge. I read many years ago how cleaning out your fridge can lead to unexpected abundance. And it's something I started doing in my early twenties. And I would always have these strange things happen afterwards when I would completely clean out my fridge.

Get rid of any old produce, that sad bag of salad that's in the crisper box that no one eats, clean out the freezer, just completely reset it. It feels so good to do that. So I want you to clean out your fridge in your freezer, put it on your calendar if that makes you feel good. Find a day to clear out your fridge and your freezer and get rid of all of the, you know what to do.

Anything that's not edible goes into the trash. And check in with your condiments, all of those condiments alongside the door. I bet it might be time to let go of half of those. Very easy thing to declutter is those condiments that are expired or that you don't like.

Sometimes you buy a condiment. I bought a truffle aioli the other day and it's just not good. It's not good. So I need to declutter that. It's currently sitting in my fridge. And yeah, I don't like it. And I don't have enough people over to justify keeping a large jar of truffle aioli that I don't like the taste of at all. I digress.

2. BULKY UNUSED APPLIANCES

Other things we're looking for in the kitchen. Large appliances that you don't really use. Think about it. Think about what large appliances you might have in your kitchen that you don't really use. I used to have a popcorn maker, so I should say that you don't use and that you probably don't need, because I figured out I can just make popcorn in a pot on the stove. But for some reason I had a popcorn maker and I live in a one bedroom apartment.

So whatever your version is of that, whatever large appliance that's taking up space that you don't use, if it's been twelve months and you haven't used it, you've gone through all the seasons in a year and it hasn't been used, you can donate that. You can let that go. So we're looking for any of those larger pieces that are really going to give us some of our precious real estate back in our kitchens, depending on what

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size kitchen you have.

3. EXPIRED PANTRY ITEMS

The other thing I want you to look for in your pantry. I do kitchen and pantry together, but pantry, again is a great time to check in on items and see if there's anything that's greatly expired that you might be ready to let go of. You can also put those aside and say goodbye.

4.DUPLICATES

Another thing is duplicates. If you have multiples of the same item, if you have three can openers, five bottle openers, things that you just have excess of that you really don't need. I have one can opener. I actually used to have an electric can opener and a handheld one, and I got rid of the electric one. It was big and bulky and I don't mind doing it by hand and I'm able to do it by hand, so it was totally fine. I just let go of the big, bulky electric can opener.

LIVING AREA DECLUTTERING

Now let's touch on those common living areas. I currently live alone. I have definitely lived with other people many times in my life. So when you're decluttering for yourself, want you to focus on your items first and it might inspire the other people that you live with to check in on their items next.

1. CANDLES

Common living spaces. The items that I find can start to make these areas feel crowded. I want you to check in for candles. A lot of times we hold onto these half-burned candles. Bed, Bath & Beyond scented candles, three fourths of the way burnt down, just all over the living room, all over the dining room. Check in with those candles that are probably pretty much done and could just be let go of.

2. OLD MAGAZINES AND NEWSPAPERS

Old magazines, newspapers, really paper clutter in general. So difficult, the amount of paper that still comes into our lives. But magazines, newspapers, old ones of those. Easy area that you won't really miss, easy area to declutter. And I bet depending on who you are, you might be able to find 25 items, paper items alone, to declutter from your living room, your dining room, or any common living spaces that you share with your family.

3. OUTDATED ELECTRONICS

Now, if you have any electronics that are not functional that you keep thinking you're going to get repaired or maybe they've been replaced with a newer model, I think it's time to let go of those. So maybe you have old cassette tape players, VHS players, CD players. Things are moving so quickly. MP3 players, a lot of those old outdated electronics that can be discarded. Check Best Buy. A lot of times they have an electronic recycle program, but you could literally just Google best electronic recycle program.

4. FURNITURE THAT SERVES NO PURPOSE

And the last thing I'll say about the common living spaces is really look around your room with fresh eyes and see if you have any bulky furniture pieces that are taking up space that aren't really adding to the functionality of the room.

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So I had a small white table in my living room and then I also had this double shelf, glass tiered glass table, and then I had my desk. So I had a whole bunch of tables and I have one small living room. I didn't need all of those pieces of furniture. So I've gotten rid of two of those three things and actually the third one is on its way out as well.

So I want you to actually look at your furniture and really check in and see does this add anything to the space? Does this give me any kind of function? Is it something comfortable that you can sit in? Or is it just another space that collects clutter that you just end up throwing piles of things on top of? If that's the case, consider decluttering some of those furniture items as well.

ENTRYWAY DECLUTTERING

So the last area I want to touch on is the entryway. Entryways, exit ways of our homes. I have a front door and a back door. And these zones, they're basically drop zones for when you walk in the door and they can easily become cluttered and or disorganized.

A PLACE FOR THINGS

So a couple of things that have really helped with my entryway number one, hooks on the wall. Having hooks on the wall, it's a game changer. My keys now have a home. And if you don't want hooks on the wall, then just simple bowl for when you walk into your door. Whatever room that leads you into. If you have a specific dedicated entryway, just having somewhere to put your keys, your sunglasses, maybe your wallet, I think those items that you can't leave home without, need to have their own dedicated zone, their own dedicated space.

1. CHECK AREA ITEMS

And also do a spot check on any seasonal type accessories. I live in La. Where it's pretty much 75 degrees almost every single day of the year. But I know if you are living in an area where the seasons change, just think of packing up those items that you are not using right now that are not in season and putting them into your storage closet or into your garage, wherever you keep your items that are seasonal.

Your entryway can be a really great time to do a spot check on items like coats, umbrellas, see if anything's broken, see if anything's worn out, see if these items maybe don't fit you or your children anymore, anything that isn't actually used, anything you don't need.

I think those are the foundational rules for decluttering in my home. If I don't love it, if I don't use it, and if I don't need it, it goes, I have the right to say goodbye and you have the right to do the same thing.

So we have managed to touch on the main areas of the home, starting with the bathroom, going through our closets, moving on to kitchen and pantry, and then common living spaces.

OTHER ROOMS

So I know, depending on your house size, you may have many other rooms. You might have a laundry room, you might have a home office. You might have your kids' rooms. You might have a patio, a backyard, a garage, an attic. The bottom line is, no matter what space you're decluttering, I want you to always bring it back to one item at a time. You're going to pick up one item, even if it's as small as the bobby pin, and you're going to make a decision.

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ALL ABOUT DECISION MAKING

Decluttering is all about decision making, and we want to limit our decisions so we don't get decision fatigue. And I want you to only give yourself the option to keep something, to throw away something. Or recycle, that includes recycling or to donate. So it's keep, donate, trash. Want to keep it as simple as possible so that you don't get overwhelmed.

And no matter what item you pick up, it has to fit into one of those containers. Let's say you have a junk room or a room that is overflowing with a whole bunch of random items. I still want you to always focus on getting 25 items at a time out the door.

If you're dealing with an excess situation, maybe even a hoarder situation, if you do 25 items a day, every single day for a month, that's 750 items that you'll have out the door of your home. So it does work.

BUILDING MOMENTUM

These small action steps will add up to bigger results over time and being consistent. And the momentum that you start to feel as you tackle these smaller rooms or these smaller projects, and just getting your first day of 25 items, it will create momentum and you will feel so good.

But if you are dealing with a junk room or really any other room in your home that we haven't covered, I want you to focus on one item at a time. So the thing with decluttering is you're going to have a few different options of what you can do with the item that you pick up.

But I want you to pick up one item at a time. And it's really great because it will actually help you to get better with your decision making, which is something that can only help you in every area of your life.

But I want you to pick up one item and make a decision. And so your options are to keep the item and find a home for it, to trash the item, whether you're going to throw it in the trash or to the recycled bin, to donate the item, or to relocate the item, which means take it to another room in the house.

ONE ITEM AT A TIME

You're going to pick up one item. I will pick up this journal, for example. Okay. Am I going to keep this? Yes. Where does this go? All right, this goes in my bookshelf. So I'm going to put that on my bookshelf. Okay. I've Got this little fan. I never use this. So still works. I'm going to donate this going into the donate pile. Okay.

So it's like you have these little containers, and we want to limit our options so that we don't have unending decisions to make. I've got this matchbox. It is empty. I think I'll throw this into the trash.

You're going to pick up one item and you're going to make a decision about it, and you're just going to do that. And anytime you get overwhelmed, you're going to go back to the principle, which is one item at a time. You can't get overwhelmed if you keep focusing back on one item and forcing yourself to make a decision on that one item.

IT CAN WORK

I hope that today's session has been helpful and inspiring for you. I am someone who really did live in complete chaos and clutter for many, many years of my adult life and growing up. And I have to say that living in

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a home that is decluttered and organized, it has added so much joy, and it's improved the quality of my life so much.

And if I can do it, anyone can do it. It doesn't mean that you're a minimalist in an empty room and you only wear black and you have one book and one fork and one spoon.

No, this is your home. You get to create it however you want. But it does feel really good to have a home filled only with the items that you love, that you use and that you need, and you get to define that for yourself. And it's such a great lesson in just authentic living, and it helps you get better with decision making. I really think decluttering, if you do that one thing in your life, it can affect so many other areas of your life.

Thank you so much for watching today's, class. And thanks to Get Organized Head Quarters for organizing this tele-summit. I have loved being a part of it. I hope you'll check me out at my YouTube channel, the Carla Project, and make sure to download the free checklist, thecarlaproject.com/checklist, and I'll see you guys later. Bye.

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Limited Storage Space Solutions

CARLI SABO • TRANSCRIPT

Hi there. I'm Carly from Clutter Free Carly, and today I want to talk all about how to organize a small space.

HI CARLI

First, I want to tell you a little bit of background information about me. I started this journey when I was a daycare provider several years ago. Now, I lived in a 2000 square foot home, so I really didn't have trouble with space. But I did have trouble with clutter because I watched a lot of kids, all under the age of six. So I really had to learn to implement systems that would help my daycare and my home run smoothly and save my sanity.

Fast forward to a couple of years later. We moved to Virginia and we bought a home that was only 1300, was built in the 70s, so it has very limited storage space. I kind of want to take you through a couple of different rooms in my house and give you my tried and true tips and tricks in how I make each space function every day.

THE KITCHEN

Okay, I want to start in the kitchen. Because the kitchen truly is the heart of your home. I included a free decluttering checklist in every single room we're going to cover today. These checklists can be found in my e-course, along with organization guides, product recommendation guides, and detailed videos of my eight baby-step decluttering method.

Speaking of my decluttering method, the first thing you need to know when organizing a small space is that you have to declutter. The key is to get as much off of your countertops as possible. I've come up with some secrets to getting clutter off the counters.

The reason why this is an important thing to do is because clutter attracts clutter. So the more things we have on our counter, the more we're going to just set things that don't belong on our counter. But when our minds see a clear surface, we can easily recognize, hey, this doesn't belong here.

GO VERTICAL

One of the ways you can eliminate counter clutter to take advantage of your vertical storage. So, for example, instead of having a big knife block right here, we have a magnetic knife strip with our knives.

DECANT

One thing I wanted to show you was inside my cabinets. I don't have a lot of cabinet space, so the key for me has always been decanting my food. If you don't know what decanting is, it's just taking stuff out of the packages, out of the original packages that take up a lot of space and putting it in containers, glass jars, et cetera. So I've decanted all of my spices. They fit really nicely in these glass jars. I'll link all my products that I mentioned in this video for

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you guys, but this just saves a lot of space rather than just having them all the same or all different sizes. They're all the same size, all pretty uniform.

I also have quick, easy to reach, see through baskets. I always keep a spice overflow whenever I am dealing with spices, because you always have more than what fits in the actual jar.

THE PANTRY

I wanted to show you what we do for a pantry. Obviously, in a small space, we don't have a pantry. So, same thing as with my spices, I decant all of my food into these Oxo containers. One thing I also love about decanting your food is you can see when you're running low on something. Whereas if I were to open this up, have you ever opened up the box of cereal and noticed there's, like, this much? That whole box was taking up so much real estate when you only had this much cereal left.

So all of these just fit so nice and neat. And this is really all I need for pantry space. We also have a Molly Maid pantry that I will show you. It's just a standing dinky little pantry that we've made to utilize extra food storage space. This is my standing pantry. It creaks. So we know every time the kids are getting in here, which is convenient. It's not perfect. But you know what? It works for this house and this small space. This is where I keep fruits and vegetables. We keep them in hanging baskets on the wall. Again, taking advantage of that vertical space.

This is the cabinet where I keep baking wear and food storage. I'll show you a better view of this, but found what's key is to keep limited Tupperware. I love these Caraway ones. I store them with the lids on. With Caraway in particular, it comes with, like, an organizing thing. It makes it really easy to put our food storage containers away.

CLOSETS

The thing everybody always asks about is, what do you do with closet space? We have two kids sharing a tiny closet per bedroom. Obviously, that is very limited storage space for the amount of people we have living here. And so I've really found the key is creating a capsule wardrobe.

You can find out more about capsule wardrobes by YouTubing, Googling. There's a lot of information out there. Basically, it's when you take a curated amount of items and you rotate through them. So you only have a few shirts, and you have all pants that match the coordinating shirts. You have to do laundry more frequently. But I've just found that's what works for us.

NO FOLD LAUNDRY

Another thing that works really, really well for our family in this small space is our no fold laundry system. Let me show you that I bought these storage cubes. Really, they're really affordable on Amazon. You just throw them together, and I have one in each kid's closet. There's one bin for one child's PJs, one bin for that same child's pants, and then shirts get hung up. Now, what makes this really easy . . . I don't know how this got in there, but that's not supposed to be in there.

Obviously, when this basket gets full, this is my guide. This is my container. When it's no longer containing things, I know I have too many clothes for my kids, and we have to declutter some of them. I don't fold my kids' clothes because, let's be honest, if you have kids under the age of five, they just get unfolded anyways. I discovered early

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on I was no longer going to waste my time folding when I didn't have to be.

ARTS AND CRAFTS

I wanted to show you what we do with arts and crafts. I had to get really creative. We homeschool here in our dining room. So this is the main hub for all the arts and crafts and all of the other dining room supplies. I bought this unit from Ikea. It's the Ikea Kallax unit. If you open it up, it has all of our homeschool books in these cabinet parts. This cabinet part is an insert that you buy extra.

Let me show you our craft container. This is where we keep all of the arts and crafts. I love keeping this up high. If you have young kids, you know that you don't want all the arts and crafts down at the same time. Zipper mesh pouches are really good when you have small space, because all the boxes take up a lot of space.

All of the game boxes, all the arts and craft boxes, these bags don't take up that much space. I file, I don't pile. And then this goes back up on our Kallax unit. These different drawers store things like erasers, crayons, pencils, my home school magnets, glue, all the things in one easy location. It's easy to find.

THE ESSENTIAL FACTOR

This system is one of my favorite systems in our whole small house. So we can't talk about organizing a small space without talking about the most essential factor, decluttering. I want to go over some of the most common setbacks when it comes to decluttering and how you can solve them.

GETTING FAMILY ON BOARD

Right now, something I hear really often is, well, I'm an organized person, and my house would be tidy and organized if it wasn't for my family. And the one thing that I always advise is that you can't control other people. You can't control your family members, what they do, but you can control yourself and how you react to clutter.

A lot of times when we start decluttering our own belongings or our own clothes, our own hobbies around the house, we can start to see that our spouse is noticing the difference. They're noticing the difference in our anxiety levels. They're noticing the difference in certain spaces in our home. And a lot of times that motivates them to jump on the bandwagon.

If not, there are some other practical solutions that you can do first when it comes to both spouses and kids. Do you have everything in your home labeled? Do you have clear, easy to read labels for kids? I always suggest picture labels instead of words. Kids who can't read most small children can't read. So you might know where Barbies go, but if you don't have like a Barbie picture labeled, they're not going to know they can't read the word Barbies. So clear picture labels and then large picture labels.

STAY CONSISTENT

Another thing is I tend to play musical organization chairs, which is not good because my family is used to things going in a certain spot, and then lo and behold, I've moved that thing out of that spot. So you want to make sure you're keeping things consistent.

Also, making systems where your family is naturally dropping things really helps. So if they're coming in the door and dropping

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their shoes right there or not hanging their coats up, you may want their coats behind a hidden wardrobe or hung up on the hanger, but that doesn't work for your family. So we have to adjust for our family's needs. And so what I did was I hung hooks. We have this shoe rack. It's not the cutest, but it works really well for my family. And so that's what we use.

NO TIME TO ORGANIZE?

Another common setback is time. I don't have the time to organize. I have four small children, so I am not giving you any grief about this. Trust me, I get it. Time is really hard to come by, especially when it comes to things you don't want to do, like decluttering.

I always suggest setting a timer. This is baby step number three in my baby step decluttering process. And I found that setting a timer really, truly does help. Setting a timer is a really good thing to do, especially if you struggle with something like add ADHD like myself. It just gives your brain a place to stop. And you're not so overwhelmed at I'm going to be decluttering all day long. No, you're going to start with 15 minutes, and when your timer goes off, you can stop for the day.

Another reason setting a timer can be really helpful is that you can keep going. It gives you motivation. Oh, I did 15 minutes of this. I can keep going. Sometimes all it takes is 15 minutes a day to get your house to a manageable place.

GIFTS

So another common setback is gifts. That is something that is really hard, especially if you have a family with a lot of young kids and your family members keep gifting your children toys. We don't want to hurt family members feelings. It can be really hard to deny your children all of the toys and all of the fun things.

And so one thing that we do recently, I found an app called Evite, and we create a birthday party Evite, and we send it virtually. And on the Evite, there's an area where you can put your Amazon registry. Did you know on Amazon you could create a gift registry for birthdays? And then in the invitation, we say something like, so for my daughter Freya, who has an upcoming birthday I will say Freya has everything she needs. Right now, your presence is the best present.

But if you would like to get her something, we are asking that you would please stick to the Amazon gift list or gift Freya with an experience gift. She loves to go to the zoo. She loves to go to the park. She would love to just spend time with you. And so that's how we handle that. And then if it keeps happening, I don't feel bad letting my children play with the toy for a while until they get tired of it. And then I will gift it to a family who will really use and love that toy.

NO GUILT

I'm at the point where I do it guilt free, and my family has gotten to the point where they really will ask me now, hey, what do they want for birthdays? Because they don't want me decluttering the things that they buy. They want to invest well. I want them to invest well. And so I've really found that the fact that they know I'm Clutter Free Carli helps because they don't want to waste their money.

And I don't think any of your family members would want to waste money on something that you'll just declutter in the

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future. So you can't think of it as hurting feelings in that way. So I hope those tips are helpful.

SENTIMENTAL ITEMS

When it comes to family gifts, let's talk about sentimental items. That is actually the number one setback when it comes to decluttering, and it can be really hard, especially if you've had a family member that passed. Some things that I do is I always try to remember that the value of the item and the memory of the item is not in the actual item itself.

We carry our memories in our hearts. So when we look at some china that's our grandmas, we don't use it. We don't necessarily even think it's cute. We don't love it. But every time we look at it, we think of Grandma, and we can't imagine parting with it because Grandma used this china set.

ASK YOURSELF

What I do is I can look at it and think, do I love this because Grandma used it, or do I love it because it was Grandma's? Sometimes we're attached to things that Grandma didn't even use. It's like, why are we so attached to this? I never saw her use that china ever. It was just hers. She had it piling dust in an attic somewhere.

Another thing you can do is take a picture of the item or keep just one piece of the set instead of keeping the whole china set. That really helps when it comes to sentimental things for me personally.

Well, thanks guys, for joining me today. I had so much fun talking about how to organize for your small space. I hope some of these tricks and tips really help you help take away the overwhelm. I know it can be hard, but it is not impossible.

You've got this, my friend. If you want more information on myself or to find more tips and tricks, you can always find me on Instagram under clutterfreecarli. Bye.

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Organize a Drawer with Me! Live & Interactive

CAS AARSSEN • TRANSCRIPT

Hi, I'm Cas from Clutterbug. I'm so excited to have you here with Get Organized HQ. I'm gonna be your Clutter coach today. And if you've never heard of me before, again, my name's Cassandra, but Cas for short. I am the owner of a company called Clutterbug, which helps you identify your unique organizing style so that you can actually work with your natural tendencies to get organized for good.

I'm also the host of HGTV's Hot Mess House, which is banana pants, because I am not a naturally organized person at all. Even today, I struggle with organization.

TODAY'S AGENDA

So I've learned some tips and tricks and techniques to actually have a functional, organized space. And that's what we're going to do today.

We are going to interactively, together, organize a drawer. So go ahead and move to a drawer, move to a space. Bring your laptop or bring your phone, whatever you're watching this on, with you. And if you can't, that's okay. You can rewatch this session later, and we can organize together.

WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT

The reason I wanted to do this with you is because most people really fail to keep an organized house because they're making some huge mistakes. They're not using the right technique. I'm going to show you how to make it fast, easy, and so it stays tidy. That's what this is all about.

And it isn't about what it looks like. We're not chasing rainbows here. We're not trying to make this look like Pinterest. We're trying to give you a home that's easy to maintain. That's what this is all about.

So move to your drawer, move to your space. And here is the first step. I'm doing a junk drawer. This was organized. I dumped it all out to make it a hot mess sandwich just for you, so that we can do this together.

THE DEATH OF PROGRESS

Normally, when you organize a space, what do you do? You take everything out and you start making little piles. You're like, okay, rulers are going to go here. Flashlights are going to go here. Oh, I need a pile for tools. I need a pile for pens. I need a pile for highlighters.

And you've taken one pile and spread it out into 50 little piles. This is the death of progress. This is why we're failing, because this is overwhelming. We have to think constantly about every item, where it should go in the pile.

JUST TWO PILES

So what we're not thinking about is the most important thing in the first step, which is, do I need this? And so here's what you do. I want you to pull everything out

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one at a time and only sort it into keep or go. And maybe the go is like, well, this could be recycled, or this goes in another room. I don't want to put it back in the drawer, but it isn't trash.

It doesn't matter. We're going to sort the go pile later. You're only going to sort this into this is going back into the drawer or this is not going back into the drawer. Okay, that's it.

STOPPING DECISION FATIGUE

This stops decision fatigue. So go ahead and start doing this right now. And as you're doing this, this keep, go, I want you to really think again about nothing else. Zen your mind. Okay? Zen that mind and only is this keep or go?

Keep, go. Keep, go.

Decision fatigue is the number one reason why we fail when it comes to organization. Because if we're thinking about what pile this rubber band needs to go into, we're not thinking about, am I actually going to use this rubber band or is this trash? Do I want this in my home?

So the most effective way and fastest way to declutter is this two pile method. And I want you to keep - right now, like literally while you're watching this, right now, let's sort into these two piles.

MOVE QUICKLY

So I'm going to do this really quickly. Two into keep, and go. This isn't actually going it's just not going back into here. So we're going to keep all the batteries and the rest is go. Keep sorting, friends. Keep go. Keep go. This is going. No idea what these keys are to. They're leaving.

Wine glasses. I forget that I own these. These are like you write on the wine glass when you're entertaining, you put everybody's name on them. Number one, I don't entertain because I have social anxiety. Number two, even if I did have people over, I don't drink alcohol. And number three, even if I did have someone over and we were having a glass of wine, I would never remember that I owned this wine marker or think to look for it. So it needs to leave my house. It's just extra clutter.

You might have things like that in your drawer, too. If you forgot you owned it, it can leave. It's just creating mess, headache and excess in your home. Goodbye, friend.

THE PEN PROBLEM

If you are watching this on repeat and you're doing a junk drawer and you have 50 gazillion pens and markers, here's what I want you to do. Pause this. Not the first time, the second time, pause it and actually take a minute to test your pens. Like, does it work?

Because here's what everybody does, including myself. We take a pen out of our junk drawer. We try to write with it. It doesn't work. And what do we do? We put it back in the drawer to play pen roulette later. It's like this vicious cycle of I can never find a pen that works. So take time, the second time you watch this to actually test all of your pens and only keep the ones that work. Your life will be a little bit easier, every single day you try to find a pen.

This could go. This could go.

PHASE TWO: ORGANIZATION

So congratulations. Now we are on to

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phase two, which is the fun part, which is organization. All the go pile, we're not going to deal with it right now. We're just shoving it to the side. We're going to deal with the go stuff later and we're just going to sort and organize the keep.

But here comes the second mistake. Normally again, you're going to take this pile and you're going to start making lots of little piles. And then what do you do with it? It all has to go back into the drawer. And so that's, again, the death of . . . you're wasting your time, it's the death of organization.

ORGANIZE FOR THE SPACE, NOT THE STUFF

Instead, what we do is we organize for the space, not the stuff. So take a look at your drawer. How many drawer organizers can you fit in here? And if you don't have drawer organizers on hand, that's okay. Run to your food storage container, grab some food storage containers or Kleenex boxes that you cut the top off. This works really, really perfect. Because here's the truth. We're not going to put this back into lots of little piles and then put the piles back into the drawer. It's all just going to be a big jumbled mess anyways.

What we have to do is find out how many containers will fit into the drawer and then organize into those containers. And so I have like this little setup. Everybody's is going to be different. How many drawer dividers fit into your drawer? And the same technique works for a closet or any other space that you're organizing.

DETERMINING CATEGORIES

Take a look at it. Even if you don't have containers, how many shelves do you have in your closet? Every shelf should be a different category. So that gives you four categories to sort into. We don't sort based on our stuff. We sort into how many categories are predetermined by the space we have.

So again, whether it's a drawer or a shelf, a closet, it doesn't matter. Let your space determine your categories.

So obviously here I have four little categories to sort into. So what I'm not going to do is separate all the pens and markers and pencils because I don't have enough separation to divide all of those, right? I only have these four categories.

So I'm going to choose this one for writing or office, and anything that's office related is just going to go into that category. Easy peasy lemon squeezy. This technique, this way of organizing is going to again, stop the decision fatigue of making a ton of piles, but also stop you from over organizing and wasting your time. Because then you're left with a little lot of piles.

And what do you do? You're never going to find the perfect containers for all your little piles. Instead, you find the perfect containers for your space and you make the stuff fit those containers so that your space is the limit. Your space is dictating what you can keep and how you organize.

This larger compartment here, I think I have a ton of batteries, so I'm actually going to use it for batteries. But then I have this like, little baby thing. I just happen to have this extra one. So it's going to be perfect for loose batteries that aren't currently in a package. So I'm going to put those in the little baby thing.

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MACRO CATEGORIES

And then I'm left with a lot of things like flashlights and tape and screwdrivers. So I have a lot of little things, but only one spot left. And that's okay because we can create the category of household tools. And even though technically a flashlight isn't a tool, it's okay to keep those sorted together. So let's think big macro categories in order to really keep your drawer very, very tidy.

Doesn't matter who I organize for, this is the technique I use. And if you're really, really detailed, go ahead and get some extra dividers to go into your dividers. But at the end of the day, what's important is that everything has a home and that those homes aren't going to mix back together.

So I don't just want you to toss your stuff back in the drawer because it's just going to slide around and become a mess again. We're letting our space dictate the stuff. Okay, so glue. I would think of that as like household tools, right? Yeah. You're getting this? Let me know in the comments if this makes sense to you.

RESIST PERFECTIONISM

A lot of people resist this, especially perfectionists. I don't know why, but it's definitely human nature to want to sort into lots of little categories right off the bat and then figure out how to organize those categories later. And I'm telling you, this is why people struggle to not only get organized, but stay organized.

You've spent hours sorting into tons of piles. You don't know what to do with it. So everything just becomes one big pile again eventually. This is it. I want you to give this right now with me, this technique, a try. And I promise you your organization struggles will totally be a thing of the past.

It works, especially if you're like me and you struggle a little bit to be organized. Look at these. My batteries look beautiful. Let me know also in the comments right now what space you're working on, what space you are organizing right now, and what space you want to organize using this technique in the future.

I feel like this is writing/officey. I'm going to just slip it right beside here. I don't use it very often. This feels so good, so fast. This is something that we can do in like, what, ten minutes, 15 minutes? This little battery here, and these can go. Exciting. Oh, you know what? These are going to go with tools. Organization! Okay, this is exciting.

THE GO PILE

Now here's the next step. You have all this go, right? We have to complete the cycle. We can't just stop and enjoy our gorgeousness, the wonderful organization that we've done. We actually have to tackle the stuff that's going.

MOVE IT IMMEDIATELY

And this is when you go through and if something belongs in a different space in your house, you immediately take it there. Right now. We're not doing a give a mouse a cookie situation where you take it and you have to reorganize the space. You just shove it in. Wherever you would look for this first you're taking it there immediately and putting it away.

And if you have things that are trash, take it to the trash. If you have things that maybe you want to recycle or donate, that's okay. Take the donations to your car immediately. We are taking action on all the stuff that's

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left over. We're not overthinking it. You've already decided that it's not going back in the drawer. So now it's time to just do that last bit of cleanup.

THESE STEPS WORK ANYWHERE

You can use this exact technique for any space in your house that you're organizing, but it honestly works really well for your bathroom products. Whether you're doing your makeup or think about your medication, or extra products like shampoo, conditioner, body wash, maybe extra razors. Go into that space and instead of taking everything out and making lots of little piles, you first sort into keep and go. So you stop that decision fatigue and you're focusing on the things that really can leave your house.

Then the next step is taking a look at the space where things are going to go back. You can either go by each shelf is its own category, or how many containers can you fit on those shelves. In most closets, like a one door closet, it's eight containers, which means you have eight categories to sort into. So maybe you don't sort into antacids and pain relievers, but you have one basket just for medication, or one container just for extra bathroom products or extra toiletries.

This is the most amazing way to organize super-fast and easy. You can always go back and make it perfect inside those containers. Later you can go back and micro sort and get really detailed.

DON'T FORGET, SPACE NOT STUFF

But the big part, the main part, the most important and hardest part is done when you organize for the space, not your stuff. Let your space dictate how many categories you have and sort into those categories. You can use Post It notes. If you don't have containers currently, that's okay.

Envision how many containers fit into the space. Do a quick sort, and then either find containers in your house, shop Amazon boxes, or head to the dollar store and pick some up. I kid you not, in under 30 minutes you can have a beautifully organized space that most importantly isn't going to feel overwhelming, isn't going to make your house trashed and messy, isn't going to make you exhausted, and is going to stay tidy because you've done it right.

So I hope you're feeling inspired. I liked spending time with you, and I know this might not feel like the natural way of organizing, and you might still want to take things and make piles, but I'm hoping you give this a try. I'm hoping you try it because I know you'll see the light. You'll the amazingness of getting your house organized super-fast and efficiently.

Thanks for spending time with me. Right now, we're going to jump over and do a quick live question and answer.

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Minimalizing Finances

CASEY JONES • TRANSCRIPT

Hi, I'm Casey, That Minimalist Mom. I teach women and busy moms to live intentionally, minimally, simply, and clutter free. My goal is to help others create space in their life to make room for more of what matters.

FINANCIAL MINIMALISM

Today, I'm going to be talking about decluttering your finances, which, interestingly enough, is exactly what led me to discover minimalism in the first place. At one point, my husband and I were over $200,000 in debt. But one day we decided enough was enough and sold everything. We downsized our house and all of our belongings in an effort to become financially free.

THE BEAUTY OF IT

Not only did we achieve that, but we also discovered the absolute beauty of living with less. Now, decluttering your finances is not just for those looking to pay off debt. It is for those looking to eliminate the nonessentials and the clutter from their budget to leave more money for what they value most.

In our family, we really value experiences and travel, so we cut expenses such as cable TV, subscription services, and club memberships, so that our money can go towards our family's priority.

Today, I'm going to give you five actionable steps to decluttering your finances so that you, too, can be on your way to investing in more of what matters.

STEP ONE: GET ORGANIZED

Step number one: get organized. Start by gathering all of your financial documents and creating a filing system. This could be a physical filing cabinet or box or a digital system such as an online cloud service. Have all of your financial accounts and bills in one place.

This is my system. It's just a file box, and I keep everything labeled so that I know exactly where to find it and exactly where to put it. I have a spot for bills and receipts and taxes and all those kind of things. It helps me stay super organized.

STEP TWO: SET GOALS

Step number two set goals. Decide what your family's values and priorities are. This will help you focus on what is most important. Are your financial goals to pay off debt or save for an early retirement? Where do you want your money going?

Do you want to prioritize travel or health and fitness or perhaps sports? How do you see yourself spending your money so that it aligns with your values?

STEP THREE: BUDGET

Step number three, budget. You need to know exactly where your money is going. I

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created the minimalist budget workbook so that I could have more control over my finances, and it is actually the exact process that I use to pay off over $200,000 in debt.

FIXED EXPENSES

Now, the first step in creating a budget is to track all of your bills, and that is what we use the master bill tracker for. I usually suggest looking at the past three to six months of bank statements to get the exact amount or an average of how much you spend each month on things like rent or mortgage, water, electrical insurance, subscription services, et cetera. Those are called your fixed expenses and they are typically the same amount and come out on the same day every single month.

VARIABLE EXPENSES

Next, you want to look at your variable expenses. Those are things like groceries, takeout and household purchases. These amounts vary every month, so you want to take an average of how much you have spent in each of those categories in the last three to six months. This will give you an idea of how much you want to budget for those categories each paycheck.

BUDGETING BY PAYCHECK

Which brings me to the next part, which is budgeting by paycheck. This means that every single time you get paid, you want to assign each dollar to a category. This ensures that you know exactly where your money is going and you can make sure that it aligns with your values and financial priorities.

I have created a sample template for you today to show you exactly how this process works. So let's say this paycheck you got paid $2,000. These are the bills that are coming out during this pay period $100 for electrical, $100 for gas, $50 for water, $150 for your cell phone, and $50 for internet.

After those bills are subtracted, we are left with $1,550, which is carried over to our variable expenses. So this paycheck, I am setting a budget of $300 for groceries, $100 for gas, $100 for takeout, $100 for household purchases, and $50 for fun money. That leaves us with $900.

PRIORITIES FOR WHAT'S LEFT

Now, you want to refer back to your family's values and financial priorities to decide what to do with the money that is left over. Now, as I said before, our family really values travel and experiences. So I am going to put $450 into a travel sinking fund. Now, a sinking fund is simply a savings goal that you put a little money into each paycheck. So now I have $450 leftover.

So I am going to put $200 in savings and $250 towards a buffer. That just means that $250 is going to stay in my account in case anything comes up that I wasn't expecting. You always want to make sure that you end in $0 because that means that you have assigned every single dollar a job and you know exactly where your money is going.

STEP FOUR: ELIMINATE THE NONESSENTIALS

Now, many of you might be thinking, what if I don't have enough money to put towards my financial goals and values? Which brings me to step number four, which is to eliminate the nonessentials.

I want you to take a look at your master bill tracker and see if there is anything that you can cut from your budget. For example,

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our family decided to cut cable TV and streaming services. We got rid of our gym memberships and decided to work out at home instead. We went from two vehicles to one and were able to eliminate the insurance, gas, licensing and car payment. We eliminated subscription services like Amazon Prime and lowered the cost of many of our fixed expenses just by calling around and switching to different providers with better rates.

There are many ways that you can lower your bills and even your variable expenses by doing things like shopping your pantry and making meals at home, buying used items instead of new, and cutting back on your utilities by turning off lights and appliances when not in use.

STEP FIVE: REVIEW YOUR FINANACES

And lastly, step five review your finances. Regularly set aside time each week to review your spending. Check your account balances and make any necessary adjustments to your budget. This ensures that your spending is on track and your money is going towards what matters most.

That is all for me today. I am excited for you to declutter your finances, organize your budget, and make room to invest in more of what matters. You can find me on Facebook, Instagram and TikTok under That Minimalist Mom. See you there.

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5 Strategies for Raising Financially Healthy Kids

CHELSEA BRENNAN • TRANSCRIPT

GETTING TO KNOW CHELSEA

How's it going? Get organizedHQ. My name is Chelsea Brennan. I'm the founder of Smart Money Mamas. And today we're gonna talk about five strategies to raise financially healthy kids.

So first of all, who am I and and why should you listen to me on this topic?

So my background was actually in hedge fund investment management. That's what I did on Wall Street for a number of years before, almost six years ago now. I left to start Smart Money Mamas, and the reason I wanted to focus on mom moms was they had all this immense knowledge about how the financial world worked.

And I wanted to put it in the hands of people that not only could make families more stable, but that could create a generational change in how we talk about money as a society. And moms are so well positioned to do that because they pass those lessons on to their kids.

WIDE RANGE OF THOSE INTERACTING WITH CHILDREN

Now, as we've done this work have we discovered that, of course, there's a very wide range of people who interact with children, whether it's aunts and uncles and grandparents, and we can all pass these lessons down.

So whether you're watching this and you're a mom or a dad or you just have littles in your life, this is a lesson for you on how to talk about money with kids and pass down healthy financial relationships.

So many of us watch these talks on how to budget, how to invest, because we're struggling as adults with the best way to manage money. And we want to make sure kids go into adulthood without having to climb that mountain, right? Without having to feel this fear and uncertainty when it comes to money.

WHY TALK TO KIDS ABOUT MONEY?

So why do we have to talk to kids about money besides what we just said? The biggest reason is that kids need intentional money lessons or they're going to make their own assumptions.

Money is a big part of our society, good or bad. It's how we get the things that keep us safe. Food and shelter and clothing.

And so when we don't talk to kids about money, there's this big confusing thing out there in the world and they're going to try to make sense of it. They're going to make their own assumptions.

CORE BELIEFS ARE SET AROUND AGE SEVEN

That's why research shows that core money

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beliefs for most children are set around age seven. And that kids around the age of three, three and a half start to have a basic understanding of how money works in the world.

Not obviously all the complicated things, but the fact that we exchange things of value. We using money as a tool that kids understand that.

And so when we don't talk to kids, they get those core beliefs. And for many of us as adults, those core beliefs we set around age seven have been living unchecked in our minds for 20, 30 40 years. And often those assumptions weren't correct.

And so we've built this very difficult kind of monster that we have to overthrow to figure out how to have a healthy relationship with money.

YOU HAVE TWO CHOICES

With kids, you have two choices. You can start that conversation earlier, which is great, and we will talk about ways that we can talk to kids that are very young about money and about money mindset, or we start to listen to our kids.

And so if your kids are older than seven, don't panic. All that means is that we also have to listen to them about what are the stories they're telling themselves about money and help them heal. That if it's a story that doesn't serve them well. Does that make sense?

MONEY IS A TOOL

Okay, so the biggest thing we want our kids to understand is that money is a tool to create the life you want and show what you value. Money is an exchange of value in our society. That's really all it is.

And so instead of making money really good or really evil, we need to focus in that it's a tool. Okay, so let's start from there. All right, ready for our five things? Let's dive in.

CREATE A FAMILY MONEY VALUE SYSTEM

The first one is to create a family money value system. What I mean by that is how does your family use money? How do you talk about money? What are the goals that you have as a family?

The reason this is really important and family, I'm going to say, is anybody who has any input into your child's upbringing, right?

So if you have a co-parent figure, if they have step-parents, if they have aunts and uncles, if they have grandparents that take care of them on a regular basis, you as the primary parent or whoever the primary parent is, is going to be the core kind of decider of what these family money values are.

SHARE YOUR MONEY VALUE SYSTEM

But we need to make sure that we share them with everyone that is a caretaker in our child's life. This is going to create a much more consistent way that we think about money. Right?

And so your values could be that money is a tool. Your values could be that we use money to make our community a better place and giving back. This could be we prioritize safety and security before wants, right?

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And so we can decide what those kind of family money mantras are and then what are your goals? Right?

So talk to your kids about, hey, one of our big goals is that when you're older, we want to help you pay for college. And so that is going to restrict some of the things that we can do in the near term because we're planning for this big long term goal. But this is really important and it's for you and it's for our family structure.

So we have a whole family money values template that you can download for free. I'm not going to get too much into it because we have a very short window to talk today.

CREATE A CONSISTENT FOUNDATION

But basically you want to create a cohesive way that your kids hear about money talked about within your family. They're going to get all kinds of voices that are healthy and not from media, from other people in their lives, from kids at school.

You want to make sure that their foundation is consistent. And that so when you step outside that bound, right, when you feel those negative voices come up, they can help check you as well and say, hey, you actually said we don't talk about money that way. And you can self correct and kind of get back on the same page. This gives your kids a foundation that is very, very healthy.

Part of the way that we instill that, by the way, is some people are like, well, where do the family money values go? There's a one pager in the free template that you can download, put up at your house, put in your family money binder, wherever you want to put it. We have one put up in our kitchen, but in a bigger frame.

NARRATE WHAT YOU ARE DOING

You just want to be using this on a regular basis. And the biggest way to do that is remember when your kids were learning how to talk and all the books say, just narrate everything you're doing.

I'm getting your breakfast and I'm warming your milk, and I'm doing all these things so that they hear as many words as possible.

We're going to do the same thing with money. And even when your kids are really little, right? I'm putting in my credit card, which I pay at the end of the month to cover the costs of these groceries, or I'm using cash to pay for these groceries, and we're going to get this receipt, and it's going to tell us how much we spent.

We're explaining to them the things that we're doing as we're doing them, including if you're going to sit down and do the bills, you sit down. You say, this is the time of the month where I look at our budget and I look at all the expenses that we had this month and make sure that those are paid on time and that they align with our values and things like that.

We're going to narrate to our kids so that they understand why we're making the decisions that we're making and the steps that go into it, right? Because money can be this kind of confusing, dark and scary thing that doesn't have to be as long as we just kind of pull that curtain back and explain to our kids what we're doing as we're doing it.

This doesn't need to be detailed. This doesn't need to take a ton of time. It's just

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narrate as you go, right, and where it's age appropriate.

LET THEM PRACTICE

All right, the second thing that we're going to talk about so the first thing is having family money values. The second thing is to let them practice. Okay?

The biggest mistake we can make is to try to hold off on any money, handling any money practices until our kids are old enough or until we don't want to make them worry about it until they're older. We want them to enjoy their childhood.

We want them to enjoy their childhood, of course, but that doesn't mean they can't handle money because that's your own negative money story, saying that money is some scary adult concept that you're now passing on to your kids, which is exactly what we want to avoid, right?

AGE APPROPRIATE WAYS TO PRACTICE

And so instead, we want to give them age appropriate ways to practice with money. We don't want their first times that they're handling, making financial decisions, choosing wants over needs, learning how to prioritize their money, understanding what bills are.

We don't want that to happen the first time when they're in college or when they've graduated college or god forbid, they move out, right? These very, very huge momentous life occasions. We don't want those to also be these big money decisions.

And so what does that look like? Well, from a really young age, that can be giving them opportunities to help make some decisions.

So one of my favorite ones, when our kids are still little, my sons are five and seven, one of my favorite things to do is to go in and say, hey, we have $20 for fruit this week. You go into the grocery store and you decide what the $20 are.

And so we help them look at the numbers. Do you want apples? Do you want blueberries? Do you want strawberries? And they very quickly start to figure out that if they get blueberries, they only get this much blueberries. But if they get apples, they get a lot more of apples.

And that doesn't mean that they don't ever buy blueberries. They start to figure that out that maybe I want some blueberries and a lot of apples. So I have fruit that lasts all week.

And it lets them have that opportunity to figure out what we call opportunity cost, right? We can get anything we want, but we can't get everything we want, right?

LEARN TO PRIORITIZE

We can try to figure out how to prioritize. This can be the snacks that go in their lunchbox, right? We have $10 this week for your snacks that are going to go in your lunch for school. How do we make that decision? What are the snacks that you want? How do we prioritize those things? Right?

And so those are the types of opportunities we can give our kids as they get a little bit older. And by older, I really mean usually around four or five. We want to start to give them agency. So here's your own money to do what you would like to do with it.

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ALLOWANCE

And we call this allowance, right? And there's a lot of systems and a lot of ways to do allowance well. And to do allowance poorly, though one of the biggest things that, in my opinion, is important is to not tie allowance to household chores.

We're going to specify to standard household chores things like cleaning their rooms, putting the dishes away, doing the dishes. These are just part of being in a family.

And all research shows that as soon as we start rewarding standard behaviors, whether it's household cleaning, whether it's grades, whether it's reading, once we remove that positive stimulus, their ability to do that work diminishes.

And even while you're rewarding that standard behavior, most kids will figure out, what is the bare minimum I can do to get my reward, and that's all I'm going to do. And we don't want to instill that with basic household chores, right?

We want to make sure that our kids know that being part of the family is just an important part of being part of the family. The way we frame allowance and the way we teach our mamas to frame allowance is that this is an investment in your child's future.

You can talk about one of your family money values, being making sure that the people in our family are financially stable. And one of the ways that we can do that is we can give you an opportunity to practice and to make your own choices with money. And so this is a parenting decision that we're making, is that we're going to allow you to have this allowance.

SET RULES

Now, the second thing that people tend to mistake with allowance is that we start allowance with our kids without setting any rules.

And so the biggest rule that you want to make sure you set with allowance is what are they responsible for getting now at very young ages, if they're getting $2 a week or $3 a week, maybe all this means is I'm not buying things for you at the grocery store check out, of the Target checkout, any little things that you want that aren't holidays and birthdays you have to pay for out of your spending money, but you want to make sure that they have some responsibility for that money.

So it's not just they spend it when they feel like it, but if they don't feel like it, you buy it for them. That does not create any healthy money beliefs, right? We want to have them have some sense of responsibility and some limitations around that money.

SET THE BASIS OF BUDGETING

The other thing we want to do with allowance is to start to set the basis of budgeting. Okay? And I know we're going really fast here because this is a short talk, but we talk about all of this at Smart Money Mama, so you're welcome to go get more information on each of these five points after this talk as well.

So at the basic level, we have a save jar, a spend jar, and a give jar. This gets our kids into the practice of, I have to save a little bit of my money, I have to spend a little bit of my money, and I have to give to others. Right?

Everybody has different ideas of what that

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giving jar looks like. But there's two parts I want to talk about before we move on to step three. Okay?

NO SAVING FOR LONG TERM FUTURE

Step one is saving. Saving is not for their long, long term future. When your kids are little, if your kids are seven, 8, 9, 10, even ten, saying this money is for college, or this is money is for you when you get married, this is something in the future we don't want to do that because thinking long term is really hard for human beings in general.

It's very hard for adults with fully formed brains to think ten to 20 years in the future. It's not something that we do well neurologically, but when we do that so when we force kids to try to do that, what they feel like is saving is my money being taken from me and disappearing. Because it might as well be gone. Right?

SAVE FOR AN AGE APPROPRIATE TIME

If it's for something ten years from now, it might as well be gone instead. To make saving a practice where we really think is saving is to get something I really want in the future. Help them save for something that really matters to them, that is an age appropriate time in the future.

At young ages, when we're talking four, five, six, we're talking maybe three to six months longer as they get older and as they practice that delayed gratification.

But help them pick something that they're really excited about that you're not planning to buy them, whether it's a big Lego or it's a video game or whatever it is that they are excited about, create a savings chart. And that's what their savings money is going towards.

Let them see the progress towards the savings, and then when they reach that goal this is really important. Okay? When they reach that goal, celebrate hard with them.

CELEBRATE WITH THEM

Congratulate them. Tell them they did a great job, that this is what they get. Because they were patient and they were focused. Right. All of these things.

We want to really celebrate that milestone. Hey, you set a goal, you waited, and you achieved it, and you got this amazing thing, and I'm so proud of you. That helps build a really good relationship to saving.

That's not it's something I have to do. It's not my money's disappearing. It's more this is a really beautiful thing I'm going to get to get in the future because I focused and saved.

GIVING

Giving is going to actually fall in the same bucket with allowance. Sometimes parents take that giving money and they put it towards what they, as a family, give to, or they give it to their religious organization if that's something that matters to them.

And in the same way you're telling kids that they have agency with their allowance, and then you're taking that agency away. Right. And we really don't want to do that for our kids. We want to make sure that if we tell them they have agency that they have agency.

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LET THEM CHOOSE WHO TO GIVE TO

And so when it comes to giving, talk about what your family values are and then give them opportunities to find a giving goal that actually speaks well to them.

Maybe they love arts and crafts and there's a local organization that gives art supplies to schools that no longer have art programs or to kids who don't have art supplies.

Maybe they love pets and they give to the local animal shelter, right? Or they go to the store and they buy some dog toys that they give to the local animal shelter.

Something that feels really connected to them. That is going to build a healthier, longer term relationship to giving than you saying, here's your allowance. You're going to put $2 in each of these buckets. I'm going to take the savings dollars and put them away from the future. I'm going to take the giving dollars and do whatever I want with them. You really only have control over a third of your money.

HAVING AGENCY BUILDS THE SKILLS THEY NEED

That is a lot of kids experience with allowance and it's not what we want to build. And so let them practice. Let them actually have agency and decision making power with their money. And this is where they're really going to get to build all the skills they need with real hands on practice.

Last thing on allowance, because I know we've talked about this one for a lot and it's a really important one. And once again, sorry, that's two side notes. This is my ADHD brain is going to tell you two different things.

YOU CAN'T AFFORD ALLOWANCE

One is if you're listening to this and you're like, I can't afford allowance, totally understand it is a privilege when you're able to do that.

What I want to emphasize is that there are opportunities that we talked about at the beginning, whether it's helping them, letting them make decisions on a certain portion of the budget, whether it's a certain amount of their groceries or their clothing, right?

Like you have this much money to spend on their clothing. Help them make those decisions on what clothing they want to buy and how they want to prioritize that money as they get older, give them longer periods of time that they're getting the budget for that.

Instead of saying, hey, it's back to school, we're doing back to school right now, say, here's your budget for the year. Here's the things you're going to have to consider. Seasons, you're going to grow, whatever, and let them make a longer term period of time.

You're going to get the same lesson without necessarily having to commit to a consistent weekly or monthly allowance, right? If that's not in your family's budget, you still have lots of opportunities to give your kid a chance to practice without adding an additional thing to your budget.

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GIVING THEM ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

But the last thing on allowance is that as your kids get older, we need to make sure that their allowance is in line with what they need and that we're giving them additional responsibilities.

Just like we just talked about with the clothing. That might be something that you add over time.

Maybe you add their activities. Hey, your allowance is going to be higher now, but you're going to be in charge of paying for whatever clubs you want to join or sports teams you want to join. And making sure that their allowance is commiserate with.

You can get some of what you want, but not all of what you want, right? Too little and we start to build that scarcity mindset. Too much and we don't really learn anything because we can just money is just everywhere. We just get everything that we want.

So those are some lessons about allowance, but the second thing is really focused on letting them practice.

INSTILL A PROBLEM SOLVING. MINDSET

The third thing we're going to talk about is instilling a problem solving mindset. Because at the end of the day, the most important thing is mindset.

Do your kids feel like they have the ability to manage money and to get the things that they need? Do they feel like money is a tool and not money is inherently good or bad? Do they feel like they have the skills to manage their money successfully?

"WE CAN'T AFFORD THAT"

Those are the things we're most trying to instill. And so when we talk about a problem solving mindset, one of the biggest things we tell people is to not tell your kids we can't afford that.

Now, that's a hard sentence because sometimes the reality is at that moment you cannot afford that thing. Right. It's not in your budget.

But there are different ways to say that. You could say we are prioritizing different things right now, right? We are saving for this goal so we can't buy that Lego that we just walked by in the store, right? We have different priorities.

And then so set the boundary that you are not going to buy that thing. Right? We have different priorities. That's not what we're here for. That is not something that we're willing to do outside of the holidays.

You set whatever your family money value boundary is and then open the door and don't mean for you to do it, but say that's really cool. How could you get the money to do that? Is that in your allowance budget? Do you want to take a picture of this and save for it? We can create a savings chart when we get home.

HELP THEM FIND THE MONEY

Start to open the door for them to figure out a way to find the money, right? And this is the place where kids are actually really good, right, at starting to figure out, hey, could I do clean up the backyard for grandma? Could I start a lemonade stand? Could I save my allowance? Could that be

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my next savings goal? Can I wait till the holidays to get this thing? Can I put it on a Christmas list? Can I put it on a Hanukkah list?

Whatever it is. Right, but you want to make sure that you're not saying hard no because of money limitations, but you're letting them have that way to figure it out on their own. And so do you have money for that or how can you get money for that are some of the things we say to the kids most often when we're in Target. Right?

Did you bring your wallet? Do you have enough money for that? How are you going to get enough money for that? That sounds great, but it's July and your birthday is in February and the holidays aren't for a few months. What's the best way do you think you could afford that, letting the kids figure that out for themselves?

They're very creative, and often when it's put on them in any way, you'll start to notice that your $20 is worth a lot less than their $20. And they will draw that line. They really want that playdoh thing unless it's their money, and then it actually doesn't look that nice. Right. We get a lot more they're a lot more particular when it's their money, and so letting them kind of have that runway.

Now, sometimes these are things that just are outside our value system, right. They want a violent video game. They want something that you just really don't want in the house that makes a certain noise, and that's when you can say no.

DON'T TRY TO AVOID DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

But don't ever say no about something that you just don't want because of money. Right. Like, oh, we can't afford that. We can't get that. If the real answer is we don't want you to have that.

Those are different conversations because once again, if your kid has their own money, if they have their own agency, that is going to become a conversation later of like, well, what if I saved for it? And now you're still going to have to have the difficult conversation of, I don't think that's an appropriate thing for you to have.

And so don't try to avoid difficult conversations by setting money limitations. This builds a negative money and scarcity money mindset really quickly and builds a negative relationship with money.

And so instead, focus on that problem solving and take the opportunities to have conversations about broader family values when it presents itself, right. When it's something that you really just don't want them to have or don't think that it's appropriate.

All right, that's a lot. But make sure that we're kind of watching our language and that we're giving them the opportunities to kind of figure it out. Right. All right.

SKILLS AND VOCABULARY

The fourth is skills and vocabulary. So this is where a lot of people start, right? How do I teach my kids how to budget? How do I teach them how to invest? How do I teach them how to do these very specific things, pay the bills, write a check.

These are all important skills and we want them to have those skills. However, if they've practiced, if they've had good money value since they were a kid, if they have good language around money, those

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skills, they're actually very simple, right?

They're things that, by the time our kids are 13, 14, 15, and they can do good math and they can focus on numbers and things like that, the rest of it's easy, right?

The world has been created to make these concepts seem difficult and scary. One, because we all have a lot of fear when it's instilled with money to begin with. And two, we don't have that good relationship with money.

And so the idea of sitting down and paying a bill is much harder than the actual practice of doing it. The actual function of what it takes to do it is pretty straightforward, right? And so now that our kids have started to have those lessons, now it's time to sit down and really get the focus of the actual day to day skills.

Now, maybe you don't know these skills, right? I get this question sometimes from mom how am I supposed to teach my kids how to invest? Or how am I supposed to help them get through their 1st 401K paperwork when I don't know what any of this means?

LIFELONG LEARNING

This is the lifelong learning, right? This is the family money values coming back and saying, hey, we're never done with this money work. That's why me and your co-parent or whoever your family is defined as, that's why we have these values, because we're consistently working on our money as well.

And hey, I wish I learned when I was 20 about how to invest, but I didn't. And so let's sit down and watch a YouTube video and figure it out together, right? Let them know that it's okay to always be learning.

And when it comes to things like simpler things, like a budget, bring them into the family conversation, right? When they're 14, 15 years old, say, hey, let's just can we have a quick conversation about what it costs to keep this household running? Right?

Talk to them about what is your rent or your mortgage, what are your utilities cost? How do you have to think about insurance? Start to just very slowly and casually bring that into a normal thing that they think about and those skills will develop.

Those skills are important, but they are not the foundation, right? When we talk about teaching kids about money, we don't teach them necessarily about trusts and investing and stocks and bonds. We can. That's great.

MINDSET FIRST, SKILLS SECOND

But what is much more important is giving them the idea that I am comfortable with money, I am capable and I can solve any problem that brings itself to me and I can get the things that I need. And some of the things that I want, right? Mindset first, skills second.

Don't be afraid to learn alongside them. That's actually a really empowering thing for kids, that they don't have to have it all figured out.

When we look at our parents and assume, well, all adults just know how to do money, we were waiting for this switch to flip, right? And when we walk into new adulthood, we're like, we should know this.

We should know how to do this. We should know how to set up auto pay. We should

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know how to apply for a credit card, thinking that it's just something that we should innately figure out. And it's not.

It's not how these systems work. It's not set up to be that straightforward in many cases. And so letting your kids know, hey, we all have to figure that out and that's okay. You know these skills. You know that you're capable. Let's figure it out. Okay.

So that's when we're going to start to use the skills. Don't be afraid to use YouTube videos, podcasts, books, practice to figure it out together and to let them see what those skills are. All right.

LEAD BY EXAMPLE

The last thing is we're going to wrap up here quickly is actually the hardest, and I could spend the most time talking about this, but number five is lead by example.

This is hard. We talked about how our kids are going to make assumptions about money and they're going to try to figure out how it works in the world that they live in.

That means that all the time that you spend to intentionally teach them about money and the focused moments and the focused systems and the allowance, that's all great, but they're still listening and watching you all the time.

If you haven't or aren't working on your money mindset, if you are regularly talking about money around them in a way that is scary or negative, if you seem really uncertain, if you seem really angry ever having to talk or deal with money, your kids are going to pick up on that, right?

All those negative money mindsets that maybe got built through your own financial trauma or just not being taught about money as a kid or whatever it is those things will pass on if we don't work on healing them, doesn't mean that you have to be perfect. No, we never are.

A LIFELONG JOURNEY

This is a lifelong journey. We're always going to be dealing with money. But you want to make sure that you're working on it and that when you make a misstep, don't be afraid to come back to your kids and say, hey, I know. In the grocery store I got really frustrated because I needed to get these certain things and it was over our budget and I didn't know what to do. And I kind of freaked out. Here's what I wish I would have done, right?

Come back and explain to them that, hey, sometimes we make mistakes. We're always learning. But try your best to use good language.

NEEDS VS WANTS

My biggest example of this with little kids is wants versus needs, right? This is a core understanding for kids. What are the things that we actually need? A house, a safe place to sleep, food. And what are the things that we want? Right? Trampolines and toys and whatever. And how do we draw that line?

And there's so many different instances where your kids will start to call you on that language and you'll start to develop a better money mindset as a family.

For instance, when we were in the grocery store and my then three year old was with us and my husband was like, oh, I need Oreos. And he was like, dad, you don't need Oreos, you want Oreos.

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And we all laughed and it was funny, but it was a sign that he was picking up on those things. And it was a good frame reset for my husband in that moment to be like, you're right I don't need Oreos, I do want Oreos.

And we actually ended up having a conversation at that point as well about healthy food choices and how no foods are inherently good or bad. There are foods that are good for your soul and there are foods that are good for your body and that he wanted Oreos. And that was fine because we had bought vegetables and other things.

LISTEN TO WHAT THEY ARE THINKING

And so to kind of have these conversations with our kids, any time that you can take a moment and talk to our kids and listen to what are they thinking, how are they making a decision? It can be hard, especially when we're rushed.

But when you have time, when you're in the toy store or Target and they see something they want and you have a minute to pause and say, why do you want that? How important is it to you? How is it important to you versus other things that you have? And how could you get it?

Let them get through that thought process, because sometimes those thoughts are scary and overwhelming. We're getting a lot of different messages, even in our own heads. I want that, but I also want this other thing. And I also already have this thing that I don't play with at home.

We all have experienced this as adults, right? When we're talking about where we want to go on vacation as a family, right?

These big decisions that we make as adults where we're like, man, I really want to take the kids on vacation, but I also need to pay that credit card off and I'm behind on my retirement. And you get overwhelmed with what's the right choice?

And oftentimes when we feel rushed through those decisions, we either feel like we should just know, right? This comes back to like, why don't we? Why isn't this obvious? And we just make the easiest, fastest decision because we don't want to think about it anymore.

When you take a moment with your kids and let them think through that process, let them pause and really get through this chaotic thought process, it teaches them that as adults, it's okay to take a breath.

IT'S OKAY TO FEEL UNCERTAIN

It's okay to sit in uncertainty with our financial decisions for a minute, to make sure that we make the choice that is actually most aligned with our values and needs, instead of just making a knee jerk reaction so we don't have to feel uncertain, we don't have to feel scared. Does that make sense? All right, lead by example.

Keep working on your own money mindset. Anytime you invest in healing your own money mindset, in learning something new for yourself, you are making steps to raise financially healthy kids. Your kids are seeing that they are benefiting from that.

And so if there's anything you can do, start these conversations with your kids and start these conversations with yourself and with your spouse and with your co-parents. This is a place that the more we can learn as a community around our children, the more our children will grow up in healthier environments.

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As I said earlier, we have a free family money values template you can download on our website. We'll have the link for that below this video.

WHERE TO FIND CHELSEA

You can always find me at SmartMoney mamas. I'm on Instagram probably the most, so if you want to DM me, ask me any questions, email me at chelsea@smartmoneymamas.com.

I hope this has been helpful. I hope your kids grow up to be confident with money and confident in getting the things that are most important to them to build the life that they want. You've got this, and I can't wait to hear from you and answer your questions. Have a great rest of the summit. Bye.

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10 Genius Ways To Use Printables

CHRISSY HALTON • TRANSCRIPT

Hi, this is Chrissy from Organise My House and I am so pleased to be with you today in this session all about printables and how to use them around the house to get organized. If you want to find out any more about me and the website, it's Organise with an S. Organisemyhouse.com.

So, let's get started. So, let's talk today about all the brilliant ways, ten in fact that you can use printables around the house to get yourself more organized. And let's go back all the way to beginning.

WHAT ARE PRINTABLES?

First things first, the basics. What exactly are printables? So, before I start talking about ways to use them, let's go back and look at exactly what they are and why you should love them.

So printables are simply ready-made templates for all sorts of uses. Including getting organized, artwork for your house. You could create stickers for your planner and you can create them yourself. You can buy them ready made and often you don't even have to buy them, you can get them for free. A lot of places, including my own site, offers them for free.

You then decide which ones you want and you can download them and print them out and just use them as you like. And it really is that simple.

REASONS TO LOVE PRINTABLES

So why should you love them? Well, they are usually a lot better than just scribbled notes. They make you feel a lot more organized, they've got a little bit more style and they give a little bit more care to everything you want to get organized. So, most people feel more motivated then to use them and to integrate them into their daily lives.

ORGANIZATION

They feel more like they want to be more organized and they raise you up to a certain level rather than just those scribbled notes that you can often just mislay and get shoved into a planner or on a notice board amongst loads of different things. A printable seems to take pride of place wherever you use it.

PERSONALIZATION

You can often personalize printables, which is fantastic. Some places that you can buy them offer the ability to change the title, add your own family name or your name, and some offer ways to customize the fonts or the colors. So, have a look.

If you're interested in a certain one and you can't find it from a Google search, then ask the person that you're buying it from whether they do offer the personalization idea as well.

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INSTANT ACCESS

One of the best ways that you should love, absolutely love printables is that you get instant access. There is no waiting around. Once you've decided which one, you can simply buy it or download it immediately if it's free and use it so you don't have to wait for that postman, you don't have to wait for anything. Usually you get sent straight away a link and you can download it straight to your computer.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN

Because of that instant access, you can class printables as actually better for the environment.

A lot of people think that printables are wasting the ink and the paper, et cetera. But if you think about it another way, there are no delivery costs, no delivery, no vehicle charges, no packaging costs. You purely have to use the paper that you need for the job and all of that is recyclable. So actually, in the long run you're saving a lot of time and effort and the environment by doing your own printables.

Another little trick is that if you want to save even more paper, you can print more than one page onto one side of paper. Just change your print settings and if it's suitable for the project you're doing, you might decide to do two pages for each sheet that you print out. Another way to save paper and save a little bit more of the environment.

JUST WHAT YOU WANT

Lastly, why should you love them? Well, you can usually find the exact thing that you want if you're willing to do a little bit of searching. So, go on to Google, have a look, type out the kind of things that you want, go into the images, go into shopping. And you will often find exactly the type of thing that you want to have as a printable without having to spend all your time and energy actually trying to create it yourself. Unless you're that way inclined.

FIND THEM ON GOOGLE

So where do you get them from? If you're searching for them, then the two places that I would recommend most is obviously just do a Google search. If you're looking for something free, then obviously free printable and then whatever printable you want. So free printable meal planner, free printable calendar, anything like that will bring up lots of searches of bloggers and websites that offer free printables. And you can just have a look as to whether their templates are suitable for what you want.

FIND THEM ON ETSY

Another place that I absolutely adore going to is Etsy. That's Etsy.com and they are made up. It's a marketplace if you haven't heard of it before. It's a marketplace where small businesses will sell their products and they do digital products as well as fully printable.

Now you can buy on Etsy the printables already printed out for you and posted. But as I say, if you're environmentally conscious then have a look for ones that you can download and print yourself.

MAKE THEM ON CANVA

The other place you can find them is to look on somewhere to make it yourself, such as Canva. Now Canva is spelt Canva.com and they are fantastic little design studio where I've actually created this presentation, the

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slides for the presentation using Canva, I use it for a lot of my graphics, a lot of my templates and I absolutely love creating in it.

If you are creative, if you have an idea of what you want to create yourself, then I highly recommend going to Canva. There are lots of templates as well that you can use. So, have a look around. You don't have to start from scratch and you can normally tweak what you want.

GET SET, PRINT

So, the last thing in the basics is exactly how you would use printables.

Now, it's really simple. They are what they say. You get them from wherever where we've just discussed. You will get a link to download them to your computer or your phone and from there you just set up your printer settings, make sure that the color is right. I'd recommend printing in black and white if you can, to save costly ink.

Set up the paper size that you need, print them off and then use them. It is so simple. Now, the only thing that you might run into is that you don't have a printer and there are options for that as well. So, you can obviously ask a friend or a family member to print them off for you.

You can go to a local print shop with the files ready and they'll print them off for you. Or you can have a look and do a search for an online printer in your country and your area and they'll do it for you and send it to you. So, there are lots of options. You don't have to struggle if you're not technically minded. You can simply take the email to your local shop with the link and they'll do it all for you.

WHERE TO PUT THEM

So, the next thing that we'll look at is what to think about when deciding where to put them. Now, we're going to go through the ten ways to use printables in just a sec. I will get there, I promise. But you know the basics of the printables now and it's time first to start thinking about how you're going to use them, what is important for you, your home, your lifestyle, what's best for you and your tastes before you even start to print them off.

It's worth just taking a step back and having a think about how you're going to actually use them in your day to day life.

So, there are two main things to consider. Those are whether you're going to want them hidden or on display and the style of them. So, let's quickly go through those and give you some options about where and how to incorporate those in your decision making.

So firstly, hidden or on display? So overall, you will want them whatever you use them for, you will want them to be in the place that they're most needed and used and accessible for those who need to use it. So, whether that's just simply for glancing at it for reference, or for actually filling it in every day or every week, et cetera, think about how people are going to use it and the safety for whoever is using them.

For example, you don't want to put a printable behind a glass frame if it's for kids or if the printables changed regularly. You don't want to be taking it out of a proper frame, you might prefer to use a clipboard or something like that.

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HIDE IT AWAY

Hidden options would be to have it inside a planner, inside a cupboard door, on the back of the cupboard door, so when you open it, it's visible, but it's hidden away on the day to day level or inside a binder on a shelf.

The common place to put these is in whatever you call it, your home hub, your command center, your home office, your paperwork area. So just to have all of your printables ready to go wherever you keep most of your home's information.

So those are great three options if you're going to be hiding them away but leaving them so they're still accessible.

SHOW THEM OFF

If you want them displayed, then obviously a frame is a good option. Now, you can get all sorts of frames. You can get obviously glass and plastic covered frames. You can get frameless frames, just have a look at what you need them for.

One type that I love to use is the clipboard. I actually hang these on a nail on the wall and usually put them in like a set of three. We have calendars and things like that on the wall and they're easy because you can display them well and they are easy to shop and change and add in and out. It's also a good idea, a clipboard for kids' artwork, for instance, that changes regularly as they bring things home from school.

Just an extra tip there.

And another way for display is just to have it taped or stuck onto any visible surface near where you're going to use it. So, we talked about hiding it in the cupboard door. You could put it on the front of the cupboard door, for instance. You could put it on top of a desk, but taped down, ready to use, or a notice board or on the wall or anywhere basically, that you will be using it.

STYLIN'

And then lastly, thinking about the style. Now, I've already talked about the fact that there are infinite ways to create these printables and just a simple Google search will show you just how many options are available. Now here's just a few just to show you. You can get very, very ornate and beautiful fonts, simple things, colored things, ones with shapes that you can color in very stylish monotone colors, et cetera.

Now, depending on the style that you like, depends on the style that you might want your printables to be in. So, you might have a country style. So, for instance, this Happy Easter frame is a lovely wooden frame. The font's very good for, very cozy homelike feel. Above that you've got the lather, rinse, repeat, which is a very ornate, beautiful thing that could go beautifully in your utility.

For instance, you've got a to do list that's got a little bit of color in. This is actually printed off on a different colored paper. So that's another option. Instead of using the ink from your printer, you can just simply buy different colored paper to make it more individual for you.

In this home, we hug. This was a font that I created sorry, I bought and then I created the printable. And I love the fun letters and the shapes and things. So, you can basically... the world is your oyster. You have a look, see what works if you're having them on display, what works with your home? Have a think about that before you start to go ahead and purchase.

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REUSABLE TRICK

The last thing I want to talk about here is a really fantastic tip for reusing printables. Now, obviously, printables are brilliant because you can keep printing them again and again and again once you've got the file. But if you don't want to keep printing them, one option is to laminate it or put it behind a frame, a glass frame or a plastic frame, and use a dry erase marker so you can tick things off.

You can write on it, but then wipe it off once you've used that printable and reuse it again and again and again. Perfect for kids, for routines, for checking off their morning routine and things like that. Brilliant for your own to do list each day. But that's a fantastic way of reusing the same principle again and again. And also making use of the actual frame. Just simply make sure you attach the pen somewhere close so you've always got the ability to write on it when you need to.

So, all that being said, let's get to the ways that you should or could consider using printables around your own house. I hope now that you can see the infinite reasons why you should think about using printables if you haven't before. And your mind might be buzzing about ways that you can display them and use them.

TEN WAYS TO MAKE THE MOST OF PRINTABLES

But let's get to the actual specific ways that you can make the most of printables to get organized around your house.

DATES

So, number one, to track important dates. Now, I love using printables for calendars because they're so easy. You can use a grid calendar to track each month, swap it out at the end of each month, and you can track the overview of what's going on in your family.

So, it's brilliant for things like tracking birthdays, tracking holidays, any special dates that are above and beyond the usual weekly schedule so that any family member or any household member can just have a quick glance and see exactly what's going on.

I talked about it earlier. On the right hand side, you can see this is actually a part of my kitchen where we hang three note, three clipboards. The top one is a monthly calendar. Then we have some word art in the middle and then at the bottom, we used to have my daughter's school artwork, but now we tend to put any important notices or anything like that that we need to have to hand. So, it works kind of as a little bit of an art installation and it's useful.

And I love having the monthly sheets because you can basically chop and change them each month. You can have a different style and all of that. In the middle you can see that I've also got a sort of similar monthly sheet, but that's actually for the school holidays. So, it tackles the weeks of the holidays. And again, that's fantastic for kids where you can see and they can see exactly what days they're free, what's going on all over the holidays, and you can balance it out and plan it a little bit more. So those monthly sheets to track important dates are a fantastic way to use your printables.

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IMPORTANT INFO

Number two is to keep track of important information. Now the more static things that don't change very often need to be saved somewhere in your house and are really important to track properly. So, using certain printables are a brilliant way of doing this.

On the left hand side, you can see this is my printables, this is my information area, what I call it my home hub, the printers on one of the bottom shelves. And then I've got binders which have all the information such as my address book, medical info, emergency info, budgeting, subscriptions password, home inventory, all those sorts of things are to hand labeled and ready to go and they are all printables.

So again, a brilliant way of easily housing all the important information in your house. I've created a home file that has several sections and several hundred printables. In fact, that makes it really easy. And there are other places that also do this as well. So, have a look round for anything, any ones that you feel are good for you.

HOUSEHOLD TASKS

So, what to do with the we've looked at the static tasks, but what about the household tasks that are constantly moving? And by this I mean the things that you will be updating or checking off regularly and using regularly. These are things like cleaning schedules, home maintenance schedules, to do lists, project planning, we've got declutter checklists, spring cleaning checklists, all those kinds of things, whatever you want to do.

There's usually a printable that you can find that will help you and guide you. I love to put these kinds of things where they're needed most, which is in my utility and I hide them away in the utility cupboard and I can check off, especially the cleaning schedule, I can check off as I do them. And this is fantastic because the rest of the household then know exactly what's been done and what hasn't been done. I know things that are going to be done in the future, so I'm not worried or stressed about trying to do everything at once.

And you could even color code these things. So, have a color for each person so that they know what's their responsibility and what days they should do it on. So, there's loads of ways to keep track of household tasks. This is probably one of my favorite ways to use printables because it keeps you on track easily.

MEALS

Number four, now, meal times is a great way to use printables for lots of different reasons.
You can plan your meals out, so you could plan all your meals every day for a week or a month or a season. You could have seasonal meal plans so that you change them up every three months depending on the weather.

You could have a shopping list ready alongside your meal plan so you know exactly what to spend your money on and what to budget, et cetera. And another way to keep meal planning easy is to keep fridge or freezer or pantry inventories so you know exactly what's in what, and you can check off as you use them.

And take these, sit down with these so you don't have to be hovering over your freezer trying to work out what's for dinner next Tuesday. It's just an easier way to do it and

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a much nicer way, I think. So, loads and loads of different ways to plan meals and to organize meal times.

SORTING SPACES

The next way, number five, is to keep your actual space, your actual house sorted. And this is a fun way. And there's so many creative ways you can use printables for this. Now, the first way is a home inventory. Now, to have a home inventory is to sort of I like to think of it as having peace of mind. So, for insurance purposes, for things like that, you know exactly what is in your house at all times. It helps, as I say, for insurance, it helps when you're moving house. It helps for a lot of different things. And a printable is an easy way to keep track of all this.

Now, the real fun comes when you start labeling things. Now, labeling, I've shown some spice labels here and some kids labels. You can use whatever style, shapes, et cetera, that you want, and sizes. A good way to do this is to print them off onto sticky paper. Avery A-V-E-R-Y is a good place to go to look for specific size stickers that you can print to size or just buy sheets of sticky paper and then you can cut them out as you go. That's actually an easy way of doing it as well. So, you can have loads of fun labeling everything in the house and getting really organized in that way.

HOME AND LIFE EVENTS

Now, number six is to streamline all the big home and life events that you go through throughout the year. So, things like planning Christmas, packing lists for holidays, a countdown checklist for if you're going away, a moving house planner, a home staging checklist.

How about if you're having a party. Wouldn't it be nice to have a list of all the steps that you need to go through to make sure you've planned that party right? You might keep the printables that you've used the previous time and reuse them again so you don't have to go through the processes every single time. You don't have to start from scratch.

Keep a folder with all the information with the printables ready to go and you can reuse them. So printables for big events are a fantastic way to stay organized.

GIFT GIVING

So, the next one is gift giving. Now, just in the same way that we were talking about using printables for sticky labels, you could print similar types of things for gift tags and really personalize any gifts that you're sending to people.

You could fill them out on your computer with their names, et cetera, and a special message or a special icon picture, et cetera, or in a special shape and print them out onto the right level, the right weighted cardstock. Just make sure it goes through your printer, okay? And then cut them out and use them for your gift tags.

Other ways for gift giving are thank you letters. A lovely trick that I like is to print out a thank you letter once. Maybe your child will fill out a little bit of it already. Print them all out and then they only have to fill in certain parts of it and it still feels really personalized to the recipient. But the child doesn't have to do all the words for several letters and obviously it's easier to get them to fill them out.

Printables are fantastic for things like that and things like gift lists and wish lists, tracking exactly what you bought people for

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Christmas in the previous years or birthdays so that you don't duplicate things, which is especially useful for children. It's obviously very easy to forget that you've already bought them a certain specific type of toy or item in previous years. So, to keep track of that in the binder in your home file or in your home hub is a fantastic way to stay organized with your gifts number eight to track your time.

TIME TRACKER

Now, this is a very usual and known, I would say, way of having a printable because it's very similar to having a ready-made planner, but you can create your own. You don't have to be specifically held back by a format of a planner that you purchase. You can decide what pages you need and create your own.

Buy a little Planner I reuse my Filofax binder a lot for my planner sheets and I have a simple weekly planner that works for me, along with a to do list and a monthly overview. And that's all I need in my planner. I don't need all the extra little bits and bobs, but other people love to have a full sheet daily kind of journal type thing with a place that they can do their doodles track, different habits and all that kind of stuff.

So, you can pick whatever you want for how you spend your time. So weekly schedules to do lists, the colors, the formats and all of that. Be as creative as you want, but it's fun. And you're more likely to stay on track with your own time if you have the right printable, the right sheet for you to track.

There's nothing worse than buying something or getting something that doesn't quite work for you. And you have to tweak it all the time. It just makes it a bit less special and a bit less the sense of being personalized for you.

SELF CARE

Number nine, we are nearly there. We've got two left. So, number nine is to track and organize yourself, to track and organize your self-care.

And by this I mean all those things that kind of go by the wayside in daily life. We're very bad at looking after ourselves, let's face it. There's the families to organize, other people to organize, friends, et cetera. The house we get lost along the way.

So, having a printable, having a fun printable, put somewhere that you will see it kind of makes it a special treat to help you look after yourself. And there are so many things that you can track if you want to.

So, there's things like habit tracking, medication tracking that's really useful if you're on several medications. Journaling, goal tracking, morning routines, evening routines, daily routines, challenges that you want to set yourself.

So, 100 day challenge or a ten day challenge. Make it fun by actually recording it and using a printable for that. How about some word art? You can print off some beautiful motivational quotes. Hang that somewhere, maybe in your bedroom or in the kitchen where you get your coffee each morning just as a little boost for yourself. So, there's so many ways that organizing yourself and giving yourself a little treat and a little bit of self-care can really make a difference. And printables can be absolutely fundamental in that process.

KIDS

So last is for the kids. So, if you have kids, printables are a fantastic and nice cheap way of helping them to get more

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independent and be more organized for themselves. So, I've got some examples here.

We've got a nighttime routine where they can simply check off each of these tasks. Obviously you can buy these ready-made, you can add different things to them and create it yourself. So, if you've got different ideas for what they need to do each night, as I said before, laminate it or frame it with a plastic instead of a glass frame and they can just tick them off as they go and reuse them each week.

The next one is a weekly planner, so what they've got each day and what they need to pack for that. And then things like these are chore tokens. So, this is a little bit of fun where you can cut them up, put them in a jar and they could pull one out when they're bored. Or if they are wanting to earn a little bit of extra pocket money, maybe you could add some ten p or something for doing a job.

So, there's loads and loads of different ways to get the kids more organized using printables. And it's fun. The beauty of printables is that you can have all these lovely icons and make it more fun than just a simple planner that can be a little bit too grown up for them at times. So, make the ability for them to personalize it, to color in and all of that kind of stuff.

Make it fun so that they get the enjoyment out of it and they kind of it's called, I know it as kind of stealth learning. So, you're teaching them all these ways of being independent and getting more organized, but in that fun way that's crucial for them.

PRINTABLES EMPOWER ORGANIZATION

So that's it. Those are the ten ways to use printables around your house to get more organized and hopefully a little bit of information on really why they are such a good idea, how you can print them and where you can get them from.

Always think about whether you want them hidden, whether you want them on display and the style. What do you want from your printables? This is your chance to make your organization journey fun and stylish and exactly personalized to yourself and your own needs.

It's a fantastic way to really empower yourself to get more organized and to use them around the house to help yourself and anyone else living with you to get that little bit more organized every day.

Hopefully you found at least one new idea here that you can put into practice in your home straight away so you can get things more organized.

REVIEWING ALL THE WAYS

Let's just sum up and go through so you can track important dates with calendars. Track important info such as budgeting, medical emergencies and family info. You can track household tasks like your cleaning schedule, your home maintenance, project planning. You can use meal planners, shopping lists and inventories to sort out meal times. You can keep every space sorted with your home inventory.

And using labels, you can streamline all those big events that go through your house each year, such as Christmas and holidays and parties. You can help yourself

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with gift giving, with thank you letters, tracking the gifts and making tanks. Track your time with your weekly schedule, daily plans to do lists, self-care with habit tracking, fitness planners, medication trackers, and lastly with the kids with morning routines, tracking their savings, chores, checklists so much to help them be independent.

A FEW LAST IDEAS

And just to recap very quickly, the use of clipboards is a fantastic way of being able to easily access and swap out printables regularly. The middle one shows an insider cupboard door. Where we've got just a blank page, really, that says we've run out of and it's a shopping list area where this is a plastic fronted frame and we use a dry erase marker just to write things down.

And then what I do is just literally take a photo of it before I pop out to the shops so I can see exactly what we've run out of and then I rub out each one when I've bought it back into the house. So that's a lovely quick tip for using printables.

And lastly, one of my favorites, I love a good quote, I love word art everywhere in the house and you can get some really specific ones for the room's use for bathrooms, utilities, bedrooms, et cetera, or just motivational quotes and inspirational quotes.

And I highly recommend printables for just organizing your mindset, really around the house and making your art as personal for you as possible with things and words that mean something to you.

SIX LAST TIPS

Few quick printable tips to finish off.

Number one, keep a copy of whatever printables you buy on your computer. If you're just planning to use it once, that's fine, but keep a copy, save it. You never know when you might need it again. Once you buy it, it's yours to use. So why not have a copy and make sure you've got it for years to come?

Number two is print off extra copies. So, if you've got things like schedules, routines, habit trackers, planners to do lists, have a few copies when you print them out so you're ready to go, you're not stuck waiting. Or if your printer has run out of ink or anything like that, you've always got a couple of extras ready. I would have them in a binder that's literally labeled extra printables or something like that. So, you've got them and you know where to go for them.

Number three, use less ink by only choosing black and white printables and as much of the paper staying with a white background as possible.

Now you can use colored paper for a different look, which is number four. So, I love using brown paper for kids' stuff. You could have a different color for each of your children. For instance, you can get some beautiful pastel colors and you can personalize it like that without having to spend a lot on actual ink.

Always use the right thickness of paper. If they're just for throwaway printables, like to do lists, then standard print printing paper is totally fine, but if you're going to display anything or use them in a more substantial way, then slightly thicker, usually 120 grams/m² or something like that is a good starting point. Make sure it goes through your printer so you don't have any blockages or anything like that and you'll

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just get the best quality there.

And lastly, we touched on this earlier, but you could print two printables per page. They can be really cute to have smaller printables, and you can save paper and ink and be more environmentally conscious.

So that's it really everything, hopefully, you wanted to know and should know about getting organized with printables.

KEEPING UP WITH CHRISSY

The next step, obviously well, I hope, is that you're now keen and eager to go out and find printables that suit you. And you're in luck, because if you like my style and want to have a look at over 100 free printables that I have currently in my printables library online, head over to the site, which is Organize with an S, Organisemyhouse.com/freeprintable. That's free printable.

You can go there. All you need to do is add your email address, and then you'll be sent the password for access, instant access to all 100 free printables. I hope that you have enjoyed my session.

I hope you enjoy the rest of the summit. And if you want to say hi to me, you can find me. I'm Chrissy and it's organisemyhouse.com. Or tag me at organisemyhouse.

Have a great rest of your week and enjoy your printables!

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Creating Custom Sticky Notes

CHRISTINE DAUGHERTY • TRANSCRIPT

Hi. I'm Christy Daugherty with Create with Christy. I teach hand lettering and doodling. I teach it on the iPad or on paper. But in this class, I cannot wait to show you how to create your own sticky notes. And if you don't have the tools to do that, but you're still interested in getting my sticky notes, I have a free printable for each of you.

I don't know if you've ever heard of the app Procreate, but I'm going to show you how to get the iPad, use it with the App Procreate with an Apple Pencil, where you can go hang out if you want to learn more about hand lettering and how to use the Procreate app. At the end, I'll share some information how you can take some more classes with me.

FREE PRINTABLE

All right, let's get started. Here's the printable that I created for you. It's four pages. The first page tells you the directions on what I'm going to teach you how to do. In case you forget, these are some of the templates I'm giving you. These right here. If you pull this up on your computer, you can actually click on each of these and go ahead and follow me right away. I would love that so we can stay in touch. And if you love what I do today and you don't want to make your own, or even if you do, I have more templates in my Etsy shop that you can look at.

All right, so this is what you'll get. You'll get this set of six that you can print out. I'll show you how to do that. This is what you're going to need to know. This is your guide on where to put your post it notes or your sticky notes. And then here is a template for a to do list.

GETTING THE RIGHT STICKY NOTES

Okay, so I have a variety of sticky notes to show you. Now, I'm sure you've seen the different colored sticky notes that you can get. These are all standard size, three by three inches, and that's what my template is. So that's important whenever you're going shopping for your sticky notes to get those.

Now, I have never seen these in shopping in store, but I've never really looked for them either. But I found these online, and I can get you the link for them. But this is white sticky notes, and these are clear, translucent, and I'll show you. We'll print these through my printer, and I'll show you the results. And so you can see what maybe you want to get.

PRINT THE TEMPLATE

First thing you want to do is go ahead and print out the template I made for you that just has the blank squares. And then we're going to use that to put our sticky notes on.

PLACE STICKY NOTES

So next you're just going to take whatever color sticky notes you have and place them over each square and try to get them

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centered. But they don't have to be perfect by any means. These are a couple of clear ones that I used just to see how they would print out. They printed fine.

I just have a regular desk inkjet printer. It's nothing fancy. And then I put white ones on the other side. The reason I like to use white is because I can print colored ink and it looks really pretty. And if you print color on color, sometimes it didn't show up really good. That one got a little crooked so I want to fix it.

ORIENT YOUR PAPER

And now then you need to be thinking about your printer and how your printer prints because mine's going to be different than yours. They all print differently. And so you have to look and see. See if there's arrows that show you which way to put your paper in. And then I have to turn mine upside down because when it prints, it rolls up towards me. Okay, so I have to put it upside down facing up. And then when it comes out, you can see how it came out. And then it's already printed on there, which is so fun.

TOUCH AS LITTLE AS POSSIBLE

And they're ready to go. And you can take them off and you can stack them together. But the least amount of times you touch the stickiness, like even when you're putting them on, every time you touch it, the oils on your fingers can get take away some of the stickiness. So make sure that you are . . . see, I'm touching it way too much. Try not to touch it so much.
STICK AWAY!

But then you can stack them back on top of each other. Then you can use them for whatever. I mean, I love putting them on mirrors. I love putting them on refrigerators, gas pumps just to make someone's day. I mean, you can do so much with them. But you can also custom make some that are relatable to whatever you're doing.

Like if you're doing a Bible study and you want to learn certain scriptures, that kind of thing, it's fun. So now I'm just taking the same template and I just took those off. I'm using the same piece of paper that I printed out in the very beginning. I'm just putting colored sticky notes on. The reason I love colored sticky notes is because they stand out and for especially as a reminder or something, I love having them. And also I love getting the sticky note, the actual brand, the Post It note brand, because they just are better quality. So keep that in mind when you're shopping. All sticky notes are not created the same.

I will tell you that for sure. And then again, you're going to think about when you go to printing. You'll see how I'm just choosing here just the fourth page to print out. So I didn't print everything out at once. I just printed out what I needed at the time. So that's just how I decided to do it. And I just put in, I just want to do page four of four.

Now, actually, since I've been working on the video, I've changed it to five pages, but it'll still be page four that you need. But I added a page for more details, so you could use the link for my sticky notes if you want to shop online. And then here we go again.

Check your printer, make sure you put it in there the way it needs to go in. And that might be the most challenging part of this whole thing. But once you figure it out, make a note to yourself of how to put it in. And then it's pretty fun once you get it all figured out. You know, technology, how

that goes. So here they come. They look so professionally, they look so good. And then you can just, again, stack those on top of each other and keep them to use them.

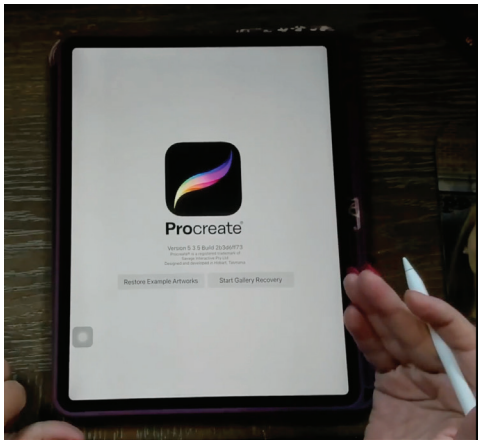
IDEAS FOR USE

However, here's a couple of ideas of how I use them. Like if I was going to do my errands or just my to do list. Okay, so on this one, I wrote, yeah, just for a certain day and thought about what would I need to get done in a day? Maybe it would be laundry. Then you just check it off once you get done. That's the most satisfying, right, is when you get to check something off, pick up medicine and whatever else it is.

And then on another one, I wanted to show you that you could make them for some specific person. So if you had a kid named Mike, this is Mike's to do list and he gets to clean off the table. You have to be real specific, especially if they're kids, right? Wash down the table, set the table, clear the table.

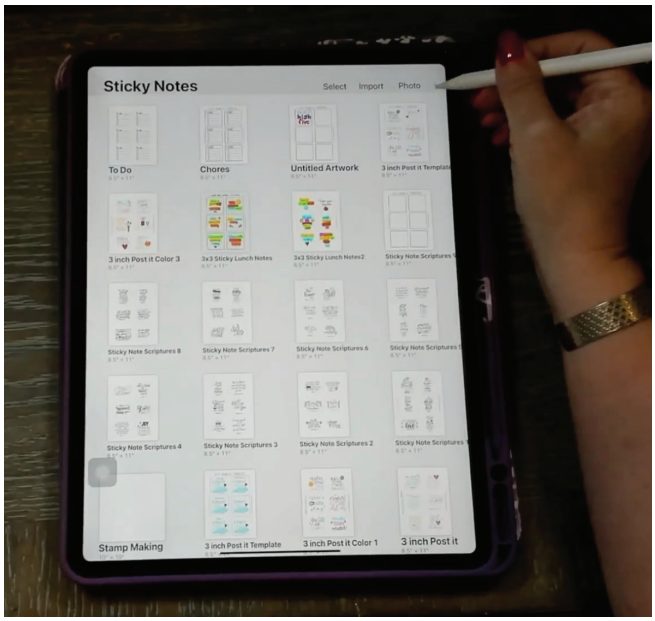
USING IPAD & PROCREATE

Okay, so here we are. This is my iPad. To do what I'm going to do, you'll need an iPad. You need the app Procreate, which is what I'm using here. And when you go to the app store to purchase it, it looks like this.

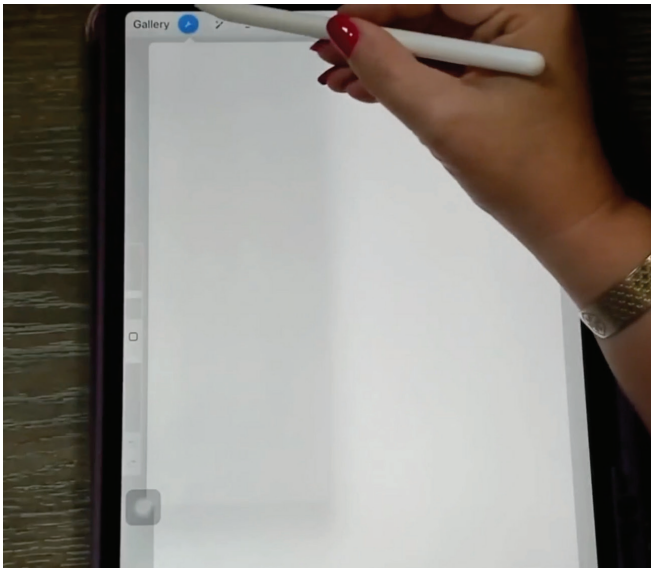


And then an Apple pencil to draw with. Okay. All right, so I'm going to open up Procreate. So I've been working on some templates, and the ones that I've already made, I showed you are these. And so these are the ones you'll be getting, but you can make your own.

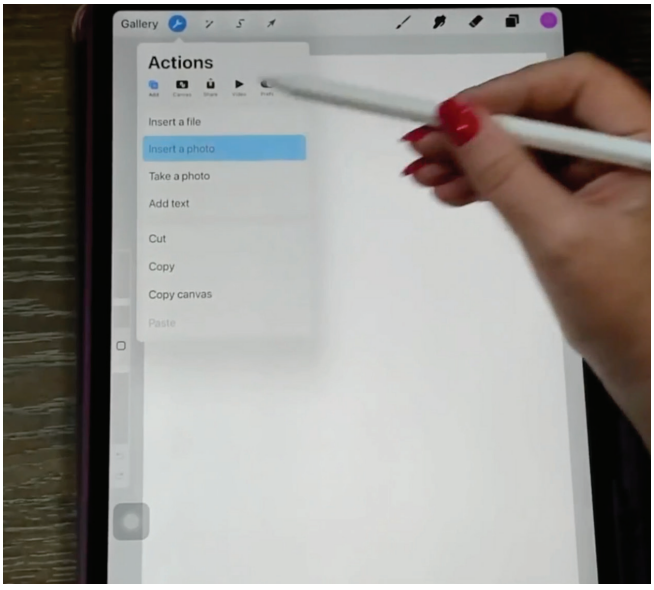
I'm going to give you the blank page, right? And so you will be able to take it and put whatever you want on it. So what I do whenever I go in to upload this, let me just show you from the very beginning. Whenever you download Procreate to your iPad, you're going to hit this plus button right here.



It's $12.99, by the way. One time fee, worth every penny. I can't even tell you all the things I have on here. It's incredible. But I'm just going to do an eight and a half by eleven because that's what size my paper is or eight and a half by eleven. Either way, eleven by eight and a half. And then I am going to have you pull in the template that I gave you so you will have that saved to your camera roll. So you're going to go to the wrench, and then you're going to click on Add.

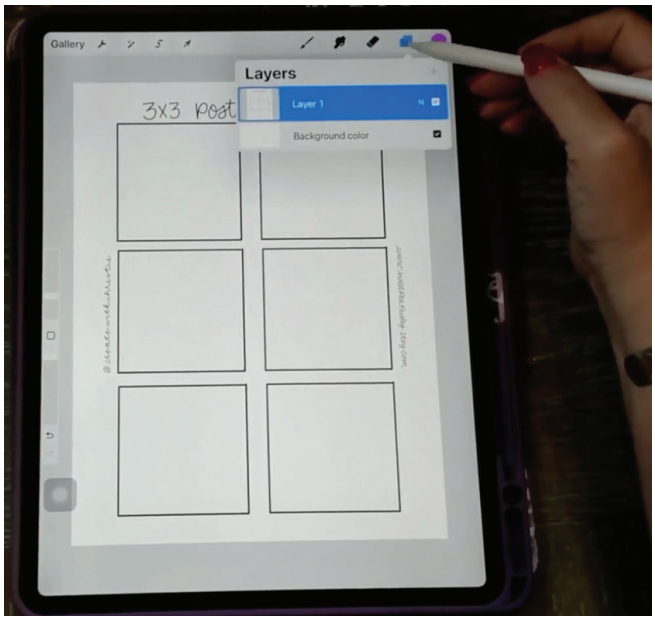


Insert a photo, should be one of the last photos that you added to your iPad. And when I click on it, it opens up. If it doesn't open up the full size of the page, you're just going to click fit to canvas, and then it'll be ready to go.



Now there's a dancing line around here, so you can make it bigger or smaller. We don't need to do anything, so we're just going to uncheck that. Okay, so now this is Procreate.

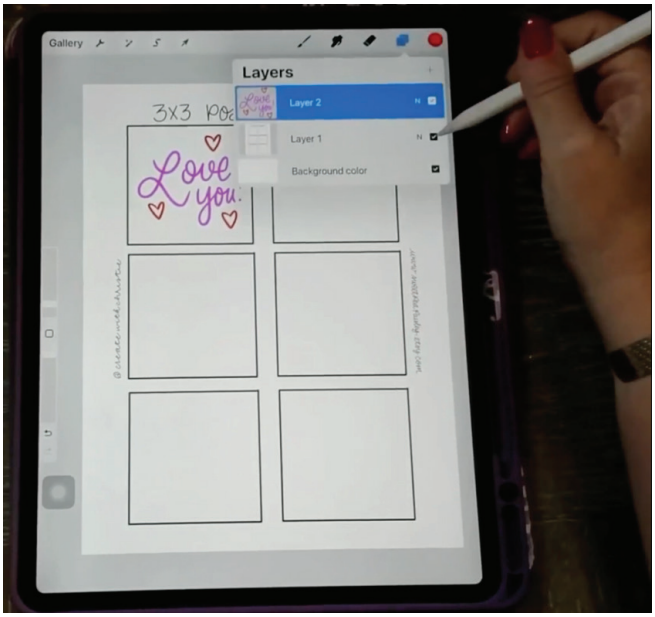
This is layer one. This is the only thing that we have on our canvas. Okay. This white box is our canvas. Now when you click on this right here, these are layers. And so when you make your templates, you want to add a layer. And we're going to write on this layer, and it's going to be separated from the boxes.



So let me give you an example. So, for example, let's say you just wanted to make a note to stick in your husband's car so when he wakes up in the morning, he'll find it. All right. I'm going to make it a little bit smaller, play around with it, get it the way I want. Maybe I want to add a heart as well. Just doodle some hearts on here.

And now let's say I want to print that out. Of course, I would go ahead and doodle all of the boxes. But when I decide to print this out, in the beginning, do you remember how I showed you the template was all by itself? So we'll take the template away and you'll print it like this, onto your sticky notes. Okay?

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All right, so let's do a couple more ideas here. What else could we do of something that maybe we would want to leave around the house for someone that we love? You are so helpful. Who doesn't want to hear that? I love finding little notes around places. You are so helpful. With a smiley face. You are so helpful.

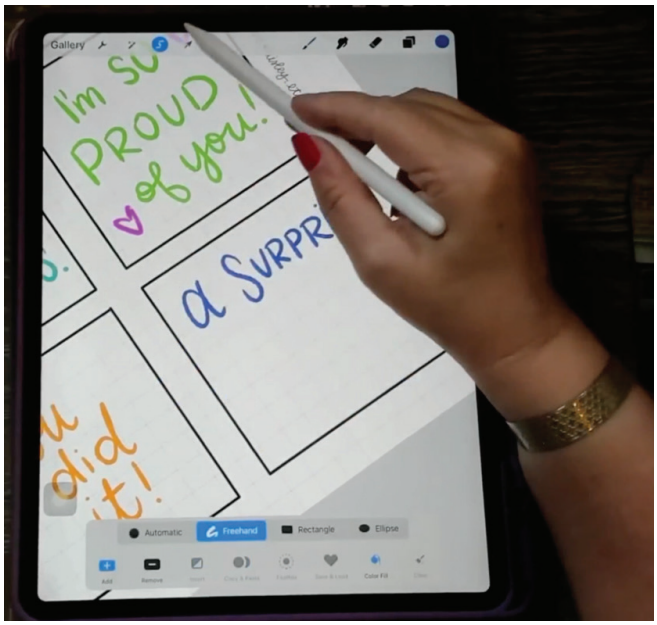
Okay, and now what else could we do? Thanks for being kind. And this could be to a sibling, right? Thanks for being kind. Or doing the dishes without being asked. And that's why I love that you can make your own, because you could use whatever words make sense. That the language that you speak with your family for your kindness.

Now, this program just offers so many fun things, so many great tools in here. So if you needed lines, like if you wanted to make your word straight, there's a guide that you can click on. If you go to Canvas and Drawing Guide, and so that can kind of help you there. Also, if you design all of these on a separate layer, then you can move them separately. So say this one's a little crooked. We could straighten it out and move it over. So that's why I like to add a new layer each time.

So we're going to add another layer and pick another color. And this time so. . .I love you. You are so helpful. Thanks for your kindness. I'm so proud of you. I'm not going . . . kind of going a little bit faster than maybe I would normally do when I teach my lettering, but it doesn't have to be like, beautiful, perfect lettering. I mean, your handwriting is so precious, and it would be a shame if your family didn't know what your handwriting looked like, right?

I'm so proud of you. We have different things to celebrate, too, so you did it is always a good one. You could do happy birthday. A surprise is coming your way. OOH, I love that one. I love that one. A surprise is coming your way. Make sure you spell everything right. As a lettering teacher, that's hilarious because now right here, I forgot to add a new layer, and so I need to move that over, but it's going to move everything over.

So to fix that, I go up here to this little selection tool, and I oops, I accidentally hit the wrong thing. Okay, click on the selection tool.



Circle this, and then I'm going to hit the arrow. Three finger swipe, cut and paste. And that's just like a shortcut. You don't have to do the three finger swipe, but there's lots of things to learn with Procreate.

And I have some free YouTube videos if you want to learn more too. A surprise is coming your way. Woo. Woo. Okay, so maybe we'll do kind of like a little decorative rainbow here to add some color to me. You can't do enough smiley faces for sure. Love doing the smiley faces.

EXAMPLES FOR SCHOOL KIDS

Okay, so that was just a really quick way to show you how easy it is for you to write out little notes for your family. I did a couple of other examples. So this could be like, around the house, but I thought these would be great for school. You want to encourage your kids to be kind to other people. So have a great day. I kind of like to remember. Be kind. Help someone today. Compliment someone today. Make someone smile today. Hug someone today, and share with someone today. So I came up with those and then I also did this list.

Thank your teacher, make today great. I have a surprise for you. Good luck today. Be kind to someone. So I was thinking, who was sad? I was thinking, put it in their lunchbox. And it's a reminder in the middle of the day of mom is encouraging you and she's not with you.

But these are things that you would talk through them before so they wouldn't be surprised, so they'd know what it meant. Like compliment may be a big word for someone, but if you talked about that'd, be a great thing to teach, what is a compliment. And then all of a sudden in their lunchbox one day, they get this, compliment someone. I know what that means. I need to tell someone that they did a good job.

BUSINESS USE

Here's what I did for my business. I had a lettering challenge and several people finished it. So I made little sticky notes with their name so I could give them a little note with their Happy Mail that they sent me. They completed the Happy Mail challenge and so I sent them a card and I put this little note in there and it's so fun to be able to personalize it like that.

RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS

And then here's just some more that I made up for anywhere you can put this. I literally went around and put them on mailboxes one day for fun. Just kind of as a random act of kindness with my daughter. So, you're as sweet as a peach, out of reach. I adore you. What's that mean? I adore you sew, like sewing needle, so much. Keep your head up, buttercup. You make a difference. Stop and smell the roses. Bless your heart. I'm not sure exactly why you might use that one, but it's such a fun saying we say around here in Texas. Anyway, bless your heart. Kind of like maybe you've been through something and you need some encouragement.

SCRIPTURE MEMORIZATION

Here's some scriptures that I've been working on. I'm eventually putting these in my Etsy shop. I don't know by the time this airs or not if I'm going to have it in my Etsy shop or not, but I love learning scripture, and it's such a great way to have these little sticky notes around the house where you can stick them up and memorize for you

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and for anyone else who may enter that room.

So there's those two. Another one. This one I love. Be the light. I love them all. They're so fun. These, I took my time, you can tell. I hand lettered them and spent time drawing and doodling and all that. So it can be as basic as you want or more in depth.

MORE BUSINESS NOTES

Okay. And then I did some for my business as well. I think it's this one. Yes. So these, I printed out little sticky notes to put on my order. When someone would order a lettering book for me, I would just stick that on there and it was like super easy to go. So hopefully you're inspired by these and feel like this is something that you could do.

STAY TUNED

So I said at the end, I would tell you a little bit more about what I teach. So if you're interested, stay tuned. But this is some of the artwork that I teach every week I do classes where I teach how to hand letter and doodle, and it's faith based, and I'll show you some examples. Oops. Hold on.

So here is a class that I did on paper, and we use markers and watercolors and all the fun things in my class. And then I also have another class that's digital, so we did this digitally. So I teach both doing art on the iPad or on paper. So I'd love to tell you more about it if you're interested.
So stay tuned.

You can see if you look in the packet, there's links that tells you how to get on my waitlist and that kind of thing. But make sure that you stay connected and follow me on social media. Thank you so much for allowing me to share my passion with you. Have a great day. Bye.

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Change Your Life With These Money Saving Tips

CHRISTINE • TRANSCRIPT

Hey, friends, how are you? Thank you so much for joining me today. I am gonna talk about a topic I'm very, very excited about. If you are starting to be concerned about the price of housing, food, gas, cars, clothing, raising kids, doctors' appointments, heck, everything these days, then this is the video for you.

I am here to give you some money saving hacks that will change your life, they'll change your budget and hopefully help you feel a little more in control of the inflation that we are experiencing right now.

HERE'S CHRISTINE

Hey, how are you? My name is Christine. Did I mention before that I have four kids? This is one of them. This is my youngest. He's the baby. I have a daughter and four sons. That's four kids. They're all teenagers. Send help now. We're reading books right now. I like books. I like to read. Currently about to start this. This just came out. I think this is book five of this series.

I also love food and exercise of any variety. I've done CrossFit. I'm a mountain biker, a road biker, a triathlete, a marathoner, a trail runner. Currently training for an ultramarathon. I don't really know how I got roped into that one, but here we are. And here's what I do know, is the more potatoes that you eat, the more miles you can run. Or vice versa. The more miles you run, the more potatoes you can eat. Something like that.

If we have not met before, I have over 1000 videos on saving money, grocery shopping, cooking for your family, and just general hangout shenanigans. So if you enjoy hanging out with me today, maybe head on over to YouTube. Check me out over there. In fact, I'm all over social media. We'll talk about that more at the end of this video.

HERE ARE THE HACKS

But to kick it off, let's do money saving hacks. Now, I had a really hard time narrowing down my money saving tips today to a smaller amount to help you guys out today, let's go through them right now.

1. CUT YOUR STREAMING SERVICES

Number one, streaming services. Okay, listen, I'm not trying to be harsh right here. I hope it doesn't come across that way. But if you have the time to watch Netflix, Amazon Prime, Hulu, Acorn TV, HBO, Max Sling, YouTube TV, Peacock, Discovery+, Paramount+, ESPN, Disney+ . . .
Why are they all called Pluses? You pay for Spotify, you pay for Pandora, you pay for Amazon Music. If you have time, if you literally have time to watch and or listen to every single streaming service, you have way too much time on your hands.

The truth is, we have all of these options, and then it's too many options, and we usually stick to one thing. So my suggestion today is to rotate your streaming services.

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I have said it for years, it still remains true today. Probably even more so because the cost of all the streaming services keeps going up. From Netflix alone, you used to be able to pay like $8 a month. Well, now their basic plan includes ads, which is fine. It's $7 a month. The standard one we've had forever and ever, it's $15.50 a month now. Okay, Disney+ at its cheapest, including ads, $8 a month. Hulu with ads $8 a month. HBO Max, $20 a month. Discovery+ $5 a month. Peacock, $5 a month. If you did those, that's $61.50 a month.

And I didn't even add some of the other options or any music services or Audible if you use that, or renting movies on Amazon Prime. So I am a huge fan of picking one streaming service, pausing the rest, and watch what you want to watch, like rotate through the shows you want to watch on that platform, pause it and switch to another one.

You're going to cut your bill from $60 to $100 a month to basically ten, and most likely free up some of your time to perhaps work a side hustle.

2. WAIT FOR A DEAL

Money saving hack number two when it comes to streaming services is wait until there is a fantastic deal and do it then. I'll give you some of the ones that I have done. Why is it always Black Friday? I feel like it's always Black Friday they offer this deal.

Hulu. I've had a $1.25 a month for a year. Like they'll give you an entire year for under $15. I got Peacock for ninety-nine cents a month for one year. I paid less than $12 for an entire year of streaming on Peacock and I have been very happy with it. They have all of the seasons of Everybody Loves Raymond. The longer you've been married, the funnier that show gets. Yes, they are horrible to each other, but it's like, it's kind of ridiculous.

3. USE YOUR LIBRARY

The rotating your streaming services and finding a deal when you purchase them leads me into my next money saving hack. This one is huge. I have utilized this one heavily as a stay at home mom, as a mother of four kids, and married to a spouse who doesn't really like to spend money on anything. Even when I tell him it's okay, he just like, no, what a waste of money.

When it comes to entertainment, you can really, really blow the budget. And your local library is key to helping you save those dollar, dollar bills. Okay, listen to all of the perks that your local library has.

SO MANY THINGS

Are you ready for this? They have free Internet. So if you can't afford Internet in your house, or maybe you don't use it that much, you can go to your local library and use their computers and their internet. So you actually don't have to have those items.

Number two, hello, books. Books up the wazoo. You can borrow essentially any book that you want. And if your library doesn't have the book that you're looking for, go talk to the person at the circulation desk, because I am telling you, they are always willing to listen to suggestions.

Let's say you want to go check out the Percy Jackson books, all of the different series of those. There's a lot and your library does not have them. You can go to the circulation desk and say, hey, I'd really like to read the Percy Jackson books. And they were like, excellent. We'll put it on our order

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list for this month. We always want to know what our patrons would like to read. It has happened to me multiple times where I've just asked the person at the desk, they put it on their list and then they buy it.

My library also has like, book kits. So they'll have the audiobook, they'll have the book that you can hold. They'll have worksheets, they'll have associated books so you can talk about that. They have book club book kits so you can get multiple copies of a book, hand them out to all of your friends, and then like, discussion questions.

MORE THAN BOOKS

Here's another thing that my library purchased because I asked was the TV show Revenge. I was streaming it. It was taken off the streaming service and I couldn't watch it anymore. So I went in. My library has a ton of DVDs for movies and TV shows. A ton. Huge selection. And I went in and I was like, hey, I'm looking for this TV show Revenge. I don't see it. Do you have it? Is it checked out? And they were like, we don't have it. What a great suggestion. I'll put it in and we'll order it. And then they ordered it, and now it's there.

You can get full TV series. All 15 seasons of Supernatural are at my library for free. There is endless entertainment available at your library for free. So you can save all of those dollars and
put them back into your pocket and into your budget.

In some areas, you can even utilize the Libby app for audiobooks. In my area, it doesn't work. Excellent. Like, everything is many, many months wait and they don't have a ton on there. But I have noticed for larger cities, that is a great option as well.

PRIZES AND MORE

One more thing about libraries. Usually they have summer reading programs for your kids. Free prizes encourage the kids to read books. They're really, really fun. My library also has arts and crafts time during the summer. And you can donate old books to most libraries. They have their own little bookstore where they sell used books, and all the proceeds go back into your local library system. It's a win, win, win for everyone.

BIGGEST BUDGET ITEMS

As I was considering the tips I really wanted to share with you today, I tried to consider the highest bills on most people's budgets on my podcast. Did you know I have a podcast? It's called the Frugal Fit Mom podcast. There's a video version on YouTube. You can listen to it anywhere. You listen to podcasts. We frequently do budget breakdowns where people submit their family's budget and we try and help them know where to cut and give suggestions to help them reach their financial goals. As I review all of these budgets, the things where people spend the most money are entertainment or like fun money, their car and food. So that's why I decided to choose these tips today.

4. DRIVE A USED CAR

So let's talk cars. Cars are very expensive. Cars are not an asset. In most cases, they will cost you money and not make you money. That means they're a liability. Insurance, gas, upkeep, the purchase of them in the first place. Most people finance them. So now we have interest rates also. Number one, a new car is not always the most reliable. There is such a thing as driving older cars with high miles that are

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very, very reliable. You just have to pick the right brand and make sure that it was maintained well.

Now, these are my personal experiences with used cars. It's what I have always, always bought. Number one, Ford sedans don't last very long. We had two Ford sedans and my sister had one. And every single one of them did not stand the test of time, let's just say that. So when it comes to Ford sedans, I'm going to give it a pass.

I have had excellent luck with Hondas and Toyotas and Chevys. I bought my very first Honda Odyssey with 100,000 miles on it. I drove it for eight years, pushed it up to 210,000 miles, and sold it working just as well as the day I bought it. That car never gave me a moment's concern on the highway. Driving around town, driving my kids around, it never broke down on me. It served me very, very well.

Currently, today, I have a 2007 Toyota Rav4 with pushing 200,000 miles on it. It just won't quit like it's such an amazing car. I have a 2012 Honda Pilot. That's an eleven year old car with 160,000 miles on it. It's my favorite car. It's like my favorite car I've ever had.

5. REGULAR OIL CHANGES

And here are the two things you should always do with your cars to have them running as long as possible. Number one, don't let them run out of gas. And number two, the most important, if you do regular oil changes on your car and you're not driving crazy, you will be shocked at how long a used car will last. I have saved tens of thousands of dollars over the course of my life by driving used cars and maintaining them with oil changes and a wash here and there. Like, I've literally done nothing else to them. I'm a huge fan of used cars.

6. BUY YOUR CAR PERSON TO PERSON

If you can get a used car that was like driven by a grandma and kept in the garage, that's like a Toyota or a Honda or a Chevy, you're pretty much going to do okay. I always have a mechanic look at it just to make sure they're sound and they're running right there's no weird noises or anything like that. But I still think even with today's higher prices, you can find a deal on a used car, but you're most likely not going to find it at a car lot or at a dealership. It's going to be a person. It's going to be person to person like this. They're harder to find, but you still can do it. And don't forget to do your oil changes.

FOOD HACKS

If you don't know me very well, I do want to tell you that I am only here for the food. It is all about the food. And my next few tips are about, well, yeah, you guessed it, food. One of the biggest budget busters when I review other people's budgets is the grocery budget and the eating out. Most people spend more on food and eating out than they do on their house.

7. DRINK WATER

So let's talk about it and talk about a few ways you can cut down on some of these expenses. Number one, drink water. I'm serious. Drink only water. Your Gatorades, your coffees, your teas, your sodas, your Capri Suns, your hot chocolate. While not necessary, okay, let me take one step back here. My mom would fight me to the death if I took away her Diet Coke, okay?

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So if you need, like, one drink vice, whether it be coffee or tea or Diet Coke, okay, or Diet DP in my case, I'll allow you the one. However, if we're buying, like, cases and cases and cases all the time, they're expensive. They're not necessary. And this goes for going grocery shopping and also going out to eat. Your $4 soda is busting your budget.

When you go out to eat, you drink alcohol. Your going out to eat bill will shoot through the roof. Like, if you want to do that, just buy it and bring it to your house. It's going to be much, much cheaper. But I am telling you, you cut the drinks, like, the drinks that you're purchasing, just that one thing, and you drink water, and you don't bring any of those drinks home. I'm telling you, most people would save $100 a month by doing that. One tip.

8. EAT LEFTOVERS

Let's move to the next. There are some people I know won't like this tip, but here it is anyway. You got to eat the leftovers. How much food are you throwing away every month? Do you buy groceries, like, the big thing of spinach with good intentions, and then your good intentions end up in the garbage because they've turned to green slime? Like, you think you're going to make green smoothies, but you don't really like green smoothies, but you know you should because they're healthy, but you don't really want to do it.

Yeah, I know exactly what you're saying. Be aware of what you're throwing away and then let that be your guide when you meal plan and shop in the future. If you keep buying those what are they called, those crudités platters, which is just French for throw in the garbage later and you don't ever eat them, stop buying them.

If you make so much food at dinner that you have leftovers for three days but no one in your family likes leftovers and you end up throwing it away, you need to buy less food and make less food. If you don't mind the leftovers, don't cook dinner again until the leftovers are gone. There's a lot of different ways we can hack this one.

9. RECREATE TAKEOUT

Speaking of hacks, let's do another one. You like to eat out, but the price of eating out is like, driving you banana town right now. The last three times I have gone out to dinner, the service has been horrible and the prices are through the roof. So what I'm saying to you is find your favorite takeout or like, restaurant meal and recreate it at your house.

Have you had the Just Bare chicken from, was it Costco or Sam's Club? Get some of that chicken and like the Walmart chicken sauce, you have yourself a Chick-Fil-A dupe, man. It's delicious. It's so tasty and a fraction of the cost. It's not that hard to recreate your favorites from takeout places. In fact, there's tons of YouTube videos on it. I know my friend Jen Chapin makes crunch wrap supremes at home all the time, which is, let's be honest, the best thing on the Taco Bell menu.

10. STOP BUYING JUNK FOOD & COOK AT HOME

My last two food tips are these. Stop buying junk food and cook at home. I'm going to call junk food convenience items. That's going to be your chips, your Oreos, your ice cream, things like this and this. Yes, they are delicious. Yes. Look, I have a few at my house right now. I know, but when I bought these for like, a special breakfast for my kids' friends, I could not believe that I had

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spent $50 at the grocery store for just a couple of items.

NO NUTRITIONAL VALUE

It was shocking how much money stuff like this and stuff like this can cost and how much your grocery bill will shoot through the roof by buying junk food, which, while delicious, have very few, like, vitamins. Right. We can agree on that. I don't know that there's much protein in these. There's a whole lot of sugar. There's a whole lot of ingredients I can't really pronounce. Like, these Oreos have like, four different kinds of oils. Yikes.

If you just bypass, like bypass those center aisles with like the 3 million lanes of cereal and all of the Oreos and crackers and chips and cookies and chocolate chips and all of those things, you just bypass those and buy actual ingredients and then cook at home.

FREE COOKBOOKS

Don't know how you guys, I have like 700 videos on my channel on how to cook. I have a whole website with my family's tried and true Recipes. In fact, I have three digital cookbooks that I am giving you for coming and joining me today. Those links for the download will be down below. Down below this video, there's like an additional resources section. I'm not really sure how they're going to set it up. All three of my digital cookbooks I am giving you for free. These are like family tested things I have cooked for 15 to 20 years that are winners at my house.

SPECIAL DISCOUNT

If you want to save even more money, we're going to do a deep, deep dive into your grocery budget in my course, Grocery Budget Boot Camp, I am going to give to you guys for a major discount. So that will also be down below if you want to go check it out, there is tons of content, tons of videos, free printables. Like, you can't go through this course and not save money on your groceries. You can't.

MORE FROM CHRISTINE

If you want more money saving tips, tricks, hacks, you can go check out my YouTube channel. I have even more information. There even more tips to help you save money. And by saving that money, you can make your life just a little bit better.

Once again, I'm over on YouTube at FrugalFitMom. I have a podcast, Frugal Fit Mom podcast, if you want to go check that out as well. I'm even on Instagram sometimes, frugalfitmom6. And like I said, I've got that website, frugalfitmom.com. Thank you so much for hanging out with me today, and I hope to see you soon.

BONUS TIPS

You want more money saving tips? Okay. I'll give you a few bonus tips that won't move the needle quite as much as the things I mentioned previously, but they are useful. I have done them myself and can recommend to you guys.

CURB CRUISING

If you live in an area that has I'm going to call it bulk trash pickup. Like, one day a month where you can put out literally anything and they will come pick it up. When I lived in Texas, they did that. It was once a month. My area now does not do that, which makes me very sad, because if you go shopping on bulk trash pickup day, you can score some amazing finds.

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Here are some of the items that I got for free when I was trying to furnish my house on essentially no money. A set of bunk beds, wooden bunk beds that we picked up, stripped, restained, and used for like, ten years. An office desk. It just had like a free sign on it. And we didn't have a truck or anything. It was a few streets over. So Dave, my husband and I, we picked it up and walked it down a few streets. It looked super sketch. Okay? But office desk, we use it for five years to this day. You know those like, hope chest, cedar chest, blanket chest, things that go at the foot of your bed. We picked one of those up from the trash from a house across the street. It was ugly as sin. Again, we stripped it down, restained it. We still have it now. It's been at least 15 years.

NO PAPER TOWELS

Ditch the paper towels. My friends, I bought a case of paper towels probably like three years ago. I still have them all because as it turns out, I don't use paper towels that often. I'm a big fan of cleaning rags. I use rags for almost everything. I only go for the paper towel if there's like, broken glass. Maybe dog puke, maybe I'll use a paper towel for that one. But mostly it's cleaning rags. I can't believe how little I buy paper towels.

And the cases aren't that expensive. $20 to $25 for the big case at Sam's Club or Costco or something. But it's still 20 or $25 that you don't have to spend. Like if you saw a $20 bill on the ground, would you stop and pick it up? Yes, you would. And so would I.

BEAUTY HACKS

Let's talk grooming. As you can tell, I am a simple girl when it comes to grooming. I have very minimal makeup. My nails are never painted, but I do like painted toenails. But instead of paying to go get a petty, right, I just have a few polishes and I learned to do it myself, so they always look nice at a fraction of the cost.

My daughter, she does like having painted nails, so I bought her a gel nail kit that she can just do at home. So instead of paying 30 plus dollars plus tip for a mani-pedi, you can totally do it yourself at home.

Instead of getting your hair cut every four weeks, we can stretch it out to twelve weeks. You can stretch it out to 16 weeks.

And as far as makeup goes, find a few pieces that you really, really love, buy those pieces and toss all that excess stuff. You'll lean more into minimalism so you'll have less to clean up and you'll spend a whole lot less on your makeup as well.

GAME NIGHT

If you want to go out with your friends, sometimes you don't actually even have to go out. Have you thought about doing a game night with your friends? Some friends of ours, her husband lost his job and they were big fans of going out to dinner. So when her husband lost his job, what they did instead is they put together game nights with friends. Honestly, I think they were more fun. No spending money on going out to eat, didn't spend money on getting ready, paying for the babysitter. We just went to someone's house, played board games, card games, and saved a whole bunch of money. So I would recommend trying out a game night for you, your friends, your kids, they will love it.

Okay, that really is going to wrap up the tips for this video. Thanks again for hanging out. Hopefully I'll see you later.

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Thought Decluttering and More for Almost Empty Nesters and Empty Nesters

CHRISTINE OAKFIELD • TRANSCRIPT

Hello, beautiful soul, an amazing human. I'm Coach Christine, and because life doesn't always happen in zoom sessions, we're going to take a walk. I invite you to walk with me. It's a little windier than I was expecting, but we're going be in the trees.

Hi there. I'm Coach Christine, host and producer of the Your Empty Nest Coach podcast and creator of the 30 day challenge to empty nest success. And I am not your usual life coach. I am quirky. I love analogies. I'm usually not going to put makeup on, and you're usually going to find me in nature imperfect because this is freaking real life.

I'm doing real life. You're doing real life. And hey, we can be amazing doing real life.

A BIT ABOUT CHRISTINE

Since I know you have access to a pause button, if you'd like to know a little bit about me, here's some fun facts.

You're probably curious why I am an empty nest coach. It came organically. My daughter headed off to college at the age of 14, out of state. So I had a Band-Aid ripped off four years earlier than expected.

On the outside, it probably looked like it was calm, cold and collected. I was really excited for her. I knew it was what she needed and wanted. But on the inside, I was freaking out just a tad. I gave up a career to raise her. I had homeschooled, not homeschooled, help her through this untraditional education path. And here we were.

And I didn't have a group of friends who were going through it at exactly the same time in the same way. So I went online for resources and couldn't really find everything that I needed or wanted. So started using some things here and some things there and processing them.

NOT LIKE ANYONE ELSE'S

About a year later, friends came to me and said, hey, you seem okay. What's your secret? And this was born. We'll take a listen. [Listening to birds.] That was five years ago. A lot has happened since then.

The one thing I can say is the empty nest years, whether you're in them or they're ahead, are probably not going to look like anybody else's. And they're also probably not going to look the way you expect them to. That's okay.

WRITE IT DOWN

I have an activity for you. Take a moment and think about how you would answer this question. How do I feel about the empty nest years? Any thoughts that come to mind, write them down. Any emotions come to mind, write them down. Clenched jaw, write that down. Where you're feeling in the pit of your stomach, write it down.

Okay, you get the idea. All the thoughts,

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feelings, emotions, body language that you have around the empty nest years, put it down on that piece of paper and set it aside. You can tap pause and do that now if you like. I took a seat. I'll wait.

WHAT IF?

Okay, you're good? Let's do it's. So easy to get caught up in one little piece of the empty nest years and to focus purely on that like this. Thoughts such as my child is never going to get out of that predicament they're in. How is my child going to beat that addiction? How is my child going to survive in this economy?

it's very easy to go into the worries of parenthood. What I'd like you to consider is adding a what if, but making it a positive thing. So often the what ifs are around things that we're worried about and concerned. But next time you catch yourself focused on that one thing, what if this doesn't work out for them? What if their partner isn't great for them?

I want you to remember that, what if they are? What if it does work out? What if they learn and grow from this? What if they become the amazing human that they are meant to be? It's so easy to focus on one section. And there's so much more to our kids, to us too, and our relationships. So next time you catch yourself in a thought or a feeling that has you not feeling so great, see if you can notice what that thought is and say, well, what if it doesn't happen?

AFFIRMATIONS

Because the chances are it's not going to play out the way you expect. What if my past relationships helped me to become who I am today? What if my past relationships helped me to know the kind of relationships that I want in the future? What if I knew with all my heart and energy that my most important relationship is the one that I have with myself? What if I am amazing?

And specific to worries and concerns about our kids. Even if things do play out the way you're expecting, think about how far they've gotten. And when things go wrong, you always figure out what to do. You know what to do. So trust you, your amazing self, that when you get to that moment, you'll know what to do. And don't put yourself there ahead of time because it may never happen.

ADDING TO YOUR TOOLBOX

Oh, let's stop. Take some deep breaths. Do it at your own pace. I like to add things like this to the top of my life's toolbox. I have this whole analogy about the top of your toolbox and the bottom of your toolbox and the top of your toolbox are things that help you process through tough moments, that kind of reset you to get to the next place.

Stopping when you feel overwhelmed and taking deep breaths, noticing your thoughts, focusing on something, a sound, a leaf on a tree that's dancing, the sound of the wind. Something to just take you out of all that's going on in your mind. It's really great.

THOUGHT BOX DELIVERIES

Okay, let's move on. Let's spend a little bit of time talking about decluttering the thoughts in your mind. I could talk about this for two plus hours easily. It's a little bit kind of my addiction. I love the analogies around it, but I like to think of your mind as like a house.

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And think of thoughts as being delivered to your house and in a box. And in the box outside, it has the name of the thought, so my child is amazing. My child is worthless. I've heard that my child isn't going to ever be financially sound. Whatever the thoughts are that are coming into your mind, think of them as thought box deliveries. And they have been arriving, thousands of them, over your lifetime, into your house, and they are in rooms.

There are amazing thoughts that are hiding behind some thought box deliveries that are like, aren't so great that we continually focus on. So let's start taking a look at those thought box deliveries, seeing which ones we're illuminating and shining a light on, and which ones we might want to pull out declutter and find, because they're gems.

BEGIN TO DREAM

The power of decluttering your thoughts is a game changer. Add what if to your statements. Also a game changer. Enjoy the fact that you've reached this stage and begin to dream about what's ahead. Many times people think that because this stage of life is over, their life as they know it is over.

And yeah, there is a change. There's a transition, there's a bit of mourning. Bittersweetness is real in the empty nest years. But there's amazing, fun opportunity to turn into a new role. Transition into a new role. I like to think become a coach to your children. Yes, you're still their parents. You're still going to help out when they need things. But also, you don't have to solve everything. You've never had to solve everything. So if that was you, I give you permission to let it go.

It is time for you to take care of yourself, if you haven't already, to think about who you are. And that can be scary. But you're amazing. You're worth discovering. You're worth figuring out who you are. And you're going to show up so much better in the future for not only yourself, but your family, your partner, your kids.

A CHANGING RELATIONSHIP

And your relationship with your kids will become more amazing than you can imagine, because they will slowly, over time, realize that you have your stuff figured out. They don't have to worry about you. Kids do that. They do. They might not tell you, but they do. And them seeing you become who you are and have fun gives them permission to do it. And then you show up together in this amazing, incredible space that is bonding is new and exciting, and you got a whole new relationship with your child. And you really get to know your kids. So much fun. Nature.

Amazing nature. And a bench to sit and lay on. Chef's kiss.

Okay, so, so far we've talked about who I am, why I do what I do, your thoughts. We've talked about transitioning. I can't say that we're transitioning into a new role as a parent for your kids. Be a coach for them. Way more of that in my podcast and other things, but just consider it for today. Consider the idea that you don't have to do everything for them and you can be a coach for them when they need it. Cheer them on, though. That's your big job.

FOUR THINGS - PSPF

Next, I'd like to cover four things to keep in mind in the empty nest years. Other than remembering you're freaking amazing if you

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get these four things, it's a really good start.

So here are your letters. PSPF. Let me write them down. Here we go. PSPF.

PATIENCE FOR SELF

The first P. That first P is patience for self. Patience for self is giving yourself patience and room to process through the emotions, the changes that are happening, and give yourself grace and love as you go through this. Patience for self. P. First P.

SELF LOVE

The S is self-love.

Hate to tell you this, but you're probably your worst bully. The thoughts that go on about yourself in your head can be brutal sometimes. A lot of times the things that we say to ourselves in our head are things we would never say to another human being. We would be mortified if we overheard our kids say them to another human being, yet we say them to ourselves all the time.

So we want to notice those and let them go. One thing to watch is we don't want to beat ourselves up when we catch ourselves bullying ourselves because the cycle just continues. So if you catch yourself in this thought about yourself that is unkind, I'm going to put it gently, then be like, oh, I don't want to say that it's okay. The good news is I noticed it and I can be aware of it going forward and start to change it. And that is a win.

Noticing it is a huge win. Celebrate the fact that you caught it and love on yourself. You are amazing. Follow me if you need reminders, because until you have it in your head that you're amazing, I'm happy to remind you of that.

PATIENCE FOR OTHERS

Okay, looking down, the next one is P. This P is patience as well, but it's patience for others. And this is the reminder that as you transition into the empty nest, more than likely you may have others in your household. And the empty nest transition years are going to impact all of you differently.

You're going to have different emotions. You're going to have different thoughts about it. One of you may be thrilled and want to convert a bedroom right away. Another one may want to put up a shrine. The pets in the house are impacted by the transition. Siblings in the house are impacted by the transition.

So keep in mind that just as you need to be patient with yourself, you also need to be patient with others. It's a really great time to take care of yourself, figure out your feelings, and then begin to communicate them with love.

FUN

And the last one, F, is for fun. Remember to have fun. Life is short. It can be dreary and awful, or it can be amazing. It really depends what you focus on.

Let me give you an example. Here's my current view. There's a lake behind there. I have no doubt I could find a piece of poison ivy or a spider and focus specifically on that. But there are so many things that are amazing and beautiful that I can focus on. Some I see with my eyes and some I hear.

So remember that the world is way bigger than that thought you're currently focused

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on and consider. Is that thought that you have right now one that makes you feel good? Or is it one that doesn't and might be worth changing?

REVISITING YOUR THOUGHTS

Remember that sheet you did in the beginning? Take a look at it. Sometimes that action is enough for people, getting all of that out of your head and your body and onto paper. Some people like to crumple it up and throw it away, see how they feel. Do it again tomorrow and see if you have the different answers. Others like to hold onto it and take a look periodically and see if anything's changed. I'm one of those.

WHAT YOU'VE ALREADY DONE

All right. I've stopped again just to point out that you're freaking amazing. You have raised a human or multiple humans. They've made it to adulthood. Are you kidding me? There's no instruction manual for this yet you've done this. Maybe there have been a lot of roadblocks getting to this point in life.

First of all, getting to 18 as your own human being, and then having others that you are responsible for in a world that is changing so incredibly fast. Our kids have been raised in a world that is totally different from ours, and we have the same thing with our parents.
And you have done well. You have done well done. Stop and take that in.

Sure, there's going to be sadness. What if the sadness is because you have so many incredible memories that you've created and you feel like they might be over?
It's just going to be different. But really take in your amazing power, whether the emptiness was ahead and you're a little concerned about those years, or if you're deep in them and you have three kids at home and they're over 40.

NO RULEBOOK

You're amazing. You've got this. There is no rulebook. It doesn't have to look any one way, but you're doing this. Well done.

Not exactly sure where I am on time, but I want to thank Laura, Tasha and team for this amazing summit. If you've watched this far, thanks for watching. If you have questions, let me know. I like to get right to the point, give you the information you need and get out of there. I have way more resources on my own site, but enjoy this summit.

Pace yourself. If you feel overwhelmed, get the big membership for it so you can catch up when you have time later. I think you're amazing. You've got this. Not only do I think you're amazing, but your future self has your back, thinks you're freaking amazing and it's cheering you on. So keep making them proud.

Have a great day. Let me show you the lake. Thanks for joining me today. You are amazing.

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The Power of Hidden Organization

COLLEEN PASTOOR • TRANSCRIPT

Hey, Get Organized HQ Virtual. I am so excited to be here today. Today I am talking all about hidden organization, and I'm calling this talk The Power of Hidden Organization.

LOOKS GOOD BUT WORKS

So all of this boils down to the belief that I have about our homes, and that is that your home should work incredibly hard for you and your family, but that it should also look darn good doing it. And I kind of feel like we either see one or we see the other. We see those Instagram aesthetic homes or we see organized homes, but they have the charts and they have the fridge covered in the meal plans, and none of these things are bad, but these just do not work for me.

THIS IS COLLEEN

So before I dig into this, because this has been honestly so big for me to kind of find this nice medium middle ground here, I want to introduce myself. So I am Colleen. I am a DIY blogger over at lemonthistle.com where I have been blogging for ten years now, which is absolutely wild.

I share DIY and home decor there, and I love to share DIY and home decor that is practical for your family, simple to organize and maintain, and we just have a ton of fun doing it as well. Other than blogging at Lemon Thistle, I also have a website devoted to free printables, and I love organization printables, so you'll find some of those as well.

And in the last ten years that I've been blogging, I have had so many great opportunities to have my work published on different websites and work with different brands and most recently even publish a book. So that is a little bit about me on the work side.

WHAT THE HOUSE NEEDS TO DO

But on the personal side, I am a mom of four kids, and I have a giant Berna doodle. And so as much as I blog about home decor, we also need our house to work super hard for us. And as much as I love modern decor with clear surfaces and kind of a minimalist feel, I love how calming and peaceful that feels. But I also want that home to have some life and some character. I want it to serve us really well. I want to have family photos, and I want our kids to feel welcome there.

And speaking of kids, they come with a lot of laundry. I need to be able to house that and maintain that. And I want to not only house laundry, but Halloween costumes that we wear at least once a week and dog toys. And I want our kitchen to not just be beautiful, but to work so hard as we have pizza parties and teach our kids how to bake and cook, and I use my small yard. I make it work really hard for me, too, with the cut flower garden. And so I also want to be able to bring in armfuls of flowers and have my kids cut them up and make arrangements to deliver to the neighborhood.

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I want to be able to craft at our table and have somewhere to keep those craft supplies and those painting supplies. We love board games. We have so many board games, but we use them and we love puzzles and we love parties. I have more candles and sprinkles than pretty much anybody that I know and I love to host. So I love to have all those things.

REAL HOMES, REAL PEOPLE, REAL STUFF

And you probably have a lot of these things too, things that are really important to you that maybe not everybody needs to have a ton of in their home, but they serve you and your family really, really well. And that is any real home that has real people who live there.

We all have real stuff that we actually want to be able to have access to, to use these things, improve our lives. And even if we have adopted a more minimalist lifestyle, we're still going to have things that are important to us to have access to easily. So that's where that power of hidden organization comes in.

We want to have access to all of these things that add value to our lives, but we don't necessarily need to see them all the time. So I wanted to make this super easy for you. So I have gone ahead and put all of these tips into a handy checklist or worksheet for you to print off and use. I will put that at our shared web page, which is lemonthistle.com/gohqv-hidden-organization. And I will also put different resources that we have talked about during this presentation there so you can easily access those.

TODAY'S AGENDA

So today in this presentation, I'm going to go through why hidden organization instead of just organization which we talk about all the time. I'm going to talk about this power of hidden organization framework that I have made so you can implement it in your own life. We're going to talk about identifying your own needs and go through a list of ideas of where to hide your organization. I'm going to just touch on my most loved strategies that we use in our home and then we're going to talk about probably the most important piece which is implementing rhythms and strategies to maintain this system in your home.

WHY HIDDEN ORGANIZATION?

So if you are drawn to minimalism in your home, but you have a full life that practically needs stuff, if that stuff can stress you out, if it is out within your sight lines, and if you want to have easy access to these things that improve your life, but you want it out of sight, then this is perfect for you.

So coming from the DIY and home decor blogger side of things, I see all of these beautiful transformations all of the time and sometimes I see it addressed, but quite often I do not see a bit of information on the storage and organizational systems that are being implemented into these room designs.

And so for sure we get a beautiful home out of these makeovers, but they might have all the same problems as before and who just wants this prettier package that doesn't serve us any better?

So I really truly think that organization and storage needs to be a consideration and needs to be addressed when you're

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designing your home or updating your home. And so we're not only going to touch on some things that you can implement in your home right now, but some things that you consider if you are looking to update your home as well.

ORGANIZED BUT STRESSED?

All right, so if you're anything like me and you maybe have in the past or maybe right now, you are feeling overwhelmed with your home, you might have done a little bit of research and the solutions that you are being presented with might look a lot like command stations, calendars, chore charts. And while these things are totally functional and serve a lot of people really well, all that to me is visual clutter that just stresses me right out.

So I am not going to tell you to put more stuff on your walls and out on your counters for you to look at and manage. We are talking about keeping this kind of like out of sight, but very easy to access.

So the whole point of this hidden organization system is to be able to get back to that ground zero, get back to that organized, calm feeling in your home a lot faster, get back to that feel good space that you love easier and to overall just lessen that overwhelm that we feel at home sometimes.

THE HIDDEN STORAGE FRAMEWORK

Okay, so I've put this into a framework and there is three parts to this framework. The first one is to identify your needs. The second one is to reevaluate where you keep your organizational systems so that they better serve you. And then number three, to implement rhythms and routines to help you maintain this system.

Now that kind of sounds linear. One, two, three, easy peasy done. But of course this is a cycle and it goes round and round and as you maintain, you can evaluate a little bit better and say like, oh, you know what, I actually have this other need or this isn't quite working for me.

So it is a cycle and as your life stages change, your needs change as well. So this is going to be something constant, but as you do it, you'll find that you're refining instead of starting from scratch each time that you go around this circle.

STEP ONE: IDENTIFY YOUR NEEDS

All right, so let's talk about identifying your needs first. So here are some questions that you can ask yourself to help you identify your needs for organization or for hidden organization in your home.

WHAT DO YOU USE HERE?

So number one, what do you use in this space? So for example, in our dining room, we also use that table to do all of our art and crafts with the kids. So I used to keep all of the kids' art and craft supplies in my craft room, which I'm in right now. I've got this storage and organization hidden back here which I'll show you later. But then we bring it all upstairs to do our crafts upstairs. It just doesn't get put away as quickly because we'd have to bring it all the way back down here and put it all away.

So we actually went ahead and dedicated a kitchen cabinet closest to the dining room for those commonly used art supplies that the kids like to use.

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WHAT GETS LEFT OUT?

Okay, so what is used here? What gets left out all the time? And this is a tip that my neighbor who is a professional organizer gave me. We went through my boys' bedroom and we identified some needs there and came up with some solutions. And she said whatever you are seeing left out all the time, she's like, don't clean up before I come over. Those are needs for you.

That's a really easy way to identify what your needs for organization and storage are for. So in my boy's bedroom, that was for books. So we took a little mirror off the wall and we hung up a metal rack that's perfect for holding all of the books that they're reading at any given time.

So what gets left out all the time in your kitchen? Maybe it is mail or maybe it is the recipe books that you are looking at for your meal planning for the week. Whatever this might be, just make note what gets left out often?

WHAT DO YOU HAVE A LOT OF?

What do you have a lot of that you need storage for but that you do not want to let go? For me that is board games. We love board games and puzzles and so finding a storage solution for those in our home is really important to us because we play them multiple times a week.

WHAT SYSTEMS DO YOU WANT EASY ACCESS TO?

Okay, number four, what systems do you already have in place that you want to have easy access to? So that could be a meal plan system, that could be chore chart systems, that could be allowance, accounting system, whatever it is that you have calendars. What do you want to have access to easily specifically around maintaining your home?

IS THERE A PURPOSE FOR EACH SPACE?

And then the last thing to consider is having a purpose for each drawer, shelf and closet. And so, I mean, you probably have these drawers, you probably have these shelves in these closets and some of them might have a purpose, but are there any that really are not serving a specific purpose and how can we assign them a job so that they can work harder for us?

So just take a look and make note if you have any that are not really doing a job right now because we can use those when we're reconsidering where we keep our organizational systems.

STEP TWO: REEVALUATE YOUR SYSTEM

All right, so as we evaluate where we keep our organizational systems and our different storage pieces, here is some things that you can think about.

CONSIDER CLOSED STORAGE

The first is to consider closed storage. So especially if visual clutter stresses you out, having storage that can be closed, huge help. So in our entryway, other than our closet, that meant getting a bench that has drawers instead of open baskets so that they can be closed and out of sight, out of mind.

So we keep our dog walking supplies in the one drawer, and then in the other

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two drawers, we keep sunscreen and sunglasses. In the winter, that turns into, like, finger mitts, but whatever works for your family. All right.

In the playroom down here, we have this open shelving system. This Kallax, the cubes there. And so getting bins that you can close so you don't see what's inside of them definitely helps with visual clutter, especially with small children's toys. So as long as this system is working really well for you, if you don't have to see it, fantastic.

CREATIVE CLOSED SOLUTIONS

Some other creative closed storage solutions include ottomans instead of toy chests. I really love how this serves as a bench for the kids to get ready in the morning in their bedroom, but then also is a very convenient place to throw all of those kinds of larger toys that don't otherwise have a home.

In our living room, we purchased this console unit that we cover in plants. It's like our plant table. It's a great place to put down coffee when you're walking by, if you've got to go in through the door or anything like that. But these cupboards and these drawers are hugely helpful for us. So my husband has a drawer, I have a drawer, and then we have a drawer for miscellaneous game pieces, and I'll show you that later.

But this is the perfect spot for us to put our laptops, to put our notebooks, whatever book we're maybe putting off to read next. And then in the cupboards down below, those have changed with the seasons as our needs have changed. So it used to be books, puzzles, and then diapers. That's where we kept all of our diaper changing stuff. I had four kids, four and under. I needed to be able to access it without going into another room. So we did all of our diaper changing, like, right there in the living space, and that worked really well for us.

But then as our kids grew out of diapers, it turned into books, games, and puzzles, and it's kind of just, like, kept moving. Now we have a shelf just for library books. Now we have electronics in there... for whatever you need to have access to in your main living space, having something that closes like this, super-duper helpful.

HOME SCHOOLING STATION

So when I have taught this workshop before, one of the questions that I get is about homeschooling. And so I wanted to give you this great example. This is my sister-in-law's home and she homeschools her kids. I don't homeschool, so I didn't have any examples from my own life. But she does such a beautiful job of this. This cabinet is kind of right in their living room, dining room, and when it's closed, it just looks like a beautiful piece of furniture. It blends right into their farmhouse home decor. But when you open it up, it is a hard working homeschool station.

It's got the pin board with all their schedules, and quite often it will have calendars or charts or things that they're working on and then all of the supplies that they need right in there. But it closes right up out of sight. No visual clutter, no stress when you're not needing access to it, but super easy to access. Right? Okay.

CONSIDER KEEPING THINGS WHERE YOU USE THEM

Another thing to consider as we're evaluating where we're keeping things are to keep things where you use them. And

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now this sounds like common sense, but I would challenge you to really think about where you use things. So I've already given you the example of the craft supplies being moved to our dining room.

STORE BEDDING IN THE BEDROOM

Another example of this is to move bedding into the bedroom where it is going to be used. So this was like a game changer for me. I don't know why we'd always kept all of our linens in the hallway closet. We had a linen closet growing up, and that's where all of the sheets went. And you'd open it up and it would fall out at you because there's always so much bedding for a large family. Right.

And our linen closet in our house is like this big. It's not very big at all. So to have enough bedding for six people, in addition to all the towels, in addition to whatever else we want to keep in there, it was a lot.

But the top shelves of the kids' closets, what is kept up there, even? Clothes that's maybe too big or seasonal or whatever, but you can probably dedicate a shelf up there for their bedding, that extra set of sheets, the extra blanket, and then it's in that room. It's not taking up valuable space in your linen closet. And you're not really losing any important storage in a high traffic place in your home like a linen closet.

So that was something that we did that I found super helpful.

Okay, so another example here is our dog toys. So we always hang out in our living room. That's where we go, that's where we play. Of course, that's what living rooms are for. And this is where our dog hangs out and where he plays and where we play with him.

So the first two photos here you can see looks clean, easy to clean these dog toys up into this little basket that is just tucked right in between the chairs. So you only see it if you walk behind the chairs. And our dog knows he can go there, he can get his toys. And they're super easy for us to just throw in the basket as we're doing a quick power tidy. Whereas if it was in a drawer, those dog toys might not ever get used because the dog can't open the drawer and then they're a pain to put away, right? So it's just thinking, okay, what is the easiest way to deal with this problem of these things that are getting left out all the time in a way that we will actually be able to maintain?

CONSIDER FUNCTION OVER FANCY

So my next tip here is to prioritize function over beautiful, especially if it's hidden. So what I mean by this is, of course, those clear acrylic containers. I've got them in my pantry. I love them. That's wonderful. But if we want to really upgrade the way that our house works for us, and we have a limited budget to do so, let's think about function. We don't need inside of our cupboards to look Instagram worthy. We want them to work super hard for us.

So I love to do that with big hooks inside closet doors. So right inside our entry closet door, we've got dog leashes. We've got bags of stuff to give back to people. I always keep a bag where I can tuck things in it to give back to people when they're coming and going. This is where we hang winter jackets, backpacks, whatever. Functional, not necessarily fancy.

In the kids' craft cupboard, which you can see here, we've got our painting supplies in one of those clear containers, markers

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in another. And then we have Playdoh on the bottom shelf. But on that middle shelf there, we have one of those stand up file dividers that sit on a desktop. And so we have that in there. And you can stand up all your notebooks and all of your loose paper so they don't fall over. We found it is so much easier to maintain than stacks where those coloring books start falling out at you.

This was another tip from our professional organizer neighbor. She is just so wonderful. But functional not fancy. That is like a $6 file holder, and it serves a purpose within this cupboard. And it makes this cupboard work so much harder for us. But it's not fancy.

CONSIDER PUTTING BACKS OF DOORS TO USE

Another tip that I want to give you, and this is one of my favorite ones. I talk about this quite often because anytime I bring it up, I get more questions about it. And it's really just so simple. Put the backs of your doors to use. So we've already talked about hooks, but let's talk about some of these other systems. We want to have easy access to our calendar, for example. So where am I going to find it easy to look at? Where do you already look all the time?

So for us, that was in this cupboard right here. We have baskets for our keys and our wallets to throw in here. So we're opening it up every time we leave the house anyways. Every time we come home to the house anyways. So now if anybody calls and is trying to make plans with us, it's easy just to wander over and open that up and look at the calendar. The kids can easily open it up and look at the calendar, see what's coming up. We have since added in a meal planner below the calendars here so that we can see what meals are coming up for us.

And we also have like our Wi Fi password and little things like that inside this covered door. So this kitchen covered door has become our command station. And we've got some pens there and some Post Its if we need to write a quick note. But it is not out within view, which that visual clutter once again can cause stress for a lot of people. And for me it really does. So this is how we manage our meal planning and our calendars.

So you can see in the cupboard, you can kind of just take a little peek. That top shelf is super skinny like this. That's where I keep my meal planning. I've got my meal planning notepad, I've got my cookbook that I'm using that week. I've got like a couple of things like that just up on that top shelf there and that's where I keep my meal planning stuff. So it's easy to grab it's all in the same space.

CONSIDER A RANDOM BITS DRAWER

I love a random bits drawer. Now I mentioned this about our living room console. We also have one in the kitchen for a different purpose, but in the living room, this random bits drawer is specifically for game pieces and small cards, puzzle pieces, that sort of thing, that get left out. And once we put away the games, is that game piece going to get put away properly? Or if I ask the kids, oh hey, go put that away, is it going to get kind of shoved in with the games and get lost and never seen again? Likely.

So instead what we do is we just throw all those pieces that kind of get found during cleaning and we have it routinely cleaned out. So anytime it's getting full, it just becomes time to clean it out and put all of

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those pieces away. It is way easier to deliver puzzles and game pieces to like five boxes at one time. If you're opening up your game storage and pulling boxes out, you can do five in just as much time as you could do two.

So just let them pile up a little bit, put them all away. As long as you have a system in place to regular clean, to regularly clean out these random bits drawers, I think that they're a great way to easily deal with the little clutter that gets left out all the time, especially if you have young children.

A JUNK DRAWER WITH A PURPOSE

So we do also have a little container in there. It's not in there in this picture, but where we drop Lego pieces because Lego goes downstairs into this playroom. So as I'm tidying upstairs, or if we're cleaning upstairs and there's little Lego bits left out, they just go into there. And then when that gets full, it's like, hey, bring the Lego thing downstairs and dump it into the Lego drawers.

And that's a lot easier than having like little piles of Lego on the corners of the console table and on the mantle to remember to bring back downstairs. And then it gets knocked over and it becomes part of the mess again.

And just having a place for those little bits, it's like an intentional junk drawer and it works really well for us. So I just want to give you the permission to have a junk drawer with a purpose, if you assign a job to that junk drawer.

CONSIDER LABELS

Okay, the goal here with any of this hidden organization stuff that we're talking about is for easy access to your organization. We're not trying to pack as much as we possibly can into the space. We are trying to make sure it is easy for us to access so that we can really use it well.

Another tip that I wanted to give is to label wherever possible. It makes it easier to remind you where things are, especially if you get used to them. And especially with kids, you don't have to use word labels, you can use picture labels, whatever you need. If it helps, you have closed storage, but actually remember what's in there. Labels are fantastic.

OPEN STORAGE IS LIKE LABELING

And as a side note, open storage can be as good as labels. But like, I'm talking about dealing with clutter and then I'm saying, hey, keep it out in the open. If something is beautiful, why not keep it out in the open? We find that having our dishware on kitchen open shelves is fantastic for us. It helps us easily just put away dishes. You don't have to open a drawer and then put it away. It's stuff that we use often enough that it doesn't gather dust. That works really well for us.

Same thing in my craft room here. This is behind here. Like I'd mentioned, having it easy to access out in the open. I know exactly where everything is.

OTHER EXAMPLES OF HIDDEN ORGANIZATION

Okay, here is some examples of hidden organization that you could give a try to you. These are all things that we do. So I've already shown you my kitchen covered

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command station, the kitchen covered skinny meal planning shelf, the closed living room storage for electronics and books, baby diapers, and folding change pad in a living room end table, or in a console cabinet like I showed you.

Inside our cleaning closet, we also have our kids' chore charts hanging. So if they want to earn some extra money, they can do some extra chores inside our linen closet, which is between the kids' bedrooms and the bathrooms. We have their routines printed up. And so in the mornings, if they are ready to go outside and play, I say, oh, double check your chart, make sure you've done all your responsibilities for the morning, like brushing their teeth, then making their bed, that sort of thing. And that's inside the linen closet, so it's not out on my walls, but it's so easy for them. It's right in the hallway that they walk through every single day. So it's easy to access.

So that drawer specifically for found pieces from games and puzzles. A give back bag or basket in your entryway closet, a donate bin in your bedroom closet. So as you're trying stuff on and it doesn't fit, you can just easily toss it in there.

So again, we're looking for the stuff that gets left out or gets piled up or doesn't have a home. And so if you do have a pile of clothes sitting beside your closet that you want to remember to donate or sell, maybe consider dedicating a basket or a shelf or a bag in your closet or near your closet specifically for that so those things don't pile up on you and become a headache. And then when it fills up, just remember, take it out to the vehicle to donate.

A drawer in your entryway closet for shoes, backpacks, mitts or sunscreen. Or maybe it's a budget tracker where you keep your receipts in between budgeting, whether that's like a little envelope or a tray where you just toss all of those receipts until you're ready to update your budget.

STEP THREE: MAINTENANCE RHYTHMS AND ROUTINES

So now that you have great hidden organization, how do you keep it that way? How do we maintain it? Let's talk about it. Maintenance and rhythms, routines, all of the good stuff.

So I think it's important to recognize that things will absolutely get out of control, especially if we are busy people, we have busy homes, we've got a lot going on, right? So things get out of control from time to time. Let's plan for it.

So how can we make sure that when that happens, we are ready to get it back under control without it being overwhelming?

A TRIGGER FOR ROUTINES

So one of the things that I like to do is have a trigger for the rhythms and routines that I need to get things back under control. So for that donation basket in my closet, when it fills up, that's the trigger. That's when I clean it out, maybe. Is it when you change the monthly calendar that you also do like a quick update to these different systems that you have that you need to regularly maintain?

You can also add calendar events in your calendar like, hey, every season when I switch out my clothes from summer to winter or fall or whichever, then will I also go through and do a clean out of that mismatched socks bin. Whatever it might be, just set some reminders in place for yourself to make it easy to maintain these.

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REEVALUATE REGULARLY

The other thing that I wanted to point out is to reevaluate regularly, so don't expect to get it right the first time. You're going to set up systems, and then some parts will work and some really won't. And so regularly give yourself permission to reevaluate and fail forward, fail better and improve until you get into a really good groove and you're like, okay, this is serving our family.

NEEDS WILL CHANGE

And then again, as I mentioned earlier, as your season of life changes, your needs are going to change, and you're going to need to reevaluate. So just expect that. Don't expect perfection from yourself. You're not going to get it right the first time. You might get parts of it right the first time, but probably not all of it. And you've got to be okay with that. You can't beat yourself up over that.

All right, so that is hidden organization in a nutshell, how it can really serve you, and some great strategies and tips for you to implement it in your own home. Reminder to grab that printable worksheet so that you can go through these exercises and go through the framework.

Thank you so much for taking the time to attend this workshop. I know that there are so many great ones out there, and I really hope that you found this helpful and that you are excited to maybe implement some of these tweaks as you learn about these other great strategies.

Maybe if the visual clutter does stress you out and this shift to hiding some of that organization, but still being easily able to access it, you can take those strategies that are going to serve your family well. And maybe consider how you might be able to easily hide them so that they not only can serve your family well, but help you feel at peace in your home.

All right, I'm going to leave you with that. Thank you so much for attending this workshop. I really hope that you found it so valuable.

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Home Styling 101 - 3 Essentials To Style Any Space Like A Pro

COREY WILLIS • TRANSCRIPT

Hey there, and welcome to Home Styling 101. I'm excited to have you here today to teach you the three essentials to styling any space in your home. You'll be able to use the skills you learn here today again and again, whether you're decorating a few open shelves or putting the finishing touches on an entire room.

Now, you found yourself here today because you understand that the way your home feels has a significant impact on your life. You know that your home environment can make you feel good or bad, calm or anxious, or even relaxed or stressed, which is why it's so important to create living spaces that support us and make us feel really good.

But maybe you haven't been able to figure out how to do that just yet, because the process can be a bit overwhelming and time consuming. Well, I'm here to help you streamline the process so you don't get overwhelmed, and get you on the fast track to creating a home environment you and your family love.

THREE PARTS OF A PERFECT SPACE

My approach to creating a functional and beautiful home environment you absolutely love being can be broken up into three parts that together create a perfect space.

FUNCTION

Function is the first component of this framework and sets the foundation for what items you'll have in your space. The function of a home is what items are necessary to live comfortably and how they're organized or stored to allow you to do whatever it is you're doing with ease.

For example, a comfortable couch is functional because it gives you somewhere to relax. A refrigerator is functional because you need a place to keep your food cold because you have to eat. And a lamp is functional because you need to be able to see at night, and so on and so on.

STYLE

The second component of the framework is style. The style of a home. And the decor in it says something about the person or people who live there. Often the colors and shapes and textures and those details that they're drawn to are evident in the space. And there are items that tell their story, what they like to do, what is important to them, and who they are.

Going back to the example of the lamp needed for light. The light itself is functional, but a beach glass lamp base with a linen shade belongs to someone who might love the waterfront. An industrial metal table lamp that adjusts over the reading chair next to it might mean that this person is drawn to a no nonsense, back to basics decor style and that they like to read.

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STYLING

And finally, the third component of the perfect space framework and the part we're going to focus on here today is the styling of a space. Not to be confused with the style that we just talked about. The styling of a space is how the items in a space are arranged.

MISSING THE MARK ON STYLING

Each of these components is equally important to achieving your perfect space. But what I all too often hear from women just like you is that they've been working hard to create a home they love, but something falls flat or feels unfinished and they can't quite figure it out.

If that sounds like you, I can tell you right now you're most likely missing the mark when it comes to styling or arranging items in your home because you've never been explicitly taught how to do it. Think of it like this each item in your home is important because it serves a function or adds to the feeling of a space, tells your story or showcases your personality.

But a house full of the right functional and decorative items is only part of getting your home to feel truly amazing. It's this styling component that takes a space from chaotic and confusing to finished and cohesive and feeling like you. Design isn't just about having a bunch of things you like or that go together. It's about creating an environment and small moments that bring your space to life.

COMMON STYLING MISTAKES

Some of the most common mistakes I see and ones you're going to learn to avoid here today are items that are too small or too large for the space, a haphazard selection of items or items that are too perfectly matched, and visual space being cluttered or too bare so your eye doesn't know where to land.

THIS IS COREY

In case we haven't met, I'm Corey DIY decorating coach at heytherehome.com. Over the years, I've taught thousands of students inside my programs how to define their decorating styles, create a home decor plan and decorate their homes with intention so their home feels amazing and uniquely them.

TODAY'S AGENDA

And today, we're going to get you started doing the same, using what you already own. That's right. No need to go out and buy new decor because today you're going to learn the three essentials for successful home styling. Taking these three essentials into consideration will ensure that you never end up with the wrong size items in your space, that your décor is interesting and inviting and will highlight the feeling you want to create in a space.

Once you're familiar with each of the three essentials, you'll learn how they work together. I'll share my go-to rule for arranging items so that your space feels intentional and less haphazard. This decorating rule is one you can use on repeat and will ensure a beautifully designed and decorated space. And finally, we'll look at specific examples of these decorating concepts so you'll be ready to put your new styling skills into action right away.

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THREE ESSENTIALS TO STYLING

All ready? Let's dive in. Like I said, there are three essentials to getting styling right in any given space. Each of these plays a role in how a space feels and how your eye gets drawn to a specific area or drawn around the room. We'll go through each of these essentials one at a time and then I'll show you how they work together.

ESSENTIAL #1: SCALE & PROPORTION

First up is scale and proportion. The definition of scale and proportion in home decorating refers to how big or small something is in relation to the human body, which is why you'll hear the term scale a lot when we're talking about the size of furniture.

But scale and proportion aren't only important when it comes to furniture. The most common mistakes I see when it comes to scale and proportion are in things like art on the walls, lighting and accessories, which are really easy to fix once you know what to look for. The size of every item in any given space is crucial to it making sense to the eye. The second the scale of something is off, it can throw the entire space off.

GROUNDING ITEMS

In order to determine the right scale of an item, you'll need to consider the size of the item you are placing it with, usually the larger of the two. I call this your grounding item. For example, when we look at this sofa with art on the wall above it, our eye can't help but relate the two. In this case, the sofa is the grounding item. The scale of the sofa in comparison to the art on the wall is off. The art is slightly too small and doesn't fit proportionally to the sofa. By increasing the size of the art, the two items are more proportionate and the art looks more intentional and less like an afterthought.

RULE OF THIRDS

A good rule of thumb when hanging art is to aim for two thirds the width of the grounding item. Of course, this rule doesn't need to be followed exactly, but it's a good starting point whether you're hanging a cluster of items or even a gallery wall. And if the two thirds doesn't work for whatever it is you're hanging, the minimum should be half the width of the grounding item.

You'll use the rule of thirds a lot when it comes to scale and proportion in design. In the case of sizing art above a large grounding item, you'll shoot for two thirds the width. But let's take a look at the rule of thirds in another scenario, like styling a bed.

Here you have an upholstered bed and to give it some style, color and texture, you're going to add some decorative pillows to it. The grounding item here is the visible portion of the headboard. So your first layer of pillows might be two thirds the height of the headboard, with an accent pillow being about one third the height of the headboard. Then you could add some art above the headboard that's about two thirds the width of the bed.

ESSENTIAL #2: HEIGHT VARIATION

The second styling essential is height variation. Placing items of different heights on both single surfaces and within a room are what cues your eye to move around the room, creating a lot of interest on single surfaces like shelves, tables or dressers.

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Adding height variation simply means including objects that vary in height.

There are many ways to do this. If you have a row of upright books, you could pair it with a shorter decorative object. If your nightstand has a tall table lamp, you could pair it with a small plant and a bowl or tray for your jewelry.

The rule of thumb for height variation is to not place two objects of the same height right next to each other. Height variation in a room is also important because your eye will scan around a room and follow the different interest points at different heights.

LOOKING AT EXAMPLES

In my family room, your eye floats around the room, moving up and down, starting at a low basket of books, then up to a patterned chair over and up to large scale art on the wall, further up to the faux Roman shade window treatment. Then your eye is subtly guided down a little bit to the fiddle leaf fig, to the top of the sofa, and then back up with the curtains. And the heights of other items in the room follow a similar pattern, creating layers of different height variations to guide your eye around the room.

My friend Ashley at Bigger Than the Three of Us, uses height variation to draw your eye from a chair in the forefront to the top of the sofa, further away, then up to the top of the large picture window, which guides your eye up to the statement light on the ceiling, then back down to the art, and then subtly to the table lamp, down to the back of the second sofa, then up to the large scale tapestry hanging on the wall. And you can see the height variation working its magic to guide your eye around the room from this angle as well.

IDEAS FOR ADDING HEIGHT

There are many ways to add height to a room. A few ideas are to add a floor lamp that fits your style, tall plants or trees, and don't be afraid to go with fake ones. Here art on the walls, floating shelves, bookcases or built ins window treatments including curtain panels, valances or Roman shades, and accent furniture.

ESSENTAIL #3: REPETITION

Okay, now moving on to essential three, which is repetition. If there's one thing I don't want your space to be, it's too matchy matchy. I preach it all the time to the students in my decorating program, Style Your Way Home, that you can and should have more than one decorating style at play.

However, it's extremely important to tie the different styles together in a way that makes sense to the eye. We do this with repetition. Repetition in design is exactly what it sounds like. You repeat certain elements of a design. Elements such as color, shapes, textures, patterns and lines get repeated throughout a room to create a cohesive look, just like scale and proportion and height variation. You'll use repetition on both single surfaces and throughout your entire space.

SEEING THIS IN ACTION

On something like a bookshelf repeating colors is a good way to guide your eye. Here you can see that the use of this pinkish red draws your eye straight to the middle shelf and then up and down with the small repetition of that same color in the art. Then this muted shade of blue

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repeats on each shelf, and a tiny bit of yellow draws your eye from one side to the other. Rectangular and square shapes are repeated, and some are used in a way that changes up the height. And then a few curves are thrown in as well.

In this living room, various shades of natural brown are found on the side table, on the basket art, above the sofa, on the frames of the chairs, and on the basket sitting on the coffee table. And then, even more subtly, on the patterned curtains, a throw blanket on the couch, and a basket holding a plant. And even though these items are different styles like rustic, modern, and traditional, they all go together nicely because of the color repetition. Then, of course, the neutral wall color is pulled onto the fabric cushions on the chairs, some of the toss pillows, and onto the stone coffee table. The light gray sofa is paired with a rug with the same color, and more colors are pulled from the rug as well, like blues and light pinks.

There are elements of traditional design, like the picture frame molding on the wall that tie in with the door, and the traditional curves on the sofa, arms and legs. And repeated circle shapes on the more modern coffee table and the more rustic wall art tie them together. And there are a lot of circular accessories, too, throughout the space to tie it all together.

EDITING MIXUP:

[I'll show you more examples of this rule for scale and proportion in a bit, but let's move on to styling essential number two.]

The takeaway here is that everything in a given space has a buddy with at least one thing in common, whether that be its color, shape, material, texture, style, or pattern. Creating those connections among items in a space make it feel intentional and cohesive.

THE TRIANGLE RULE

Okay, this is where it gets exciting. You now have three essentials to styling in your back pocket. But there's one more tool I want to give you to tie it all together. And that's my go-to styling rule that I very boringly call the Triangle rule.

It's my no fail rule for styling any surface or any space, for that matter. The triangle rule helps you group items to create points of interest. And since you have to be intentional about the placement of each item, it automatically avoids an overcrowded or cluttered look.

Let's start with a basic mantle. You can see that there's a picture hanging in the middle and a potted plant flanking each side, creating perfect symmetry. You'll notice that your eye goes to the middle first. The triangle rule is happening here. The height of the picture draws your eye up, creating a focal point. And then your eye goes out to the smaller objects on each side.

But let's be real. The chances of you only having three items on your mantle is probably slim. So let's look at how the triangle rule plays out on a bit more realistic mantle. Now, here we have a few pictures leaning, a small plant and a decorative object. But the triangle rule is still in effect. There are just multiple triangles layered one on top of the other.

LAYER THE TRIANGLES

Here, the large triangle acts as the main point of interest and encompasses all the items on the mantle. Then the smaller

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triangle of items is layered in and includes a shorter leaning picture, the potted plant and a decorative object. The varying heights and objects give you the opportunity to display multiple items, but in an intentional way that creates little moments in your decor.

As you can see on these nightstands, your triangle doesn't always have to be symmetrical. Changing up the high point of your triangle throughout your home will make your decor more interesting.

Let's take a look at how the triangle rule plays out in real life in my own home and how I layered a few triangles on each of my family room shelves. Each shelf has one focal triangle, using a leaning picture as its highest point. Then smaller triangle arrangements are layered in.

USE AN ODD NUMBER OF ITEMS

A good rule of thumb is to work with an odd number of objects. Typically threes, fives and sevens work best.

Now, circling back to our three essentials for styling, you can see that the items selected for these shelves are the right size and often working in halves or thirds with lots of height, variation and repetition of color, shapes and patterns. Those same colors, shapes and patterns are repeated throughout the room and items are placed with the triangle rule in mind, which ensures height variation and proper use of scale and proportion.

WHITE SPACE

But it also does something else really important. It ensures what's called white space. It doesn't necessarily mean the color of the area is white. White spaces are areas that are intentionally left blank that not only give your eye a rest, but draw more attention to the intentionally placed items in a room. In this case, with the white space on either side of everything going on in the corner, you are automatically drawn to the furthest part of the room.

In Ashley's living room, she took the opportunity to add to her space on the farthest wall by adding a table with art above it, a plant and a lamp. Without this vignette, there would have been too much white space and the room doesn't have as much character or look as finished. But with that small moment in the furthest area of the room, it draws you in while still leaving just enough white space to not crowd the large tapestry focal point that's hanging on the wall.

And from this angle, walking into the room, you can see that there is far too much blank or white space. So the addition of these items fills the space nicely and adds a ton of style, height and interest.

WORKING THROUGH THE STYLING FORMULA

I know that was a lot of info. So before we wrap up here, let's work through some examples together so you can see exact steps of how you are going to put this into action. Remember, when it comes to styling any surface or any space, I want you to think about the rules of scale, height, variation and repetition when it comes to selecting items for your home, and the triangle rule when it comes to how you arrange items. Sometimes you'll have just one triangle, but you can layer triangles too.

For example, if you're styling a dresser area, you would use the dresser as your main grounding item and base the scale

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of whatever you hang on the wall off of the dresser. Remember, your grounding item is typically the largest item. This first item becomes a secondary grounding item for the other items you'll add using the triangle rule.

And from there you'll start building out your triangle and maybe layer in other triangles, depending on how many items you want to display. Your grounding item doesn't have to be centered. And since each triangle you layer in can have its own grounding item, you can have more than one. In this case, the large art is the primary grounding item, with a shorter vase that

will act as the secondary grounding item. A small plant completes one triangle and another slightly shorter vase and a decorative box or tray completes the other triangle.

With these five items, there are three different triangles that draw your eye first to the highest point in the main grounding item, then out to the smaller items. It's the layering of these triangles that allows you to decorate in a way that makes sense to the eye, even when you have multiple styles at play.

SWITCH IT UP

And if you're someone who likes to switch things up on occasion, it allows you to use your decor again and again for a fresh look. The same art in a larger size allows you to keep the decor on the surface of the dresser really simple.

All of these styling rules are carried out beautifully in this master bedroom. The size of everything from the larger furniture items to the lighting to the accessories follow the two third or one half scale rules. There's a lot of height variation that moves your eye around the entire room from top to bottom and left to right. And there is repetition of shapes, color and texture, as well as elements from various styles repeated throughout the space. And everything was placed, starting with the bed is the main grounding item and layering items in triangles after that.

As you've seen, it's the items you select for your home and the way in which they are placed that are essential to nailing the styling of your home. And I'm excited for you to put this new knowledge into action. Breaking down decorating into simple, repeatable steps you can use again and again is my absolute favorite thing, and today's insight was just the beginning.

DIGGING DEEPER

If you're ready to dive even deeper into understanding how to decorate your home in a way that feels finished and just like you, I'd like to personally invite you to join me inside my online decorating course, Style Your Way Home where I'll walk you step by step through the process of discovering and defining your decorating styles, creating a decor plan for your home and using it to decorate any room in your home so you can achieve a cohesive look that's totally unique to you without the overwhelm and second guessing.

As soon as you enroll, you get lifetime access to all of the self-paced video lessons, worksheets and cheat sheets, bonus videos and downloads, as well as access to six months of group coaching calls where I help you apply what you're learning to the specific areas you're working on, and everything is available to you 24 hours a day, seven days a week, from the comfort of your sofa. With the right approach and

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support, creating a home that feels like you is a skill you can learn.

SPECIAL OFFER

So whether you're taking on a remodel or want to freshen up your home, this course is for you. Get Organized HQ participants can get $100 off of enrollment. Just head over to heytherehome.com/enroll or click the link below this video to get all of the details about the course and enroll.

Thanks for hanging out with me here today, and I hope to see you inside.

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9 Secrets to Easy Online Clothes Shopping: Save Money + Skip the Fitting Room For Good

CORINA HOLDEN • TRANSCRIPT

If you feel like you're too busy to go to the store in person to shop for the clothes that you need, or you kind of hate the experience of going shopping in person, then this session is for you.

CORINA'S KIDS

Hi, I'm Karina Holden. I'm a busy mom of five little boys, and so that's my reason for not going to the store in person. I actually happen to love shopping, but taking a bunch of kiddos along is just not possible. And I usually like to spend my free time without out the kids doing other things other than going to the store and browsing through clothes. So that's my reason for doing all my clothes shopping online.

IT CAN BE DONE

And I know it might seem like you can't do that on a budget, or you can't find the things you're looking for, you can't try them on. But in this session, we're going to break down all of the reasons that you can still do it in an efficient and affordable manner. I'm going to give you the secrets and hacks that I've learned to make it work.

I run a business that helps women to simplify fashion, so I have all the right clothes that I need, and yet I don't ever, almost ever shop in person. So I'm going to break down for you how I'm able to find all my clothes online so that you can do it too.

Let's hop over to the computer. We're going to be doing this session there because I'm going to be showing you how to use your computer to find the perfect clothes for you to make it easy for you to get dressed every morning.

SETTING UP FOR SUCCESS

Hey, again. Okay, so we're at my computer now. In this lesson I'm going to break it down by the things that you should do before you shop to set yourself up for success. There are some key things. I think they're going to be really helpful for you.

Now we're going to go into actually shopping online, and I'm going to get into the nitty gritty. We're going to get onto some popular clothing store sites. I'm going to show you exactly what I do to find exactly what I'm looking for and at the right prices for me.

BONUS FREEBIES

Okay, there's also a couple of bonus freebies that you can grab that go along with what I teach you in this lesson. One of them is a checklist of women's essentials that goes over just some basic pieces that you want to have in your closet. And this is going to help you. I'm going to walk you through how it actually helps you to narrow down what you need to shop for.

The other freebie is a shopping directory. It's this big PDF that we've put together of all of our readers' favorite stores, and we

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categorize them by price point, whether they're like cheap or

more on the expensive side, which tends to also give a cue into quality. Whether they have free returns, which is really important for doing shopping online, and sort of what sort of style they have. Like, are they classic or are they modern? And so we break it down also by categories like plus size options, or ethical shops online so that PDF is available to you as well.

So it's like a dual freebie that's going to be really useful for you as you're practicing what I teach you in this lesson. So be sure to grab those.

All right, let's go ahead and dive in. All right, before you shop, here are the things you're going to want to do, the steps you're going to want take before you even get online to browse.

SECRET #1: DECLUTTER YOUR WARDROBE

So the first thing you're going to do is if you haven't done this before, you're going to want to spend a little bit of time decluttering your closet. So this is where the first freebie comes in handy. The current version as of recording this lesson, looks a little bit like this. So it's a women's essentials capsule wardrobe checklist.

So a capsule wardrobe, we use that term because it's basically trying to whittle down what you have in your closet to be purposeful. And then what you bring into your closet moving forward is also purposeful. You have specific things you're looking for and you avoid just shopping for more of the same things that you don't need.

This freebie will walk you through how to do a decluttering, a simple decluttering. So I'm not going to go into that in this video.

SHOPPING FOR ESSENTIALS

Okay, the next part that it has is a shopping checklist. And so it looks like a little bit like this. And then we also have details of for each essential that is listed on this list. On the checklist we give details about what exactly we're talking about. We put a star on the ones that are the very most essential, which actually everything on this checklist. It has a star because they are the most essential pieces, just the basics that women should start with.

So this list covers your tops, your bottoms, which are your shorts, skirts, pants. It covers your completer pieces, we call them, which are your sweaters, coats, vests, and accessories like jewelry bags, even down to socks, pair of neutral socks, and your shoes. So it covers all the categories.

SECRET #2: SHOP YOUR CLOSET

So you want to take that and shop your closet, which means going through with the checklist and trying to find, hey, do I have these pieces? So you check off as you find the different categories. So for example, do you have a color sweater? So a sweater, a solid sweater that is in a color. If you have that, check it off. And this is after you've already decluttered your closet. So you're checking off that yes, I have one and I would actually wear it tomorrow.

AUTOMATIC SHOPPING LIST

So once you've checked off what you have already, then you're going to be left with

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some things that you haven't found and those are going to be that's going to be your shopping list automatically that you've generated because you've found what your gaps in your wardrobe are.

So anything that is unchecked is your shopping list. So you didn't realize you were writing a shopping list, but that's essentially what just happened. So the next thing you want to do is look at those items that you don't have yet and there's a space for some notes next to each one.

MAKING NOTES

And I want you to make note of some specifics of what you're looking for in that piece. So for you, each person is going to be different, but what color are you looking for? If it's specified it should be neutral then that would be simple. But even do you want it to be white or black or gray or brown? Like what neutral ideally do you want to find? Maybe it's a few options, if it's a solid color, that we recommend it be in.

What kind of colors are you hoping to find? That's really going to help you when you browse online. What style are they looking for, what kinds of styles do you like? If you have some notes about that, what sleeve length do you prefer? Maybe make a note of a reminder to check that it's machine washable. I definitely only buy things that are machine washable, that kind of thing.

So make those notes. That's preparing your shopping list to be specific so that it makes it easier for you when you're browsing online.

SECRET #3: DECIDE YOUR CLOTHING BUDGET

The next sub step you can do in the before you shop section is to decide on a budget. Okay, this is important so that you have some parameters and some boundaries when you are shopping online and you don't accidentally overspend and then have to just return everything.

A simple formula that I like to recommend, this is actually put out by Dave Ramsay is to take two to seven percent of your yearly household income and to use that for clothes. I personally think 2% is plenty, but it just going to depend on your family and what you're comfortable with.

So again, two to seven percent. So you're going to take your yearly take home household income, multiply it by 2%. So multiply it by point zero two, or whatever percentage you want that to be and then you can divide that by twelve to get your monthly budget for cloths and that's for the whole family.

And if you want to further then figure out what your personal budget is, you can divide that by the members of the family or however you like to do it. Usually kids can take less of a budget. I don't know. It just depends on how much you like clothes, how much you like to turn your clothes and what the kids needs are.

SECRET #4: NARROW TO 2-4 STORES

Okay, the next key I think that's really important to help eliminate overwhelm is to narrow down where you're going to shop. So this is where the shopping directory freebie that you get from us, that's a PDF . . . You're going to find the link for that, sign up for that to grab it.

And this is where that's going to come in handy because it gives you lots of

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inspiration if you're a little bit clueless about like, I don't even know where to shop online. That'll get you started. But I'll also give you a few recommendations.

AVOID DECISION FATIGUE

Let me explain why do we want to even limit the amount of stores that we shop at? So one of the reasons, it really helps to eliminate decision fatigue and overwhelm when you have just two to three go-to websites that you know that they carry: the style that you like, you kind of already know the sizing for different reasons. They're your go-to stores. It's one less decision to make. You don't have to browse all the websites online to try to find the best deal. That's just overwhelming. So that's one of the huge perks.

KEEP TRACK OF PROMOTIONS

You're also able to more easily track when there's promotions for that website. So the fewer stores that you've signed up for and that are your go=to, it's easier to track with those sales.

MINIMUM PURCHASES

The other reason is that a lot of times discounts that are offered online are offered on a minimum purchase. And so when you're buying more pieces from one place, you're more easily able to get to that minimum. So you're able to save more by filling your cart with more items. This often happens with free shipping. They offer free shipping on at least this much in the cart. So you're able to at least get that free shipping easily.

KNOW THE SIZING

When you shop at fewer stores, you also get to know your sizing well. If you don't have a go-to store that you're like, you know your sizing, you will get familiar with it as you order a few items from that store over time. So that is just so helpful because while I do often order a couple of sizes of something from stores that have free returns, it's just helpful to already be confident about what your size is going to be and be able to order just the one right size. Because sizing really does fluctuate between stores. A medium in one store might be like a large in another. And so it's nice to know what your store is or the brand, the fit that it is for you.

FINDING ONLINE STORES

All right, so how do you find your go-to stores? Well, what you can think about first is just make a list on a paper of the last few stores that you've purchased from that you've been happy with your results, whether you purchased in person or online. Just write down some of those options. Also, if you have a Target in town, I recommend writing that one down and I'll explain later why.

RETURN POLICY MUSTS

The next thing you're going to want to do is go online on the online site for those stores and check, if you scroll to the very bottom, usually they have like an FAQ section or returns policy. Check their returns policy. You can also Google "store name return policy" and make sure that they offer a free return label. So this is where Target comes in. If you have a local Target, you can return to Target in store.

So if you don't have an option of either returning in person because the store is local or they offer a free return label, then I would cross it off your list because it's just

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not going to be a great option for you to shop online from this store. It's going to be painful when you do return. And part of our strategy that I'm teaching in this lesson will usually involve returns or at least have an option for returns. So cross those off of your list.

FIRST CHOICE

If they don't have that option, then further prioritize by making a star next to the ones that you really gravitate towards in style and in price range. Now I recommend then as you narrow down to the last two to three stores that are going to be your go-to, choose one. At least one of them should offer the gamut of clothing categories. So they should have the shirts and the pants, but they should also have underwear and socks and those kinds of things. So some examples of those would be like Target or Amazon, definitely something like that that offers all the different kinds of clothes. So one of your stores should definitely be that.

OTHER CHOICES

Your second and third stores that you pick could be a specific brand. Maybe they don't have all the basic essentials, but they have the styles and the cuts and fits that you really like. And then you might have one final option for where you buy some very specific things. So like if you get your underwear at Soma, you might not get all your pajamas and other things through Soma but you get that specific thing. So you'll have those, a few of those kinds of stores that you only buy from maybe once or twice a year.

ONLINE CONSIGNMENT

A couple of online thrift stores or consignment stores that I recommend are Poshmark and thredUP. So Poshmark.com and thredUP.com are two that could be one of your go-to stores to check first for items at much of a discount. Especially like the high quality items, like expensive leather purse or certain kind of shoes that need to be expensive brand. Look on those places first to see if you can find it used and you're going to be able to save a lot of money.

CORINA'S RECOMMENDATIONS

Okay, so what are my go-to stores and the ones that I tend to recommend to a lot of people? One of them is Amazon. And if you're wondering. like really? Amazon has great clothes. Yes, they do. And I'm going to show you when we actually go through actually shopping in a store. That's one of the examples I'm going to show you and just some of the great brands you find on there. So Amazon has sort of the gamut and for all the family members, so that's awesome.

Another one I really like for the US Is Old Navy. They have a lot of sort of more the up and coming styles and so often shopping from there, you can stay fresh in your style. They're affordable. And if you check the reviews often, the quality is good as well or at least sufficient. The one thing I tend not to get at Old Navy is jeans. I feel like they kind of stretch out pretty quick. But the sister brand to Old Navy is Gap. So like Old Navy, Gap, and you'll see when you shop at these stores, they have their brands all listed on top. So Old Navy, Gap, Banana Republic, Athleta, all of those are sister brands. So you can kind of think of those as one.

Another recommendation is Target, and this is specifically if you have a Target nearby that you can go to because Target, you don't get a free return label, but you can

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order things free online and then you can take it in store to return it for free. So that one obviously has a lot of great essentials. Similar to Old Navy, it also has the up and coming styles, but it has also essentials that are more classic in style. So not everything's just trendy.

And then a final recommendation is an online conglomeration of boutiques. And one that I like is Jane.com because it's discounted boutiques. Really read the reviews because some of the pieces are not great quality and some of them have been great. They've been my favorite tops that I've bought. And so you can find some really cute styles, more unique styles on there.

All right, so those are just my recommendations, but you're going to want to go through the process to figure out what are your go-to stores.

BROWSE LIKE A NINJA

Okay, so now we've done all the prep before you shop, and now it's time to jump into how to browse online for clothes like a ninja. I'm going to share my screen for this section. So let's hop on back.

SECRET #5A: ALWAYS USE YOUR SHOPPING CHECKLIST

Okay, so rule number one, when you are getting ready to shop, always check your shopping checklist and shop for those things that you actually need that are wardrobe gaps in your closet. Okay, so you're going to start out with this and you're going to decide what are some priorities that you want to look for today and keep this handy.

SECRET #5B: CHECK PROMOTIONS

Second thing you want to do is, like I mentioned, I recommend signing up for the email list for the different stores that are your go-to stores. So here's my folder where I send them all and I have them just automatically filter when they're from these different brands, they just go to this folder. So go to your folder that has these deals and most of them email every single day, which is why you want a separate folder and you want to go through and see who's having a deal on the clothes that you are looking for.

And so I'll just kind of check through here and see if there's any really great deal on a specific thing that I'm looking for that I want to shop. So you can start deciding where to look first, but you can also just open up a tab for each of your go-to stores up here and you'll be browsing for the items you're looking for in each one.

SEARCHING FOR A T-SHIRT

Okay, so then I'm going to show you on both Amazon and on Target how to narrow down and try to find things online that you're looking for. So I'm going to take the first example is just a neutral T shirt. Let's say that you are searching for either a gray or black T shirt because it's an essential that you realize you don't have. So we're going to do some searching for that. Okay?

SECRET #6 START BROAD, THEN FILTER

So there's a couple of ways that you can do this. The easiest way to do this is to start broad and then to narrow down further with the filters that I'm going to show you. So we're just going to type in T shirt. Okay?

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I didn't even type in women's T shirt or gray T shirt because that's going to narrow down. There may be some great results that you're not going to see because you started narrowing down that way.

USE A BIGGER SCREEN

So then we're going to use the filters on the side. And yes, I do recommend doing all this shopping on your laptop or computer, desktop computer, so that you have a full screen because on your phone you're just going to miss a lot of options and it's going to be a lot slower and clunkier to do this. So just pull your laptop, sit down, curled up on the couch and do some browsing.

AMAZON EXAMPLE

Okay, so then we're going to narrow down here. So we want to find things that are available with Prime. If you have a Prime account, then you get free shipping, free returns, and it's just faster shipping. I like to always do four plus stars on the review. That really helps to narrow down to the best options. Okay, then you can narrow down because here you see there's some men's T shirts and so we want to just narrow down to the women's T shirts.

DEPARTMENT, COST

So under department you're going to go to women's tops, tees and blouses, which is the very top level of that. And then the other way that you can narrow down is by price if you are within a budget that you're looking for. So for a T shirt, I think up to 25 is totally reasonable. Should be able to find plenty of options.

BRANDS

And then another thing that I like to do is actually check both of these [brands] but I usually all browse and kind of see what options there are and then if I'm seeing a mix of some lower quality brands then I like to highlight these too. So this is how you find really great options on Amazon, their own brands. So Amazon has their own brands, which you track mark here are brands. They have some brands like Amazon Essentials. There's another one called Daily Rituals. Looks like all of these are Amazon Essentials but they have another brand called Daily Rituals. So using that filter we'll find all of Amazon's brands and they really do have excellent quality.

REVIEWS

Now you're still going to read the reviews because sometimes the fit's a little quirky. Their brands are somewhat on the newer side so they're still tweaking their styles and I do find that they often improve them over time. But this has over 6000 reviews, four and a half stars, but this has just four stars and so some are better options than others. But that's one way.

The other thing you can do is you can checkmark top brands and then sometimes they have that option of premium brands and that will also narrow down. It includes Amazon's brands usually but it also will include things like Haynes and Gilden, well known brands on here that you can usually trust the quality.

So you'll be surprised by how many options there are on Amazon if you just know how to filter down. So I'm going to filter down by our brands and top brands and I'm going to just start to go through.

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Now if you know whether you want a crew neck or V-neck, you could also add that to your search here. You might have to reapply the filters on the side but you can further filter down that way.

BROWSING YOUR OPTIONS

The next thing you're going to want to do is to open up various options that you like, just the look of them on your computer. You can open it in a different tab by holding down either the Control or Command key. Control on Windows, Command on Mac, hold down the key. Okay, I'm holding it down and then click and you'll see it opens a new tab. That way you can have several tabs open but the same window and you can navigate back and forth easily.

So I'm going to open up a few of these options just to take a closer look at them. So usually the next thing I'll do is check to see if they have the colors I'm looking for. So we talked about gray and black and it looks like they do, they do have a gray here and they might even have a multi pack that's gray and black.

REVIEWING THE FIT

So you look for the options then you're going to want to read the reviews and often there is these helpful pictures where you can actually see the clothing on people that have purchased it. And that just gives you a really good sense of what it actually fits, like on different body styles. So I always go through those and then I will just read through some of the reviews because often they'll recommend these are often small or these are on the larger side.

You'll get little tips for what size to get and I only spend a couple of minutes in the review section, but you can really get a vibe for whether this is something most people are happy with or not.

SIZE SELECTOR

Another tip for finding your size is just under the size selector. It will tell you a recommendation based on past purchases, what will probably fit you best. So that's really cool. And then there's a little size chart often right here on Amazon. It'll say that if it's as expected most people said if it's expected or if it says fit somewhat small, you might want to try to get a larger size.

So you're going to go through the different tabs that you opened and narrow down to maybe the one that you're like, maybe really confident you want to buy or maybe there's a couple and you want to try them on.

PRIME TRY FREE

The cool thing with Amazon, and especially if you have Prime, is that there is usually free returns and there's another option available to Prime members is their try for free for seven days. So they often have that on Amazon brands and top brands. It's not usually like the cheaper brands sold from I don't know where that offer this option. But that's also another reason that when I filter, I like to use those filters of our brands and top brands.

Because there's this option that you need to add, I think, at least three items to the cart, but you don't pay anything. It's shipped to you. You try them on. You only keep what you want and you only pay for what you keep. And even if you send it all back, you don't pay any fee. So that's super convenient. It's basically like as convenient as trying it on in store and nothing leaves your credit card until you actually choose

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what you're going to buy. I think you can have up to eight items right now in your cart using that. You could do it.

Sometimes this is not offered and so I will usually fill my cart with a few options that have the try for free for seven days, and then if it doesn't have the option, I'll just go ahead and add it to my regular cart. The try for free for seven days does take a little bit longer to deliver. Not like the quick two day turnaround that buying new does. So keep that in mind. If you're in a rush to get things, you might want to just go ahead and pay for them and then return the items that don't work.

TARGET EXAMPLE

Okay, so let's do the same process but at a different store. So let's say Target is one of your kind of go-to stores and let's look for a different item on here. So let's say you're looking for a pair of shorts that are in a print. So let's do again a broad search. So we're going to do just shorts and then we're going to use the filters.

So here at the top says popular filters, women's shorts. Okay, so we're going to click on that to further narrow it down and then they have other filters you can use. So use the filters they have available.

DIFFERENT FILTERS

Target doesn't have one for sorting by the rating. So you'll just have to check the rating before you click on them to check them out. But there's some other things that you can do. So we already sorted by the category of women's shorts. Now since we're looking for print ones, you can look for under pattern, you can select all the kinds of patterns that you would be interested in. So I'm just going to go ahead and select some of these.

And then you might do other things like the inseam. If there's a minimum inseam that you want to look for, then you could select those. But honestly it'll just be easier to see the results and narrow down further if you have too many results. You can also quickly see how long a short is on the picture. So narrowing by inseam isn't necessarily helpful unless you're finding like, oh, I want to know if they even have something longer than a three inch inseam.

Then you could try looking for the five inch inseam and see if there's anything comes up. Inseam, by the way, is the length. That is not something that I knew before I was shopping online.

Okay, so then again, you're going to go through here and you can kind of check the stars. If something is like lots of reviews and three stars, then I probably won't click on it. There's a reason if I really like the look of it, I'll open it up and read the reviews and see what people are saying sometimes it's just that the sizing is off and so as long as you know what size to buy, you're good. So again you're going to go through and just use Command or Control on your keyboard, hold it down, then click and it'll open up some options in a tab.

INFLUENCER PHOTOS

So we're going to open up some options that we like the look of to get some more details. And again, use filters or change your query to add some more details if you're finding just way too many options and you need to narrow it down. Okay, so then I'm going to go through the tabs, I'm going to read the reviews, look at the pictures. Target often has pictures of influencers wearing the shorts and so it gives you an

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idea of what they really look like.

AVAILABLE SIZES

See that your size is available, which by the way, you can also that's a helpful filter to use on Target because Amazon usually they have all the sizes in stock, but Target might be out of stock. And so you can filter down to filter out results that aren't in your size. So I would probably select a few sizes that are in the range of your size because sometimes you have to size up or down.

So if you're liking what you see, then you'll want to check the reviews and read a few reviews to make sure people were happy with it, that it's going to fit the way that you like all of those details.

If you are shopping from a store that is a higher end, like maybe Nordstrom Rack or something like that, and you care about everything being machine washable, do be sure to check the details for the item to make sure it says that it is machine washable, not just dry clean only.

SECRET #7: BROWSE ONLINE CLEARANCE

So you're going to go through each of the items that you opened and then find some options. You can also filter down by only what is on sale. So there's a filter here called discount, and you can just checkmark some of the discount options. Another way to search for what's on sale is to go by the category. Go to clothing and choosing accessories and just look for a category. We're going to go ahead and explore all women's clothing. It looks like their category is called women's clothing deals. So you can search by top deals. Actually, let's go back. That took us to too broad of a category, but then further go by category that you're looking for. So we were looking for clothing bottoms, item type shorts, and so this will show you what's on sale in the category that you're looking for.

SECRET #8: ORDER 2 SIZES

Okay then also since you're shopping from stores that offer free return labels, it doesn't cost anything to send items back. And so if you're not sure about what size is going to be best, and you want to avoid doing this, two times of getting them, sending them back and getting another size, you can add two sizes to your cart and that also helps you reach the minimum shipping required balance. So that's handy. And so just fill your cart with the items and multiple sizes and even colors for items that you're not sure which one you're going to keep and then knowing that you're going to be able to return what doesn't work for you.

SECRET #9: STACKING DISCOUNTS

Okay, so now you have items in your cart. Now we're going to talk about what to do before actually checking out. So you'll want to check to see if there were any sales. Go back to your email, double check again. What were the promotions going on? Often the store will have a banner. Old Navy is pretty good about having a banner at the top or bottom saying what the latest deals are. See if any of those apply to what you're going to be buying.

And make sure to grab a coupon code if there is one that you need to apply in cart. So each cart will look a little different, but look for the location for a promo code and go ahead and enter in your promo code.

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CASHBACK SITES

The other thing you can do is sign up for a cashback site, a popular one, and the one that I use is called Rakuten. And Rakuten is basically a site that as long as you start your shopping session or start a session with Rakuten before you check out, you get a certain amount of cash back on your purchases. And these range in each store. This is not usually offered for clothing on Amazon, so that is one that I don't usually have to activate Rakuten, but Target, for example, has 1% and some other brands have more. Also during holidays or like Black Friday, they often double how much cashback you can get. But either way, you want to go ahead and start on Rakuten.

And they have a browser plugin that you can install. They'll link to it right inside of their website on the bottom here, Add to Chrome. Or you can Google "Rakuten Chrome browser plugin," so you can go ahead and install it. And again, this is just on the Chrome browser. But Chrome is an awesome browser you can use on both Windows and Mac.

So once you have that browser plugin, it's going to show up right at the top here and remind you to activate it for the shopping trip that you're doing. So before you check out, you want to just go ahead and click that and then just click Activate 1% cash back. And it literally is just free cash back that you get. It accumulates inside of your account and then you get paid out. You can choose PayPal or check.

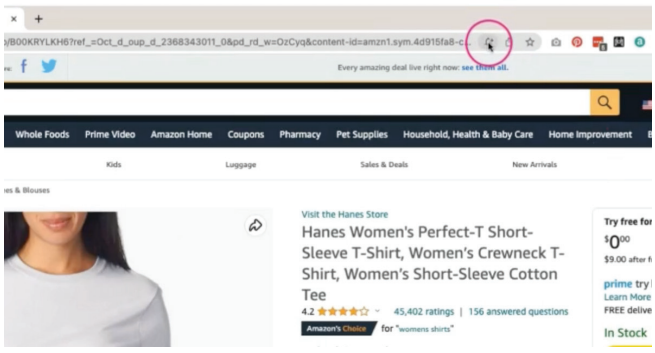
COUPON BIRDS

Another little plugin that I like is called Coupon Birds. So you can search for that inside of your Chrome Web store. Just look for Coupon Birds or Google "Coupon Birds Chrome extension" and you'll be able to install that. The nice thing with that is that it applies, kind of goes through the codes that they found online and applies them automatically for you. So you just tap on that and it goes through looking for different coupons that might apply to your cart and just checks them for you.

Okay, so it's saying it's the best price right now. Continue to check out. Target often doesn't have additional coupons to add, so I'm not surprised by that. So I usually try to shop things when they're in clearance or discounted, or there's often special days of the week where you can get discounts. So if you sign up for their emails, for their weekly ad, then you'll get notified when those are.

CHROME ALERTS

A couple of other helpful tools that the Chrome browser offers. One is built right into the Chrome browser, and you'll see it come up here. It's a little bell with a plus sign. It's kind of a new feature that they're offering where you can tap on that and it will add it to your other bookmarks page or any bookmark folder that you choose. But by default, it'll go to the other bookmarks page, and it'll basically notify you when there has been a price drop on the item.

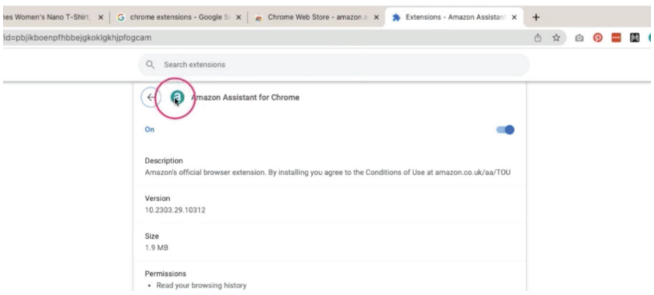


So this works across different websites. Sometimes I don't see that option come up, but if you see it, you can add it to your

list, and then you can go-to your bookmarks and the other folder to see everything that you've added to that list later. The other one is an actual extension that you're going to want to install. So if you just go to Chrome Extensions, Google Chrome Extensions. Open that up. So it'll take you to the Chrome Web store.

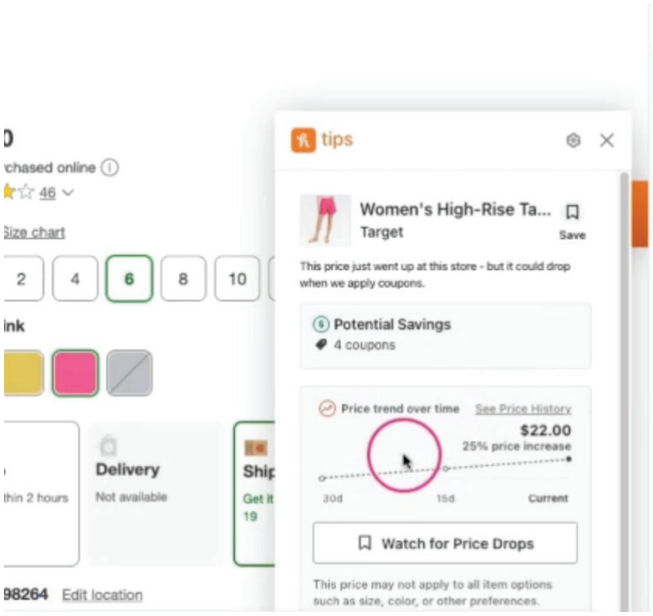
AMAZON ASSISTANT

And this next one is called Amazon Assistant. And funny enough, right now they're doing some maintenance to it, so it's not showing up here. But this is what it looks like. It's a teal circle with the A in it. It's called Amazon Assistant for Chrome. And what it does is when you're on a different site that's not Amazon, it will notify you if the same item is found on Amazon. So, for example, I haven't seen Target brands on Amazon, but if you're shopping, maybe on Nordstrom Rack or another website that carries different brands, it will just pop up as long as you have activated and tell you, hey, this item is also sold on Amazon, and it'll tell you if it's a cheaper price.



HONEY

And another extension that I want to go over for Chrome is called Honey, and it looks like this. So you can get that one also added to Chrome. And what this one does is it hangs out on the sidebar here. Now, to be honest, I often have it turned off if I'm not actively shopping, because anytime you hover over it, it brings up this thing, and it's kind of annoying. But you can just disable any plugin by managing the extension and then switching this off. But while you're shopping, it's helpful because it gives you a chart of the price trend over time.



So you can see here on Target, this has increased in price over time. In the last 30 days, this product on Amazon has stayed the same. So you can get an idea on whether you should wait to purchase an item for it to go down, or maybe it's at the lowest price it's been for a while. And then you can also have it watch for price drops, just like the built in Chrome extension, and it will send you an email when that item drops in price. So you can just tap right here. Watch for price drops or add to drop list to get alerts.

But you want to make sure to get the free shipping. So you need to have enough items in your cart so you get that free delivery. You should never have to pay for shipping for clothes online, almost never.

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DISCOUNTED GIFT CARDS

And then another thing that you can do sometimes you can purchase discounted gift cards or cashback gift cards. So an example of that is our kids school has a program called RaiseRight that we can use to buy a gift card to a store and then their school's tuition gets reimbursed a certain cash back for that. So if we're placing an order at Target, for example, I can purchase an egift card for a certain amount and then get that cash back going towards their tuition. So that's one kind of example.

Also occasionally stores will run specials where you can buy a gift card at a certain discount and so you can do that beforehand so that then at checkout you can apply that when you're paying for the item. You apply those gift cards first.

USE THE RIGHT CREDIT CARD

The other thing is make sure to use your credit card that has the highest cash back for checking out so you also get that additional cash back. So the percentages of cash back plus the discounts can really add up if you stack all of those things.

ARRIVAL AND TRY ON

Okay, so then they're all going to come in the mail and so when it arrives you're going to want to go ahead and try those on. But you can do that in the comfort of your own home, in your room. And especially for pants or shorts, you'll want to do like a three hour test. So wear them for about 3 hours. Keep the tags on, make sure that they don't stretch out or sag, that they actually fit well after wearing for a while.

Also the nice thing about this is that you can compare them to the clothes you already have in your closet to just make sure that they actually work well together with the pieces that you were envisioning that they would work with.

IN PERSON RETURNS

And then anything that you decide not to keep, you can go ahead and start a return process online. So for each website it's going to be different but you'll just want to go onto your account, click on your order, choose to start a return. Again, for Target, you're going to want to go in person to return for free. Just print out your invoice from online from the same order page. Just print the invoice and take that with you to return them.

ONLINE RETURNS

But other stores that do the free return label, they'll then often provide a return label inside of the package itself. Or you'll print one online when you process the return and that way you keep just what works and you're able to do it from the comfort of your own home.

So that wraps up our lesson on how to do your shopping online in a way that's efficient and affordable and helps you avoid just shopping for things that you don't actually need in your wardrobe and avoid paying return fees and that kind of thing.

FREEBIES

Don't forget to grab your freebies The Women's Essentials Checklist so you can shop at your closet and have that instant shopping list at your disposal. And also the Shopping Directory PDF where we break down all the different kinds of recommended stores that you can shop from online in different categories, price

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points, styles, and whether they offer free returns.

Also, I wanted to tell you about what's included in the all access pass for Get Organized HQ this year. We have a product where we have a shopping guide specifically for Amazon, where we do all the shopping for you, looking for items that are four plus stars, have good reviews and meet the criteria of the different essentials on our list. And we include these shopping guides in a bundle. Well, you can get that for free inside of the All Access Pass so that we do the shopping for you. You just select through those and you already know that there's some great options to find those essentials in your wardrobe, not just for yourself, but for your whole family.

So thank you for joining me for this lesson. I'd love to hear if you are planning to use these tips to start shopping for almost all of your clothes online and saving time, making it an efficient process that has no overwhelm that you can do from your couch.

We'll see you next time.

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Three Simple Shifts to Radically Improve Your Productivity

CRYSTAL PAINE • TRANSCRIPT

THINKING ABOUT PRODUCTIVITY

Do you ever feel like you just have so much to do and not enough time? Like you're just overwhelmed by all the to dos and you wish that you could figure out how to have a 36 hour day, but you only have 24 hours in your day?

Well, today we're going to talk about three mindset shifts to help radically transform your productivity. These are things that I hope will make you think. I hope that they will challenge you, but most of all, I hope that they will change the way that you approach your day.

MEET CRYSTAL

Before I get into that, though, I want to introduce myself. I want to tell you why I'm sharing what I'm sharing. So my name is Crystal Payne. I'm the founder of moneysavingmom.com. I am an author, a speaker, and a podcaster. And I've been blogging since 2004, 2005, back whenever blogging was not even things that some people knew about, and you had to kind of explain what you blogged about before you told them what your blog was.

My husband and I live in the Nashville, Tennessee area. We have been married for 20 years. We have six kids. They are 18, 15, 14. Then we had ten years of secondary infertility. And then we have a three year old and a two and a half year old and a one year old. Our two and a half year old is sweet little David, who we fostered for 22 months and then adopted. And he's actually some of the reason that I'm going to be sharing what I'm sharing because he has changed me from the inside out.

He came to us in the middle of the night, really malnourished with Down Syndrome and a cleft lip and palate and a feeding tube, and I didn't know anything about any of those things. And I've been on this journey of just learning and growing and having my heart changed. And he has just blessed our home, and he's changed the way that I think about productivity. He's changed the way that I think about life.

SHIFTING YOUR MINDSET

And that life isn't about getting more done, but it's about doing the things that actually matter. It's not about to do, but about being present with the people that matter.

So these three mindset shifts, they're not about how to pack your day as full as you possibly can or how to hustle harder, but how to live a life that matters.

1. I GET TO VERSUS I HAVE TO

Mindset shift number one. Instead of saying, I have to, change that to I get to. You see that shift there? So often we'll start our day and we can be like, well, I have to go to the store. I have to do laundry. I have to go to that appointment. I have to pick up that

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child. I have to, I have to, I have to, I have to.

What if we were to change and instead start saying, I get to, I get to do the laundry, I get to go to that appointment, I get to take that child there, I get to do the dishes, stop saying I have to and change it to I get to.

This is a gratitude mindset and it is going to transform all of your life. It changes chores into meaningful work. Because let's face it, if we go throughout our day saying I have to, I have to, I have to, it just feels like drudgery. It feels like life is sort of a chore.

THE LIFE WE ARE LIVING

But if we say I get to, it makes it have meaning and significance. And here's the thing, laundry does have meaning and significance. One of my friends says laundry is a pile that represents the life that we are living.

Laundry is also something that there are many women around the globe that would love to be able to do laundry. They would love for their child to have more than one outfit. They would love for the ability to have clean clothes and clean water and clean soap to be able to wash those clothes. They would love for their child to be able to run and get dirty and muddy.

Many moms or they would love for their child to be able to play sports. And so just think about how this simple shift when it comes to laundry from I have to, to I get, to how much more joy you're going to have in doing that task. Because it changes a chore into meaningful work. It changes all of our life and all of our perspective.

FROM GRUMPY TO GRATEFUL

When we say I get to versus I have to, I think of our little David, our two and a half year old sweet boy. When he first came to us, being so malnourished and barely able to lift his head up, he was almost eight months old and we didn't know what the future would hold.

We had no idea would he ever be able to pull up, would he ever be able to push up, would he ever be able to sit up, would he ever be able to crawl or to walk or to climb. He's done all of those things. And every single time, we celebrate in a big way.

And I think of one day he had been in months and months of physical therapy and occupational therapy. And I went into the bathroom and for the first time ever, he had pulled down the toilet paper and he had kind of rolled it out and he had pulled pieces of the toilet paper off and there was this mess in my bathroom. Y'all, I didn't look at that and think oh my goodness, you have messed up my bathroom. What I saw was PT and OT skills that we've been working so hard on and something to celebrate. And he's changed my perspective on so many things that I used to miss because I was just focused on getting to the next thing, but stopping and really savoring this life right here and the gifts right in front of me.

I get to versus I have to. Shift your mindset, shift your language from grumpy to grateful. I don't have to do these things. I get to. Mindset shift number one.

2. SPENDING TIME DIFFERENTLY VERSUS NO TIME

Mindset shift number two. Instead of saying I don't have time, say I'm choosing to spend my time differently.

Now why would this be? Well, when we say I don't have time, it kind of makes it as if

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we are a victim of our calendar. Like life just happens to us. We have no ownership in our life. It just happens. Life is just hitting us and we're just reacting.

IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT

What if instead we were to change that mindset to instead of I don't have time to I'm choosing to spend my time differently because that puts us in the driver's seat. There's not every single thing in life do we get a choice in, but there's a lot of things that we do get a choice in that we do have personal ownership over.

And so choosing to spend our time to say I'm choosing to spend my time differently, that's going to really cause us to step back and say, hold up, wait. How am I spending my time? If I'm saying no to this thing, what am I saying yes to?

EXAMINE YOUR CHOICES

And inversely, if I'm saying yes to this thing, what does it mean that I'm saying no to? This is an ownership mindset. You are not a victim of your calendar. So examine your choices. How are you spending your time if you're feeling like you don't have time?

Changing it to say I'm choosing to spend my time differently. What are you choosing to spend your time on? Is it what you want to really prioritize? I am a huge fan of budgeting your time. I talk on moneycitymom.com a lot about budgeting your money. I feel like when you budget your money, it goes further. It feels like you have more of it and you're able to spend so much more strategically.

BUDGET YOUR TIME

Same is true for our time. What if you were to have a budget for your time? This would allow you to probably feel like you have more time, that you're spending it a lot more intentionally and that you're just enjoying the way you're spending it because you've pre-decided how you're going to spend your time.

Now some of you are like, hold up, I don't like the word budget. That feels really stifling. That feels really restrictive. The thing for me is that when you have a budget, it's like guardrails but there's freedom then within those guardrails.

Because you know, when I spend this money, if we're talking about money, if I go to the store and spend money out of my budget, out of my grocery budget at the grocery store, I don't have to worry am I going to have enough money to pay the electric bill? Because I've budgeted for groceries and I budgeted for electricity.

Same is true for our time. If we budget for our time, we set up some guardrails and guidelines for our time, then we're not going to have to worry so much about, am I going to get to that thing that's really important because we've planned for it.

BEING INTENTIONAL

For me, this looks like a time block to do list. Every day I set up a time block to do list, and I allow a lot of wiggle room. I allow a lot of breathing room because interruptions are going to happen. I have three teenagers and three little ones. Interruptions happen a lot at my house. But when I pre-decide how I want to spend my time, I'm going to be a lot more intentional with it.

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I'm going to choose how I spend my time. I'm going to take ownership of my time, and then I'm going to have more time to be able to invest in people, in relationships, in rest, in refueling and replenishing my body and my soul.

So instead of saying I don't have time, I'm choosing to spend my time differently. This is shifting from a stress filled mindset to a strategic mindset.

3. THE FUTURE VERSUS THE PRESENT

And finally shift number three. I want to challenge you to start asking the question, what will matter at the end of my life? As you're going throughout your day, stop thinking of just the current present and think of the future.

Think of the end of your life. If that feels so far away because maybe you're a lot younger than me, then maybe think of 20 years from now. Or if that feels even too far, let's think five or ten years from now.

ZOOM OUT

But what's going to matter down the road? It is so easy for us to get stuck in the weeds of our life and to spend so much time on things that don't truly matter. What will matter at the end of my life?

This is a long range mindset. We've talked about a gratitude mindset. We talked about an ownership mindset. Now a long range mindset. Live today thinking of 25 years from now. This is like zooming out because we can get so stuck in the weeds. Zoom out and really get a bigger picture.

This is going to help you because you're going to spend a lot less time worrying because you're going to realize, you know what? That thing that I'm worried about that doesn't really matter, or that thing that you're psychoanalyzing, you can stop psychoanalyzing because that's not really going to matter at the end of your life either.

STOP NITPICKING

Or nitpicking. You know how we can nitpick things that our kids do or that other people do. When we zoom out, a lot of those things just kind of blur out and no longer matter. What will matter at the end of my life? Shift your mindset from getting stuck in the weeds to really thinking about what matters no longer. Let's not focus on the weeds, but what matters.

RECAPPING

So a gratitude mindset, I get to versus I have to. That's going to change how you start your day, how you go throughout your day, how you end your day, because it's going to give you this perspective that is going to reframe all of life to be a gift. You're going to see the beauty and the goodness around you.

The ownership mindset, you're going to change from I don't have time to I'm choosing to spend my time differently. And it's going to help you prioritize differently. It's going to help you to stop feeling like you're stuck and that you're a victim. And instead you're going to be like, what can I do with what I have, where I am? Am I using what I have to the best of my ability?

And finally, this long range mindset, what is going to matter at the end of your life? What's going to matter in 25 years from now? Zoom out and focus on that.

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RADICALLY TRANSFORMED PRODUCTIVITY

And I can guarantee you these three mindset shifts are going to radically transform your productivity. Because when you have a gratitude mindset, you're no longer grumpy and just kind of barely making it through life. You're looking at life with this newfound energy and this excitement for what really matters and the gifts and the beauty around you.

When you have an ownership mindset, you're not going to just let life hit you. You're going to start happening to life instead of letting life happen to you. You're going to take ownership for your day. You're going to pre-decide your priorities, and you're going to live according to them.

And then finally, this long range mindset, it's going to help you be so much more productive, because it's going to change the way that you think about productivity, because it's no longer all these little things that don't really matter. It's the big stuff that really, really is going to make a difference at the end of your life.

So I get to versus I have to. Start developing that gratitude mindset. I don't have time versus

I'm choosing to spend my time differently, start living in that ownership mindset. And what's going to matter at the end of my life? Zoom out and take that long range mindset, and I can pretty much guarantee that you're going to have more time, you're going to have more joy, you're going to have more focus, and you're going to have more fulfillment.

And ultimately, your productivity is going to have a radical shift because you're going to be
living life wrapped around what truly, truly matters.

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Decluttering for Beginners (Even Total Beginners!)

DANA WHITE • TRANSCRIPT

TASHA: We're so happy to have Dana K. White from A Slob Comes Clean here with us today. And we are going to be talking about decluttering for beginners especially. So even if you're a total beginner to decluttering, not sure where to start, this session is absolutely for you.

So thank you so much for joining us today, Dana.

DANA: Thanks for having me on.

TASHA: Absolutely. So as we dive into this topic, decluttering for beginners, so maybe some of the people watching, they've tried to declutter before but maybe hasn't gone fantastically. So how can we get started with decluttering regardless of our prior experience?

DECLUTTERING VS. ORGANIZATION

DANA: So I think it's important to acknowledge that decluttering and organizing are not the same thing. A lot of times when we are thinking of decluttering, it's kind of just grouped in with organizing in our brains, especially for the person who has struggled in their home to keep things under control.

That's my story. That is my background. I was completely overwhelmed in my home. It was completely out of control. I had tried many, many times and didn't understand why it was so hard for me and why I never really made progress.

And actually, when I first got started, in a way that actually changed my home, I would say, I thought I was giving up, by saying, okay, I'm just not even going to worry about getting organized. I'm just going to declutter. Well, that was what changed my home.

And I think so many times when someone has been unsuccessful, it is because they have looked around their house and thought, being organized is the solution to this problem that I'm seeing in front of me. That's what I need to do.

And so realizing organizing is problem solving. It's problem solving. Like you sit down, you think - you don't have to sit down first - but you think about, how is this going to go? How am I going to create a solution for this space? Where decluttering is simply getting stuff out of the house.

PERMISSION TO JUST DECLUTTER

When I gave myself permission to just declutter, my house immediately started to actually change. Where all the times before when I had purchased products or I had created elaborate systems within a space, the house never really changed. It just kept going back to what it was before or often worse than it was before.

But getting stuff out, I realized, okay, now I

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just have in this space what I can see easily, what I can access easily, what I can put back easily. And that made my whole house look more organized, feel more organized and function more organized.

And so I think that right there that mindset shift and realize, okay, am I thinking about decluttering or am I actually thinking about organizing? Because even I basically have found that just decluttering is all I care about. I'm like, I don't feel like organizing that space. I'm just going to get rid of some more stuff from there and then it functions more organized, right?

YOU HAVE TO DECLUTTER FIRST ANYWAY

But even those who love to organize will tell you, you have to declutter first anyway. So even if you're like, I don't believe her, I am going to get organized. I want the color coded system that is important to me, even if you're going to do that. And that's great, that's awesome if that's what you want.

But you still have to declutter first anyway, so just separate those two things and let yourself just declutter.

YOU HAVE TO DECLUTTER FIRST ANYWAY

TASHA: So I just want to make sure as we move forward, we all have the same terms, concepts in mind. So when you're saying organizing, you more so mean, like getting all the pretty baskets and putting things in a certain order, and maybe color coding them and knowing where everything goes. Almost like what you see on Instagram a lot of times, making it look a certain way, making it have a flow and system.

And when you say decluttering, you just mean go to the space and get rid of anything that doesn't belong. It doesn't really matter if it has a new basket whenever you're done or not. You are just saying, oh, we don't use this cup. We're getting rid of the cup.

DANA: Well, of course, I don't ask myself, do I use this? I have my whole five-step, no mess decluttering process where it's all just logical, fact based answers, right? Because that's where my brain spins out. I know that's not what we're talking about today. I just have to make sure I say that.

But I think, too, it's that when you look at a space and you think, I need to get organized, you think, this isn't working. It's out of control, it's not working. And it feels like I need to come up with a plan and a strategy for this space to now start working and work for every day for the rest of my life, for my entire family.

And that is overwhelming, right? And so that is the reason that a lot of those of us who struggle in our homes shut down. Because we're like, I've tried to solve this problem before. I've come up with solutions before, and it never works. And so then we feel like, I'm not capable of this.

OUT, NOT OUT OF CONTROL

So, yes, decluttering is getting stuff out. I do have a very definite process for getting stuff out, but yes, that's what it means. The stuff that shouldn't be in my home for whatever reason, whether it doesn't fit, blah, blah, blah, all of my steps, or well, for whatever reason. That stuff leaving my house, that's decluttering.

And the stuff being gone means it can never be out of control in my home again. Right.

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So that's how decluttering naturally keeps a space under control. There's less stuff, even if every single thing is out of place, there's less than there was before, and therefore it's less out of control than it was before.

DEFINING CLUTTER

TASHA: Yeah, I love that, and I love the simplicity of it. And you are absolutely right. It doesn't matter if you are planning to get to the color coded system or not. Less stuff is, I feel like, it's almost always the answer.

If there's less there, it's easier to manage. And you're totally right. It just makes everything moving forward easier. So as we talk about decluttering, getting started with this, I guess one more term we should probably define is clutter. What do you define as clutter?

DANA: So I define clutter . . . and I get to define it because I write the books about it. That's what I always say. I'm like, who cares what the dictionary definition is? I'm writing the definition.

Clutter is anything that consistently gets out of control in my home. Okay, so there's a couple of things here. It's anything. I could love it. I could want it. It could be sentimental to me, but it's anything that consistently gets out of control.

So I'm not saying that I can never have a messy space. I'm saying what spaces can I not seem to keep under control no matter what I do? If I can't keep this stuff under control, I have too much of it. I need to just have less of it. Okay?

DIFFERENT FOR EVERYBODY

And the last part of that is in my home. This is why it's very difficult for a lot of us, because we think, well, my mom's house was always under control, or my grandma's house, or my friend's house, or whatever. That house was always under control. She has such and such. I want such and such. I can't keep it under control. But it's not . . .

Clutter is different for everybody, right? Like, what you can have in your house, I can't have in my house. You have cute little baskets, right? Those are adorable. I can't really do that. For me, I don't see it. I'm not someone who consistently who notices when they're a little bit off, and then the next one is a little bit off, and the next one is a little bit off, and then all of a sudden, they're this big, jumbled mess. And so for me, I can't have that because of my personality.

So your clutter, so clutter for you is anything in your house that consistently gets out of control. So when you're trying to decide where to declutter, you go, well, what space consistently drives me crazy, right? Like, focus on that space. Get rid of stuff from there until you get to the point where that space actually stays under control.

WHAT HAPPENS FIRST?

TASHA: Yeah, I'd never heard that definition before. I really like it. Probably hadn't heard it because it's your special definition, but it's really good. I love that. Yeah.

So let's see. Is there anything that you would say before getting started decluttering? Is there anything that needs to happen first? Or do you just jump into a space and say, all right, what are we getting rid of?

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JUST JUMP IN

DANA: Yeah. Yes. Just jump in. I think that's the key with decluttering versus organizing. When you are problem solving as you're organizing, it is tempting to buy stuff, to make a plan, to think things through. There is literally nothing to do before you start decluttering. You just start getting rid of stuff.

WHAT YOU NEED TO START

Now, what I use, my supplies that I use, my tools that I use for decluttering are a black trash bag. Or whatever you have. If you don't have a black trash bag, use whatever you have.

If you have a recycling bin already established . . . I always make that clear because a lot of people get stuck because they don't have an established recycling routine and therefore the stuff just stays in their house because they feel guilty about not having one.

If we're decluttering, just get the stuff out because then you'll increase your bandwidth for being able to do those things you want to do. Right? Okay. But we're going to get stuff out. So whatever you have, grab that ideally black trash bag so people in your house can't see what you're putting inside of it, right, and second guess. So you can't see what you're putting inside of it and second guess what you're putting in there.

A donatable donate box. Meaning some sort of box. It could be a bag, it could be a suitcase that you're donating, whatever. Something that's going to leave your house and go to the donation center so that you don't ever have to go back through it again. Because if you have to go back through it again, you're going to second guess. If you know you're going to go back through it again, you are very likely going to not make a final decision because you're like, well, I don't know right now, but I'm going to put it in there and I'll know better later. We never know better later. Right? That's just pressure. And then it sits there as this box that you're going to have to deal with eventually. Right.

And your feet, meaning you're going to take things to their homes immediately when you determine their homes, according to my five step decluttering process. Okay, so that's all you need.

INSTANT WIN

And literally it can be grab the trash can that exists and I'm going to put it right here. There's a grocery sack that I can put donations in. I mean, literally, that's it. And it's so important to start getting that stuff out of there because as soon as you do that, you start to see the space immediately improve just because there's less stuff. And that's what keeps you going.

It gives you that immediate win. And that's really key in this whole thing.

TASHA: Yeah, I have totally fallen into the trap of holding on to things that I'm like, Oh, especially like specialty recycling things. I see something on Facebook about like, oh, you can mail your mascara wands to this company and they'll use them to help baby animals. And I'm like, oh, I want to do that. And then I have all these things of mascara just sitting next to my desk because I didn't get around to mailing them. So I am absolutely falling into that.

CLUTTERED IDEALISTS

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DANA: And what you're saying is so true. So many of us who struggle with clutter are idealists. That is what a lot of this boils down to. We have kept things because we're very creative minded, minded people. We're idealists. We are wonderful people. We want to help the baby animals with their eyelashes or whatever it is that those are for, but I know that's not what it's for.

TASHA: I think they brush them or something.

DANA: But we think that way. We're like, that's an amazing idea. I love that idea. I want to do this great thing instead of throwing it away. But then we collect things, we get overwhelmed, and then we get stuck, and then it's overwhelming. And you're like, okay, I saw that on a video three years ago. I've saved ten mascara wands, and I can't even find that video anywhere. I don't even know where it was. I was supposed to send this stuff.

MORE BANDWIDTH FOR GOOD THINGS

But the beauty of it is, when you declutter your house, you will increase your bandwidth to be able to do these super cool things. Some things you're going to go, yeah, that's never going to happen. But other things that are important to you, you're like, I now can breathe in my home. I have more time.

It's crazy how decluttering gives you more time in your schedule. It's really kind of mind boggling, right? But it gives you that bandwidth to be able to do these ideal things. And so that's why it's so powerful, just to get the stuff out of the house.

TASHA: Definitely. Yeah. I absolutely love that. So we touched on this a little bit, but do you have a favorite place to start whenever someone's decluttering?

THE VISIBILITY RULE

DANA: I do. So I call it the visibility rule. There is a thing that happens when you start to look at your house and go, I've got to declutter. Oh, my goodness. There is just a natural pull to your linen closet, right? Or the top shelf of your master bedroom closet, or whatever. Some kind of hidden space. Because you probably because you've been sticking stuff there and you're like, oh, that needs to be dealt with.

And you go, and it might be completely overwhelming anyway. But even if you spend all day working on that space, and the rest of your house is a big cluttered mess, you can exhaust yourself on that hidden space. And then the front doorbell ring and you're embarrassed to open the front door, and nothing zaps your decluttering energy like that scenario right there.

Or to have people in your house come home and say, hey, what did you do all day today on your day off? And you're like, I decluttered. And they go, really? It's defeating, right? It's very discouraging to have that happen.

So my rule for myself to prioritize decluttering projects, and this works well for people that I teach as well, is the visibility rule. So go to the most visible space in your home. I define that as the space that people would see when they come to your front door, or wherever they enter your home, and declutter in that space.

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SEEING THE BENEFITS IMMEDIATELY

When you do that, you're going to see the benefit of the work that you have done. You're going to see the impact that you have made every time you walk by. You're going to go [gasp], your life function is going to be improved in your home because of the work that you have done in this visible space.

The people in your house are going to see what you're doing in your home, which will get them on board sooner. I can't ever guarantee when that's going to happen, but it usually happens. But the more that they see and they experience that our house looks better, is easier to live in because we don't have stuff everywhere, the quicker they're going to get on board. Right.

And so that will increase your decluttering energy. It will perpetuate that because you're going to see that and you're going to go, wow, that was worth my time. And then you're going to be inspired to declutter again sooner. So you're starting to inspire yourself, and that's how you make actual real progress and build momentum in your home. Yeah.

TASHA: So can we talk about those hidden spaces a little bit? Because should someone ever declutter, like, I don't know, a closet or something. As you're decluttering, you're probably going to find things that don't fit in that space.

So would you recommend trying to clear out a storage closet so that you can put things there or how does that all work?

NO STUFF SHIFTING

DANA: So this is a common question that I get because it's not what I recommend. And some people are like, but wait, don't I have to do that? So here, let me just give you a brief overview of how my decluttering process works. Okay?

So I pull out one item at a time from a space, whether that's a visible space, whatever space I'm working in, pull out one item at a time and make a final decision about that item. And then I act on that final decision because that brings me into reality. I am not living in oh, I think I want this, and I'm just going to set it aside and deal with it later because that just perpetuates the clutter, right. Like, it just never gets any better. That's the problem.

So, I recommend you start in the visible space. And even though it feels like, oh, shouldn't I start in a storage space, because then I'll have places to put things? My goal is not to store a bunch of stuff. Like, that's not my goal in decluttering.

My goal is to improve my home, to not be embarrassed of my home, to improve the function of my home, and to give every single thing in my house a real place to live.

Okay, so the things in your visible spaces are the things that you are using. Like, it may be your front door, and there are backpacks and art projects and all these things that have been dropped there, and some of them are from last school year or whatever. But my goal is to give real homes.

We're not stuff shifting. We're going one item at a time, either going to the trash bag, the donate box, or to an actual home. And I'm going to . . . if something is something that I would look for, because my question is, where would I look for this first?

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NO ROOM WHERE IT LIVES?

If my answer to that is in that storage space, and you're like, but that storage space is completely full already, okay. But I would look for this item in that storage space in that closet. So I take it there now, and I look at that space, and I say, okay, there's no room in there for this item, but I'm focused on my visible spaces. So what can I remove from this storage space to create the space that I need to put this item that I would look for first in this closet?

I need to be able to put it in here. So what in here that needs to be decluttered, right? We've just admitted that it needs to be decluttered, which means things need to leave my house that are in there. So what in there is something that's either trash or a duh donation? Meaning, like, why do I even have this? Okay, that I can take out to create the space for this item that I would look for first there.

So I'm not making that space any worse. I am getting rid of something from my home because that's the overall goal, is to get things out of my house. Something is coming out of that space to create the room for it, and then I go back to the space I was originally decluttering because that's where my trash and my donate box are, okay?

GAINING TRACTION

So that's what helps me actually really make real traction in my home. People will often say, I can't gain traction. This is how you gain traction. You're creating progress in a visible space. So you are visually functionally improving your home, and you are not just moving things to the side. You're giving it a real home, and eventually you get to those storage spaces.

But in the meantime, your whole idea of storage and stuff in your home has completely changed as you have made visible progress, experienced the power of decluttering, and you've been like, wow, I really like living in my house with a whole lot less stuff.

So by the time you get to that storage space and it's all this stuff from 15 years ago that you haven't even looked at, you've got momentum, and you're ready to get rid of some of that stuff. Where if you start there, it's like, oh, I don't know, I don't know. But the momentum that you gain will take you so far in doing that.

A PLACE FOR EVERYTHING

TASHA: Yeah. So whenever we are looking at an item and we are thinking about where to put it, what do you do with something that it's never had a home before? This may be something that recently got added to your house, and it's super useful, but I don't know. This particular cleaner or whatever it is, we've never had this before. Now we're using it. I don't know where to put it because it's never had a home.

DANA: Or I've had it for ten years, and it's just kind of floated from space to space, right? Because everything was full and I didn't have a place for it. And we're constantly tearing the house apart for it. Whatever. Yes, I get it. That was me, right? I was the person who I mean, honestly, the phrase a place for everything and everything in its place, I get it now. I get why that's so important.

But it is the most annoying phrase in the world to people who are overwhelmed in their homes. I still get irritated when I think about . . . because people would say that, and I would be like, I don't have places for

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things. Like, what are you talking about? There are no places. And I didn't say it like that. On the outside, I went, oh, yeah. But on the inside, I was thinking, that doesn't help me. Okay?

So, that was one of the main things I had to do as I was working on my home. And as I was starting to declutter it, I had to figure out how to give things homes because I had a lot of the floating stuff that was just in all these random places, okay? So I was very, very accustomed to desperately needing something and tearing the whole house apart. My friend Cliff calls it a crapalanche. It caused a lot of crapalanches over the years.

THE FIRST PLACE RULE

So the way that I came up with to do this, which works on every, literally every single thing in your home, it is the rule that I follow. It's the rule that I teach. It has changed thousands and thousands of homes to follow this. Okay, is when I pick up an item that I don't know where it's supposed to go, I ask myself, if I needed this item, where's the first place where I would look for it? And that's its home.

Now, a lot of people are like, oh, I don't have a first place. I would look in 15 different places. Well, if you look in 15 different places, there's a first place, right? Like, there's a place. I am not saying that you are going to have any confidence that it would be in the first place. I'm just saying, when I was frantically looking for this, what's the first drawer I would open, the first door, the first cabinet. Where is the first place where I would look for it?

And it's an instinct, and it's so hard for those of us who have struggled for a really long time because we don't trust our instincts, right? But go with it. Say, okay, where is the first place where I would look for this? Take it to that spot, give it space by removing something easy from that space to take back to trash or duh donations.

BUILDING CONFIDENCE

And then this beautiful thing happens. The next time you look for it, you're going to be having that same panicky feeling, right? Like that same feeling that you're used to having of, oh my goodness, where is my kid's birth certificate? Oh, my goodness, kids go into kindergarten. That's stressful because you have to have all that stuff, right? Then they go play baseball, and you have to find it again.

And anyway, but you go and you're like, okay, I just start looking for it like you always have. And it's in the first place where you look. That feeling of success, that feeling of, this is what I have always wanted from organizing, was to be able to put my hand on something immediately.

Looking for it in the first place, you probably, when you actually look for it that first time, you're not going to have this total confidence. I know exactly where that is. No, you're still thinking, it's probably going to be in the 15th place, but you go to the first place. And because that's what you asked yourself when you put it away, that's where it is.

MAKING IT WORK

And that's how you really start to build confidence and create a home that functions for you. It is so easy to think, what's the best place for this item? Where should this go? That is not the question I ask myself, because that's the question that got me into the situation that you see on Facebook memes all the time, well, I got

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organized and now I can't find anything. That's not helpful, right? That's defeating. And it's the reason why people hesitate to do this in the future, because they're like, well, it didn't work last time, and then I just . . .

Anyway, so the only caveat I'm going to give real quick on this is that a lot of times people say, well, I would look for it on this coffee table. I would look for my screwdriver on the coffee table. I get it, okay, you're being a little bit sassy when you say that, but I hear this all the time, okay? And I totally understand what you're saying. But your goal is for the coffee table to be clear, right? If you're decluttering this space, you want this to be clear. And so take that out of the equation and say, if this coffee table was clear. Where would I look for this first? And then that's where you're going to go. So use that to establish the homes for everything. And then you will create a home that works for your family.

STICK WITH YOUR INSTINCT

TASHA: Absolutely. And even with this, like, asking the first place that you'll put it, and maybe you don't even feel confident. I could see myself being like, oh, man, maybe if I was looking for this birth certificate, I might look in the filing cabinet in the office, or I might look in a binder of important documents I keep in the kitchen. But if you put it in one of those two, even if it's not in the very first one, it'll probably be in the second, and it's not going to be in the 15th. So it's still that progress that we're looking.

DANA: And go with the instinct. That's where if you feel your brain starting to go, there's two different places, which one is better? Blah, blah, blah. Say no, I'm just going to ask myself again, where's the first place where I would look for it? You're right. It could be in the second.

But every time you look for it's going to start to really establish that that was it. But as you're asking the question, be really vigilant about not letting your brain start to analyze and say, I'm analyzing right now. I need to be going on instinct. So shake your head, give yourself a moment and answer the question.

EMOTIONAL CLUTTER

TASHA: Yes, absolutely. And there are so many different categories of items to declutter which can open up a lot of different ways for your brain to analyze. And I know for a lot of people, one thing that is maybe scary about decluttering is knowing that you're walking into a space that's going to require a lot of emotional decisions as well. And so can you speak to that a little bit of just like how to dive in when you know that the emotional decisions are what are coming?

DANA: Yeah, I think that that is one of the main things that prevents people from getting started decluttering, is knowing that in that closet that everything falls out. Their Monica closet or whatever. When I open up the door, I know there are sentimental items in there. I know it's going to be difficult to finish that closet, and so then they never get started. Because it feels like when you see a pile and you know there's emotional stuff in there, it feels like the whole pile is emotional. And that's not the case.

START WITH THE EASY STUFF

So my decluttering process gets stuff out of there and improves the space before you ever even deal with anything emotional. Okay, so I recommend that you start with

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the trash. That's the easiest of the easy stuff. And then you look for anything that has an established home. That's why I call it easy stuff, has an established home, and you take it there.

So every time you do that, this pile that felt emotional, felt like the whole thing . . . is a little bit smaller and a little bit smaller. And that just reduces that feeling of being overwhelmed. Then you give yourself permission to say, what in here do I not care about? What in here is not emotional? I'm not even looking at emotional stuff yet. I am just saying I'm going to give myself permission to pull something here, here, here, and here that can just go straight in the donate box.

And then you get down to only things that you actually have to make decisions about. And then you use that decluttering question, if I needed this item, where would I look for it first? Sometimes people say, but okay, I get the decluttering question, but what about emotional things? What about sentimental stuff? What about my baby blanket?

IT'S THE SAME QUESTION

It's the same question. It is the exact same question. Here's this little adorable baby outfit for my kid who's now 21 or whatever, and oh my goodness. And your brain, traditionally, because of the way you've decluttered in the past, your brain starts to go, do I really need this? But I love it. Is it even going to be something that this person would want for their kids? And all these questions come in, and instead I ask the same question about anything. I say, if I needed this Dallas Cowboys infant nine to twelve months outfit - because that's one I'm picturing in my brain, and I know exactly - like, where would I look for it first?

I'm not going to ask myself the question, do I need it? Because that's where I can come up with a lot of reasons why I might need it, right? And then I can just be stuck. Where would I look for it first? Well, I would look for it on the top shelf of my closet. I mean, that is where, that's the thing that pops in my head. If I needed this, that's where I would go to look for it.

So I take it there right now. And then I have a reality check and I say, this shelf already has some sentimental baby stuff on it because this is where I look for this stuff. This shelf already has that, and actually that's enough. Okay? And so I can let go of this. Or this shelf has other stuff. You know what? I can get rid of that because it's bigger. I don't care about it as much. This little outfit brings all the memories back, and I give it a home, right?

THIS IS THE KEY

So I'm giving things an actual home in the place where I would look for it first, but by taking it there now, which is the crucial key to my no mess decluttering process. The key to that, taking it there now, is that I'm making a realistic decision for my actual home, where before I would say this is sentimental, I love it, I would set it aside. Well, then it's just in a pile that I'm going to have to go back through later. And then I'm going to have to make decisions about. Following that train of logical, fact based, reality based steps is the thing that helps me make decisions, even about sentimental stuff.

So I totally can keep it. I am never going to tell somebody, you have to get rid of all that stuff. There's no reason for you to have that in your house. Because people like me are going to be like, well, you don't understand, and I'm done listening. Right? I didn't want

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to hear that from anybody because I had all my reasons. I'm like, I'm sentimental. Well, this allows me to be sentimental, but it puts that into the reality of my actual space, my actual life, my actual home.

TASHA: Yeah, and I love how that allows you to actually enjoy, find, use all of these different things. They're no longer just in a pile. Now, the ones that you have decided, like, yes, we are keeping these. Now you know where they are. Now you can enjoy them. So I love that.

So before we wrap up here today, is there any last thoughts about getting started decluttering that you want to leave us with?

REDEFINING SUCCESS

DANA: Yeah, just focus on making a space better. Make it better. Make that your goal. Sometimes people will say, okay, take a deep breath. And I'm like, yes, take the deep breath and then say the words out loud if you need to. I'm just going to make this space better. There is literally no way to fail at better if you do even one thing and giving yourself permission to do the one thing and feel successful changes everything.

Like, instead of feeling like, well, I don't have time to do it right. I don't have time to do it completely. I may not have the energy, I may not have the attention span to do it completely. Say, I am just going to make this space better. That mindset shift changed my home where all the years of big plans and thinking, oh, there's so much to do, I was stuck in my messy house.

But changing my focus to better actually is what brought my house to where I always wanted it to be. But it wasn't from the big plans. It was from giving myself permission to just make it better. And when you're talking about decluttering, that means just have less. Just say, if I remove anything from this space, I have successfully decluttered.

I'm not done, but I have decluttered. Okay?

TASHA: Yeah. And that keeps it a positive experience, which is so important.

LEARNING MORE

So where can people go online to hear more from you? Learn more about your five step decluttering process you've learned, mentioned all of that.

DANA: Yeah. So I am Dana K. White. You got to put the K in there because otherwise it's the guy with the Ultimate Fighting Championship, which is not me. Right. And so you can go to aslobcomesclean.com.

My books are on everywhere that books are sold. So Decluttering at the Speed of Life is my book that really talks you through all the mindsets and the steps of changing your home, of decluttering your home, change the way that you declutter. So that's there.

I'm also on YouTube. I have a podcast called A Slob Comes Clean. And I have a coaching program, too, so I train coaches to work with people with my five step process.

TASHA: Awesome. Well, we'll have links to all that below. Yes, it'll all be down there. So. Thank you, Dana.

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How Minimizing Saves Your Sanity

DAWN MADSEN • TRANSCRIPT

TASHA: Well, we are so excited to have Dawn from The Minimal Mom here with us today, and we're going to be talking about how minimizing can save your sanity. So, thanks so much for joining us today, Dawn.

DAWN: Thank you, Tasha. I love being here. You guys put on such a great event.

DOES MINIMIZING MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

TASHA: Well, thanks. We love having you, and I'm excited to dive into this topic. So, for starters, can we just talk about this whole concept of minimizing and whether or not it's really going to make a difference? I think there's a lot of women out there who feel stressed and anxious, and they really want to do something that helps. And is Minimizing the thing that's going to help?

DAWN: Absolutely. Right. And so, I would say 100% yes. But of course, I've been a minimalist for about eight years now, so I feel pretty strongly and passionately about it. But, I mean, if I could take you back eight years, I had four kids, ages four and under. I was a stay at home mom. I wasn't enjoying it. I felt stressed out all the time.

FEELING BAD

There was stuff everywhere, and I felt like a loser because I couldn't stay on top of it. I'm like, I'm a bad mom, I'm a bad wife, I'm lazy, I'm unorganized, and I'm not enjoying being a stay at home mom. And then I would feel guilty for all of those things I was feeling, right, because I'm like, you get to be a stay at home mom. Like, you're living the dream. You should be so happy. And so just most days, I just felt really conflicted and stressed out.

And so, when I came across this idea of minimalism, like many, I wasn't sure if it would be the solution to what I was looking for. But I was so desperate at the time to find something that I'm like, you know what? I'm just going to give it a shot and I'm going to try it and see what happens.

GETTING RID OF 80%

And so, over the course of that upcoming year, I got rid of about 80% of our physical possessions. I didn't set out to get rid of 80%. My goal was to get our house to a point where it took very little effort to manage, where I could stay on top of it and feel a lot better about myself. And so, it turns out that I had to get rid of 80% to get my house to that point.

So, I actually had to go further than I would initially thought. But the benefits have been so incredible. I feel like a good mom. I can stay on top of my house. My house is a very peaceful place to be.

A SAFE PLACE

And now what I've learned since then is that the research actually really backs this up. So, there is a direct correlation between

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clutter and an increase in our stress hormones. And as women, we are even more sensitive to that. And here's why it matters, Tasha, is because our world is very chaotic, and it can often feel kind of scary, too. Like, there are big things that happen in the world weekly. And what happens is that when we don't have a safe place to come home to, a place where we can let our guard down, where we do feel safe, where I know when I'm in my home, I am safe and I am okay.

If we don't get that reprieve ever, we start to feel very anxious all of the time. We're stressed out, and we feel like we live in a very scary world, when the truth is, the world has actually never been a safer place in all of history. Like, we are the safest we have ever been in human history.

But it doesn't feel like that when our homes are very cluttered because we're constantly feeling on edge and anxious, even in our own homes.

GETTING STARTED

TASHA: Absolutely. And I love how you put words to that, because I can say for myself, I've experienced that. I've experienced feeling stressed because it's cluttered and messy, but being able to have someone else vocalize like, yes, other people feel that, too. I think a lot of the women watching will really resonate with that.

And the image that you're painting, it's full of so much hope for our homes moving forward. But I know that when you're in kind of like you were saying, where you started eight years ago, when you're at the ground level and starting, it can still feel really overwhelming.

So where would you advise somebody start if they're just starting out trying to find this piece in their home?

IN THE KITCHEN

DAWN: Yeah, great question. So, I always Recommend starting in the kitchen because you use it so much, and if you simplify your kitchen, you're going to start to experience the benefits of simplifying right away, even if you don't have the rest of your house decluttered.

And my husband, Tom, one time, he said he was like, you know, when the kitchen is clean, I feel like life is under control. And it really struck me because I'm a messy person. I grew up in a messy house.

WHAT YOU'RE USED TO

My mom is my hero. We grew up on a farm. She worked a full time job. She helped with our family farm, and she would often work jobs in the evenings just to make extra money to make ends meet, right? And so often, cleaning the house just got bumped down in priorities, right? We can't do it all.

And so, I didn't think that I was necessarily sensitive to the clutter around me as much, because I'm like, I grew up in it. It's fine. And we've also kind of adopted this hot mess culture where it's almost glamorized now to be a hot mess. And there's those signs at Hobby Lobby that say, good moms have sticky floors and messy kitchens and piles of laundry or whatever it says.

CAN WE LIVE LIKE THIS?

And so, culture is telling us that it's okay if your house is a mess, we can't possibly stay on top of it. And marketing is telling us, well, you just haven't found the right solution. You need more organizing products or you

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need something else.

But the truth is that most of us can't live like this. It is way too stressful. And if we begin to declutter and simplify that, we feel so much better.

So, if you're looking at your kitchen, what I like to say is your kitchen should serve you. So even Tasha, you're in a different season of life than I am right now.

DIFFERENT NEEDS

Like, you're newly married. You don't have kids quite yet, and so you might set your kitchen up in a different way than I would set up mine. Maybe you like to try new recipes right now, or you're doing baking on the weekends or whatever. For me, our kids are eight through 13. I thought for sure when they got older, I was going to have a little more time. Like I said, they were four. I had four, four and under for a while. That was craziness.

But now we are so much more busy. It's just in a different way. And I am so protective of our schedule and everything, but it's still just a busy season of life. And so, I do like survival cooking. I cook the same things night after night. I do not apologize about it. If my family doesn't like it, they can find something else to eat.

But I am not doing lots of baking. I am not using fancy appliances or gadgets. I just need the bare minimum. So, as you look at your kitchen right now, ask yourself, what season of life am I in right now? And are the items in my kitchen, are they serving me? And is it making my kitchen an enjoyable place to be?

TASHA: Absolutely.

And when it comes to starting in your kitchen or starting to declutter, like you mentioned, a lot of people are in these really busy seasons, and I feel like there's this push and pull of, like, I want to declutter, I want to simplify and set up my kitchen in a way that works.

But where do I find the time in between all of the things that are happening in all of the traveling and baseball games and who knows what's on people's schedules? So, do you have, like, a solution for that or a suggestion?

FIVE MINUTES MATTERS

DAWN: Absolutely. So, the motto we've come to adopt is five minutes matter. And so, I got to visit recently with Melanie from A Hoarder's Heart. In fact, I think she's doing a session here too, which is so cool.

So, Melanie suffered from hoarding disorder or suffers from hoarding disorder. Right. We all have different levels of clutter in our home, but if we were to look at a scale, she was near the top of the scale. Right. And it was so profound.

A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE

When I visited with her recently, she said, Dawn, I had to keep decluttering a positive experience. And what's so tricky about decluttering is that we are confronted with every wrong buying decision that we've made.

So, you might look around your kitchen and be like, oh, yeah, there's the thing I bought when I went to the Pampered Chef party, and there's the gadget I bought because someone on Instagram swore by it. And the thing that I bought on Amazon Prime Days because everyone else said it was so good.

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And all of these things that have promised to solve dinner time and to make us master chefs and all the things, right? And so, we can start to feel very guilty, shameful when we're looking at these items and get overwhelmed very quickly.

Like, we call it decision fatigue when we're holding something up, and should I keep it? Should I not? And so, in order to fit this into your schedule and also keep decluttering to be a positive experience, set the timer for five minutes, pick one drawer, one shelf, one small section of the countertop in your kitchen, and just work on that.

MOTIVATION AND MOMENTUM

And so, something else that I've studied a lot recently because I'm fascinated by it is motivation. Because everyone says I have no motivation, right? And I saw a great quote. It said, you don't need motivation. You need momentum. Momentum is what keeps us coming back day after day and doing it again.

And so, the best way to create momentum is to pick a small spot to do it in five minutes and to complete it. So, what actually cause us to feel more energy and excitement to doing it again is to actually complete something, right? Because most of us, when we go to declutter, we pull everything out and we get exhausted and we're overwhelmed, and then there is a huge mess behind us and we don't get it done, and we label ourselves a failure.

And I'm like, well, I'm not doing that again. That was a horrible experience, right? And so, we say, okay, I am going to do the junk drawer or I am going to do the utensil drawer. I am just going to focus on that. I'm going to work to complete it. And that is going to keep this a positive experience and make it more likely that tomorrow I'm going to do five minutes again.

TASHA: Yeah. So, do you have a place where you're keeping, like, as you're doing the five minutes a day, what do you do with what you're finding that you're decluttering?

USE THESE THREE

DAWN: So, there's three things that we always recommend you have with you when you go to declutter. So, a black trash bag for just random broken stuff that you don't need anymore.

It is really important that it's black, because when things go into a black trash bag again, when things go into a black trash bag, you don't see them anymore. And your family doesn't see it, so it's less likely that something is going to get pulled out.

That you also have a donation box with you.

And then, especially in kitchens, I like to use something called a Time Will Tell Bin. So, this is where you just grab an empty rubber made tote or an empty Amazon box, and if there is something and you hold it up and you're like, I'm not using this right now. It's not serving me in my current season.

Maybe it's like a pastry maker or decorator or something. But it was expensive. Right. And I don't know if I can just donate it right now.

TIME WILL TELL

You put it into the Time Will Tell Bin and you put the date on the box or the bin, and you just set it aside, put it in the basement or the garage of the attic for three to six months and just see if you miss it. Then if you go to Christmas bake and you need it,

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you can pull it back out. So, it's a very safe way to test out having a simplified kitchen without having to make definitive decisions right now.

TASHA: Yeah, and I love how doing that and putting it, like, getting it out of the kitchen gives you the immediate experience of living in your decluttered space. I think that's huge.

DAWN: Often women will say, like, well, my husband is the chef, or my husband does a lot of cooking, or one of my adult children, I can't just get rid of their stuff. But yet, you know, right? Like, you know, they're not using it either. And so, The Time Will Tell Bin is a really safe way, then you can be like, I just put it in a bin. I just want to test this out. If you want it, just ask me for it and I will run and grab it for you.

TASHA: Yeah, absolutely. And that builds trust for your family members as well. It makes decluttering a positive experience for them, which is also huge and a whole 'nother topic.

DAWN: Yeah, no, that's a good point, though.

WHAT IF I MAKE A MISTAKE?

TASHA: Yes, absolutely. So, I know when it comes to decluttering, there can be a lot of anxiety just from the decluttering. Like, we're decluttering for the sake of having less stress and anxiety. But the process itself, those, like, what if questions, they love popping up.

Like, what if I do need this? How do you work past that from choosing to donate something? And even I find those questions pop up, like, the day I decide to go to Goodwill when I actually drop it off.

DAWN: Well, Tasha, I think you had said when we were visiting before that you donated a game that you thought, like, my husband and I are never going to play this. And then he asked about it, right?

TASHA: Oh, my parents came telling us how wonderful this new game they learned was, and it was the one I'd taken to Goodwill.

DAWN: Right. So, we have to understand that there may be a chance that we make mistakes in this process.. But what we're doing is we're making a decision based on the information we have right now.. None of us can predict the future, but the past is actually a pretty good predictor of what we're going to use today and tomorrow.

And so, we use the information we have right now. You said we have all these games. We're never going to possibly play all of them. This one, I don't think we'd ever take the time to learn it. It looks a little more complicated. And so, because I don't want to manage so much inventory when it comes to games, I'm going to let them go. And I should let somebody else play it too, right? There's no sense in it just sitting unused in my closet. Let's donate it. Let someone else use it.

So, there is the small chance then that someone's going to come along and say, that is the best game ever. And then what do we do? We get really hard on ourselves because we're like, oh, that was so dumb. Why did I donate that? Why did you donate it? Because you didn't know. Right?

NEGATIVITY BIAS

And what you're not thinking about, our brains focus on the negative. It's called negativity bias. It's meant to keep us safe in nature and protect us. But it really comes

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into play. We get really hard on ourselves when we think of the one or two or five things that we've decluttered that we could have used.

And you're not remembering the big picture. You're not remembering the 1000 other things that you have successfully donated and that you haven't missed. You're not thinking about how much easier your home really is to manage now.

You're not thinking about your goals. Like, I want my house to be a safe place for me and for my kids. Again, the world is chaotic. We need a safe place that we can come home to. We're not thinking about that. The only thing we can think is, why did I get rid of that $20 game? Right?

CHANGE THE SCRIPT

And so, this is where we have to change the script. I think for many of us, we grew up in homes. Maybe we were taught that it actually wasn't okay to make a mistake. And especially if finances were tight when you were growing up, or even if finances are a little tight right now, it is not okay to make a mistake, right?

And so, we have to stand back and say it's okay to make a mistake. I tell you, like, if you have donated anything that you've later regretted, it's absolutely okay. Because what you're striving for is so much more important and so much more valuable than that thing that you donated. So again, we have to stand back, look at the big picture and say it's okay.

I even think it can be helpful to set a budget and say, okay, what am I willing to risk every year? What if I had to spend $100 every year to buy back things that I accidentally decluttered or whatever? If I said $100, would that be reasonable? I think almost everyone watching would say, yeah, we're all very frugal. We don't want to be wasteful. But probably in the grand scheme to spend $100, I guarantee you that you will never spend $100 a year buying back things that you've discarded.

But if you need to give a number in your mind, then do it because we need data, we need facts, instead of just kind of like, oh no, I've gotten rid of things and then I needed it. Well, how many things and how much did it cost you and how much are you okay spending again if you absolutely had to? The truth is you don't buy it again and you live without it and maybe you go buy the game again or you ask for it for your birthday or Christmas and then it's not a big deal, right? And it makes a great story that everyone can laugh at me.

EMOTIONAL CLUTTER

TASHA: That I do love how you put that in perspective of the two or three or five things that you've gotten rid of next to I am so glad I don't have all the other stuff in my house that I've completely forgotten that I decluttered. And so that really puts it in perspective.

But I know one thing that can be hard is so many things. Like this game, I can go buy it. The game is still for sale. I can get on Amazon right now and it'll probably be here before I go to bed tonight, honestly. Right? But there are some things, like if I get rid of it, I can never get it back. Even if I could get something similar back.

This is from my grandmother or this is a very specific thing. What do you do with the what if questions when you can't go buy it back?

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LET IT GO

DAWN: Yes, good question. So, there is a really good book by Peter Walsh. It is called Let It Go. Should I just have it right here? So especially if you are dealing with stuff that has been passed down from parents, loved ones, people that have passed away, and then also dealing with your own sentimental stuff from maybe your childhood, your children's childhood.

And what I love, what he says in this book is that he says "One goal of the 'Let It Go' way of downsizing is for you to surround yourself with only a manageable number of possessions that you cherish and treasure, which trigger good emotional responses, like joy, relaxation, focus, and motivation."

And so, what he talks about a lot in this book is this idea of picking out the treasures, the truly special pieces, because often what happens, let's say one of your parents passed away, you inherited their house, you have to go through all their things.

And now the stuff you decided to keep is in your garage. And you are standing in your garage looking at all of this stuff that you inherited. And we have a way of saying, well, all of it is mom's, so all of it is special. But when we actually start to look at it, there are pieces that evoke better emotions maybe than others. And a big thing that he talks about is you do not keep anything that evokes negative emotions. And it is really interesting when we actually start to look at these items that many of them actually bring up negative memories rather than positive things.

POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE MEMORIES

So even from my own childhood, my sister and I played Barbies all the time when we were growing up. We grew up very modestly, but we had rather sizable collection of Barbies. And what is so funny is that when my mom gave me the bin of our Barbies, just like five or ten years ago, when I looked at them, I didn't think of the happy times of my sister and I playing Barbies together.

What I saw was the Skipper doll. Do remember Skippers are a little bit smaller than Barbie. And I saw my Skipper doll that I'd gotten for Christmas one year. And I never took the clothes off of her, I never changed her, I never put anything on because you know how Barbie clothes, sometimes when you would take them off and change them, like the seams would start to let go a little bit or you could lose pieces to it.

And she was so precious to me because we didn't have a lot that I didn't want anything to happen. In fact, if my cousins would come over, we had younger cousins and they'd sometimes come over and they were kind of rough with our Barbies and stuff. I would hide her in my bedroom, I'd go put her under the pillow in my room because I did not want anything to happen to her.

And so, when I'm looking at these Barbies, I'm feeling these almost this anxiousness of what if something happened? Or what if I lost a piece? Or what if a piece got broken and I didn't have any way to replace it. And then that was like my one and only toy, right? And so, I was like, oh my goodness, these are such negative emotions. And so, I decided to get rid of all of them. I didn't want to see my girls playing with them, I didn't want to continue to maintain them or manage them or keep them safe.

All the energy that we have to put into

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keeping these items, I decided to just let all of them go. And so, we have to really be honest with ourselves and say, does this bring up positive memories? Do I enjoy maintaining it or has it become this burden? And every time I look at it, I just feel stressed and overwhelmed.

TASHA: Right, absolutely. And with our sentimental items, with things that remind us of loved ones, wouldn't you want the positive memories?

But sometimes it can be and it can be a process. It can take time to sort out which things bring those positive memories, for sure.

Well, thank you so much for covering all of this. We're going to head into a Q and A session here, so I'm sure people, they'll probably already putting in the comments questions for that.

But before we jump into that, is there any last things that you want to leave us with for this session?

LAST THOUGHTS

DAWN: Yeah. Another quote by Peter Walsh. He says, "when you can't let your stuff go, your stuff won't let you move forward." And I think a lot of us have felt held hostage by our stuff.

And so, again, five minutes matters. It doesn't happen overnight, but it does get easier. So, if you're willing to chip away at it a little bit every day, I know we often glamorize, like, I'm going to set aside the whole weekend and I'm going to attack all of this. That's actually physically very difficult. Again, when we're talking about getting overwhelmed and so literally setting the timer for five or 15 minutes and just doing a small section, I think you're going to experience a lot more success than trying to attack it all at once. And you'll be surprised how far you can go in just five to 15 minutes, too.

TASHA: Yes. All right. Thanks so much, Dawn.

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Success at Home and Work with Easy Routines! (Simplify your day and achieve more with the Flylady System)

DIANE IN DENMARK • TRANSCRIPT

Diane in Denmark here. And I am excited to get started with you today. This year's Get Organized Virtual Summit. There's a whole host of brilliant experts and professionals and we are here to help you get organized and do it the simple way.

I'm going to be helping you today to put in some solid daily routines. Going to be talking about why we need those routines. Perhaps you are feeling ashamed with the state of your home, perhaps you're overwhelmed with life, work, family, balancing all those things. I'm here to help you with that.

And also I'm going to tell you the thing that you absolutely need to be doing to make all of this happen. And I'm not going to tell you what that is right now because even if I told you what it is, you wouldn't believe me. So I'll keep that for a bit later.

GET INSPIRED

And you don't need to go printing anything off today. I've got plenty of printables for you. What I would suggest is that you maybe grab a cup of some kind of refreshment, whatever you need in your hemisphere right now, whether it is hot or it's cold. Maybe grab a notebook and a pen. But the main thing is that you just lean back, listen in and get inspired, right?

So let's dive in. Now, if you've tried having routines before and you're thinking, oh, but it's too much work, you don't have to want to do your routines, you just have to do them. And remember here that routines, it's not more work, it's less work. We're doing things in a timely manner, we're doing them in an ordered manner and it's taking out the stress from the situation. We're not waiting until last minute to do things.

MAKE IT YOUR OWN

We're going to have some structure, but it's flexible structure. We can change things around. And if you've gone wrong with the Fly Lady system before, it's probably because you're trying to do it exactly as you've seen it on websites or on checklists. You absolutely have to make it your own because it's a one size fits all system, but you have to make it yours.

And that's where often we can go wrong with this. Trying to do it exactly the way that we see the classic morning routine or the classic evening routine. We need to make sure it's actually working for our families, our lifestyle, our homes, because that's where you're going to see the biggest results, the biggest benefits.

A DAILY ROUTINE

It's going to be working for you, it's going to be a support, it's going to be a framework and it's going to make it easier for you to run your home and give you a lot less stress and hopefully a lot more joy.

So the first thing we're going to talk about is having some daily routines. Now, you

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may have tried the Fly Lady system before, hands up if you've done that, maybe it didn't work for you. Maybe you're using some other kind of system.

Maybe you don't know why you need a daily routine. The reason that I first went looking for daily routines is I was feeling overwhelmed with everything and I just needed a starting point.

FLY LADY

And I went looking and I found the Fly Lady system. Now, I've been using the Fly Lady system since 2006 when my kids were very small and now they are this size, they've moved out, they have their own apartments. And I did it all the wrong way and I've made all the mistakes.

So I am an expert in the Fly Lady system. I've also worked as a Fly Lady mentor. I know all the ins and outs, been there, done that, got the t shirts. I've made all the mistakes. And I'm here to show you how you make it work for you. And even if you are not enjoying using the Fly Lady system, I've got tips to make any system work for you.

So the Fly Lady system is based on having some simple daily routines. And we have those not just for the everydays to keep life moving along, but you'll find that they are especially helpful on the times that things are really stressful. Perhaps one of the kids is ill, you are super busy at work, maybe you are in a period of grief. They're just the framework of our day that keep things ticking along. I have got videos and principles for you which will help you to identify what you need to have on your list.

TOP THREE

But I'll quickly run through my top three for morning and for evening and these are my three things. Perhaps your three things look completely different. Mine is I absolutely must be dressed. I've done that thing of getting out of bed and wearing pajamas all day. That doesn't work for me. I'm not productive, so I absolutely have to be dressed. That's number one for me.

I always make the bed. I do that after I've had my shower, got my clothes on, aired the bed, make the bed. That's a little win right there. First thing in the morning.

And also checking what is for dinner because that was a major stress factor for me years ago. That kind of 5:00 o'clock, oh, what's for dinner Mum? And I hadn't planned it. These days I have it planned. I'm post-menopausal, so quite often I can't remember what I have planned. But I look at my menu plan and go, okay, that's what is for dinner. And if I need to take something out the freezer or get it started in the slow cooker in the crockpot, I can do that.

START YOUR ENGINES

And you'll see here that in this little help checklist, we've got a start time and a finish time. If you have been having difficulty with your routines, it's probably one of two things. Either you've got this routine that you want to do, but you haven't actually put a start time on it and you're procrastinating on it. Actually saying out loud the time that you want to start this routine, that just gives us that little nudge.

So I would really recommend that you have an estimated start time for your routine, and it may vary depending on the day of the week. Maybe it's different at the weekend from Mondays to Fridays. That's how it is for me. But just having that start point will get you over the hurdle of actually getting

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started.

THE FINISH LINE

Now, conversely, if you're a bit of a rebel, if you don't like being constricted by the thought of having a daily routine, you may work better by having an end goal. Maybe you work well with projects when you know the deadline is coming up there. I would absolutely suggest that you have an end time in your head again that'll just give you that nudge, like, oh, we're coming up for the deadline now. The fire is underneath you, and that will push you forward.

And with all of the things for routines, I always find it really helpful to use a timer. Now, I know you have a timer on your phone. I use my smartphone for filming, no fancy equipment here. But I actually prefer to use an old fashioned timer. And the wind up ones are really good, especially for kids, because they can see the time counting down.

And I like to use an old fashioned one because it stops me from looking at my phone because, oh, suddenly there's a notification or something that will take away my focus. The timer will help you to focus, and also it gives us that permission of when the timer goes off, I get to stop, but it puts the blinkers on us and it keeps us focused in for, I would suggest 15 minutes, 20 minutes, max 30 minutes.

DO YOU NEED AN EVENING ROUTINE?

And I have lots of YouTube videos where I go into whether you actually need an evening routine. If you have small kids, if you're working at home during the day, I would advise you actually not to have an evening routine, but just to have a morning routine and an afternoon routine. But the main thing is that you have some form of routine to get things done in your day.

And I'll tell you what's, in my evening routine, making sure that I have my outfit ready for tomorrow so there's no excuses when I wake up, I can just grab that outfit and go.

CLOSING DOWN THE KITCHEN

Closing down the kitchen. If you know the Fly Lady system, we kind of clear the counters and wipe out the sink. The main thing for me is that after we've eaten dinner, as soon as we've eaten dinner when the kids were small, they had the chores that everybody clears away their plates, glasses, cups, puts them in the dishwasher. I was wiping down the counters, they would wipe the table, they would make their packed lunch boxes. When we were all together in the kitchen and the kitchen isn't done until everything is put away. And that's when everybody can go off and enjoy the rest of the evening guilt free. So that's an important thing for me.

And if you have family members who kind of come back later and make food and make a mess, you may want to write on a sheet of A4 paper, please keep this area clean and actually put it in the sink. That's a good way to stop them from doing that.

WHAT'S PUPA?

And the other thing that I have on my list says PUPA, PUPA the living room. Now, P-U-P-A means pick up and put away. So whenever we've been in the living room in the evening before we go to bed, we take anything out of the living room that doesn't belong there, put it in its proper place, take away the teacups and the box of biscuits,

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because that's what we have in the evening here in Denmark. And it just gives me this feeling of everything's back in its place. It only takes five minutes.

Again, if you haven't done this before, you may want to set a timer, get everybody to do it just for five minutes to help you with that. But it just gives you that nice feeling, going to bed, that everything is in its place. And when you're consistent with it, it only takes a couple of minutes.

WHY A ROUTINE?

And you can see here in this little checklist I also wrote, wrote on why I have the morning routine or why I have the evening routine. And I want you to think about that today. Maybe you've seen the title of this video and thought, oh, yeah, everybody's talking about morning routines and evening routines. I want you to think about why you want to have a routine.

Do you want to avoid that stress in the morning, getting the kids off to school and everybody's screaming at each other and you can't find the school bags? Maybe that it's in the evening that you want to fully enjoy your evening and not be falling asleep on the sofa and then waking up and realizing that the kitchen hasn't been cleaned up and we're staying up late desperately trying to do things when we're half asleep. Think about why you want to have the routine and that will make it much easier for you, actually, to be consistent with it.

CONSISTENCY

And I also added in these little checkboxes for Monday to Sunday where I could check off and how I feel once I've done my routine. Because quite often we don't feel like doing it, but, you know, it's like going out for that walk or doing that homework assignment you've been putting off. But once you've done, it feels so good.

DAILY ESSENTIALS

So the daily routines are going to be looking after all the things that you need to get done in a day. That could be putting on a load of laundry, it could be doing the dishes, it could be taking the dog for a walk every morning and every evening. And I would strongly suggest in the beginning that you just go for three things. Three things that are going to make you move forward on a daily basis.

And I have lots of videos on my YouTube channel about pinpointing what is essential for you to have on your daily routines list. It will depend upon whether you are working outside the home, whether you're leaving the home daily to go outside and work somewhere else, or whether you are inside the home working. And I've got lots of tips and advice of how to change up what is on your list.

But remember here, just keep it very simple. Just three things for morning, three things for evening, and once you've got those underneath your belt, then you can move forward.

KEEP THEM WRITTEN DOWN

And I've been doing my routines for years. They are automatic, but I still have them written down because I do have days where I've got a case of the blahs, where I'm feeling a bit sad, perhaps I'm grieving, maybe I'm just getting back into things. After illness, it really helps to have them written down.

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Also know that on those times when life is really difficult, just having that routine, it takes out the guesswork for us. We can look at our list, what do we need to get moving here, what do we need to get us moving through the day? And I find them very, very comforting.

ORGANIZING THE REST

And then talking about taking the guesswork out of things I want to go on to now, talking about how to organize your week and we are talking about housekeeping, we are talking about managing the home, work life balance, family, outside activities. How are we going to fit that all in?

Well, in the Fly Lady system, we've got the daily routines and then we have the housekeeping aspect and also managing our week, managing our month.

WEEKLY HOUSEKEEPING

Now, the housekeeping, we have a weekly upkeep, clean, power hour, whatever you want to call it. There are seven tasks and we're not cleaning the whole house, we're cleaning the high traffic areas, the areas that we use on a daily basis. For me, that is our living room, the hall, the entryway where people come in, and the kitchen and the little downstairs bathroom toilet that we have.

And we just spend ten minutes on each of the tasks. Now, I'll show you the tasks here and one of them is changing the sheets. I find that we only need to change our sheets every second week. When the kids were still at home, they would change their sheets one week and then the adults the next week. Going through newspapers, magazines, any papers.

You've got ten minutes on that and another ten minutes on dusting the flat surfaces or getting the cobwebs up in the corners or down on the skirting boards. Just ten minutes.

Ten minutes on vacuuming or sweeping, Swiffering, whatever you like to do. Ten minutes on mopping. And I know you're going to say here, oh, but it's going to take forever. No, just set your timer and do as much as you can in the ten minutes. Because again, it puts the blinkers on us and it keeps us focused on the task. And you can really get a lot done.

DONE IS BETTER THAN PERFECT

And we're not aiming for perfect here, we're just aiming to get it done. Done is better than perfect. And sometimes we have that tendency to say, oh, I don't have enough time to mop the floor, which you're really saying, I don't have time to do it perfectly and get into the corners with a toothbrush. We're throwing that thinking out the way. We just want to get it done.

And then ten minutes, grab a rag and quickly wipe down mirrors, any glass doors. If you can do a couple of windows as well, do that too. Then set your timer. Again, gather up all the trash, all the recycling, and get that moved out of the house. And it just gives us that feeling of being in control. We've done a little bit, but we're being consistent with it and with all these things.

Make sure you get other family members involved. You can make a game, set the timer, get everybody helping, or the kids can be doing their sheets while you're taking off the sheets in your bedroom. Everybody is helping.

And you can do this on a set day per week.

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You can spread it over the course of the week. I do it in different ways, depending on what's going on with my schedule, how I'm feeling that week. But having the list just gives us that guidance where, we don't know what to do, we can go to the list.

ZONE CLEANING

And then you're probably wondering, what about all the other areas in the house and what about all the other cleaning? That's where the Fly Lady zone cleaning comes in. Now, I won't get into that too much today, but the Fly Lady divides the house up into five zones and each zone each week we have time just to spend a little more time doing some more detailed cleaning. Now, it doesn't mean that you're not allowed to clean in there the rest of the month. It just means that when we're in that week, our focus is on that.

And again, set a timer ten minutes. Look at the list. We're not working through the whole list every week, but just identify one or two things that are really these really stand out to you and work on those. And again, the whole idea here is it doesn't need to be perfect, we just need to be doing something.

Because again and again I see people who have maybe tried the Fly Lady system. They're trying to do everything and that doesn't work. We're not supposed to be doing everything. We're supposed to be doing something, And just being consistent with the basic tasks is really going to change things for you.

Okay, so, so far so good. We've got some daily routines, we're adding in a weekly upkeep clean of the house and we also have a plan for when we're ready to do a bit more detailed cleaning or detailed decluttering in our homes. So far so good.

DAILY FOCUS

But then what about all the other stuff? Paying bills? What about some time with a family, having some fun with them, grocery shopping, errands? Well, don't worry, in the Fly lady system that's also taken care of, all the guesswork has been taken out for you.

There's a plan for that. It's called the Daily Focus or the Weekly Plan. And I'll go through the categories for you and it doesn't have to be on these days. This is just a guideline for you. And when you really do not know what to do, like I was back in 2006, I just found it really helpful just to go with the days mentioned and it gave me something to work on. And you will see that once you start using this to yourself, you can change it around and use it on the days that work for you best.

UPKEEP/CLEAN

So Monday is the upkeep clean of the house, the weekly home blessing hour, power hour, whatever you want to call it. And as I've said, sometimes I do it all in one go. Sometimes I spread it over the course of the week.

PLAN AND PLAY

Tuesday is called Plan and Play, which is Desk Day. Now, in the old days in the Fly Lady system that used to be on a Friday, it's now been moved to a Tuesday. We're not spending the whole day on Plan and Play. But again, instead of putting these tasks off forever, you sit down again, grab something to drink, set a timer for ten minutes and get started. We're just looking at our calendars. What is coming up, do you have any bills to pay? Plan your menu for the week so you maybe look and see what's in the fridge,

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what needs using up? Plan your menu so you can add things to your grocery list. And it's just taking ten minutes to focus on all those things that we need to plan.

And also, it's called Plan and Play Day. I like to plan some play because I know for me, if I do not plan some play for me or the family, if it doesn't get planned, it's probably not going to happen. So usually on a Tuesday I will get in touch with a friend, I'll send a message and say, hey, shall we meet up and go for a walk together or go and see a movie next month? And it's just reaching out and making sure that I've got something in the diary because we all need something to look forward to.

ANTI-PROCRASTINATION DAY

And then moving on to Wednesday. Wednesday is anti-procrastination day. Now you're going to say, what is that? Have you ever had that thought of, oh, there's a light bulb that needs changed, but you're going to have to get a ladder out because it's in a hard to reach area. Or maybe you've got taxes, tax papers that you should be handing in, but it's causing you stress and you keep on putting it off. On Anti-Procrastination Day . . . it's always on a Wednesday, you can make it any day that you like.

It's really useful that when you think of these little items that you keep on putting off or you don't want to do, write them down on a list. I keep mine on Google, keep on my phone. And then when Anti-Procrastination Day rolls around, you set your timer for ten or 15 minutes and you get started on your list.

Because quite often we're just putting those things off, we don't want to do it. Once we get started, the relief that comes in, and often it doesn't take that long.

ERRAND DAY

Then moving on to Thursday. Thursday is errand day. Once again, it doesn't matter which day you do, it's just nice to have your list ready in advance. And Errand Day is doing anything that you need to do when you are outside of the home. So that could be grocery shopping, maybe you have to post a parcel at the post office. Perhaps you have library books to hand in, medication to pick up from the pharmacy.

If I'm out running errands in the car, I will also fill up with petrol. Though usually I'm running errands here on my bike here in Denmark, everybody bikes everywhere. And as I said, it doesn't matter if you cannot do that in a Thursday. The main thing is that you have your list written down of all the things that you need to get done when you are outside the home, because that way we are saving ourselves time and energy.

You don't need to be running to the store every time you think of something. Get it down on your list. So next time you are out and about, you've got your list with you and that will save you time and stress.

CAR & PURSE/DATE NIGHT

And then moving on to Friday. Friday in Fly Lady Land is the day that you will look in your car. Do you have any items in the car that need to be brought back into the house? Do you have any rubbish in the car? Recycling. Grab a couple of bags, get the kids to help you with that.

Also, Friday is the day that we are going to go through our handbags, our purse, baby changing bag, babies, pram, stroller. We're just going to go through those bags. Kids'

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backpacks. Get the kids working on it too. Again, it's really helpful to set a timer just for five or ten minutes. Get the kids to go through their backpacks. Do they have forms that need to be signed in there? Do they have packed lunch boxes that need to be washed out, water bottles, sports gear that needs to go into the washing basket?

We're just looking through our bags, seeing what's in there, taking out what we don't need in there until it's ready for the next time. And it's just something we do once a week and it just gives us that feeling of we know where everything is. And often we can do these things that only take a few minutes. Maybe you're waiting in a queue somewhere, you can quickly go through the bag.

And Friday is also date nights. But Hubby and I, we actually prefer to stay home, we prefer to go out on other nights.

FAMILY FUN/REST AND RECHARGE

And what I usually do is I put together a little family snack basket and then Saturday and Sunday I like to combine those family fun and rest and recharge.

Now if you're single, this also applies to you. If you don't have any family, this also applies to you. But just taking that time at the weekend or it can be any day of the week that suits you to actually do something together, play a board game, go out for a walk together. Just making time for it, actually putting that as part of our schedule because rest and recharge, it's so important. It's really so important.

And you will see that all of these things, it's just the things that we need to get done on a weekly basis and you don't need to go by these days of the week. If you're working shifts, maybe that will change from you week to week. But the main thing is that you have them written down just, just the categories and that way you have a plan for when you're ready for it.

HAVING A TIME FOR EVERYTHING

I coach privately and one of the main reasons for people getting overwhelmed with things is because they don't have a plan. Now I've been using the Fly Lady system since, as I said, 2006 and in the beginning I didn't use the daily focus, the weekly plan, because I was at home with the kids and I thought, well I can do these things any day, that doesn't apply to me.

I was very wrong about that because actually I was overwhelmed with all the things that I had to do and I didn't know when I was supposed to be doing it. And when I started following the daily focus things just kind of clicked. It took out the guesswork for me and often it's that not knowing when we're supposed to be doing things, that is a major stress factor for us.

So I strongly advise you, even if you've been doing the Fly Lady system for years and you've been doing the daily routines and doing the cleaning, the zone cleaning, if you haven't done the daily focus yet or haven't tried it, why not now give it a go and let me know how you get on with it.

THE BIG SECRET

And now, drumroll, please. I'm going to tell you what you need, absolutely need to make all of this work, to take away all the stress, to take away all the strain, to give you renewed energy. Can you guess what it is? No. It's not a form of exercise. No. It's not

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some kind of supplement they need to be taking.

It is self-care on a daily basis. And I know you're not going to believe me about this. And this was the number one thing that has really helped me since finding any systems in the past, I would say 20 years. Self-care daily.

And I put it off again and again because I'm just like you. I was thinking, oh, but I've got so much to do. I need to put on another load of laundry. I need to help the kids with their homework. I need to finish this project at work. When I really stopped to think about it, when I really started implementing it, self-care daily changed everything.

If your mojo has gone missing, if you're feeling tired, if you're feeling anxious, if you're feeling if you've got a case of the blahs, please take it from me that I have done all the wrong things. I have tried everything, tried all the systems, putting in the cleaning and the zone cleaning and their daily focus and doing all different systems.

NOT NECESSARILY FANCY

It's the self-care daily that is going to make a difference for you. Now, before . . . because I know you're sitting there thinking, Diane, I don't have time to go to the spa. We're not talking about taking days off to do those kind of things. Those are great. If you can do that, that's fabulous. Exercise is good, but the main thing is that you're taking care of yourself on a daily basis for a couple of minutes a day.

There, I said a couple of minutes. Do you have a couple of minutes? It can be as simple as drinking your favorite beverage. Lovely sunshine here in Denmark this morning. Your favorite beverage from your favorite glass or favorite mug. Do you have a favorite mug? Maybe you can ask for one as a gift next time somebody's buying a gift for you.

Taking five minutes to sit outside in the morning with your tea or your coffee, watching the rainbow, sitting on the porch. A great way for me to get in some self-care is if I'm having a really bad day, is just to get outside for five minutes. That connecting with nature, just getting outside of the house for five minutes.

If you've got small kids, bundle them up, get their raincoats on and get out. There a great tip I can give you is setting a timer for five minutes or on your phone. Get outside of the house, walk as fast as you can for five minutes, and when the timer goes off, you turn around and you come back home. You've had ten minutes of exercise and believe me, you'll be a different person walking the door.

NEED IDEAS?

And often when I mention self-care, you want to do it and you say, okay, I'll do it. But you don't know what to do. And I've got plenty of ideas on my website, dianedenmark.com. I've even got ideas by the Fly Lady Zones, themed by Fly Lady Zones.

It can be as simple as having a bloom and putting it on your dressing table. Just that little act that shows you you're doing something for yourself and it'll make you smile when you see your dressing table. Maybe it's taking five minutes to do a Sudoku or part of a jigsaw puzzle. We don't need to finish the whole thing, just doing something for us.

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Even when you're at work, I strongly suggest that you have a little box or basket. I have a small perfume. I can put on a few dabs of perfume when I'm between clients. Rubbing some hand cream. Little healthy snack or not so healthy snack. Put together a little basket for yourself.

Perhaps you are a grandparent. You've got a little photo book with photos of your grandkids. Can just take that out and look at that. A coloring book and some pens. An eye mask. Put on some cordless headphones and listen to your favorite music. Listen to an audiobook, one chapter. Just taking a little time every day just for you.

And one of the things I would recommend in putting into your pamper self-care basket is a timer. Because quite often we're so used to running around doing everything else, picking out all the fires, that it's really difficult for us to sit for five minutes. Set the timer for five or ten minutes and just sit and be. But we don't want you sitting there for too long. We want you up off your bahuki and moving again.

But you get the idea. We're just taking some time for us. It's so, so important. Because unless you're taking time for you, all the rest isn't going to happen.

READY TO GO?

So I hope you're feeling inspired. We've got ideas for our daily routines, how to implement those. We've got a plan for the house, not just for the housekeeping, cleaning the house, detailed cleaning the zones, but also looking after the daily management, the day to day management of your home, making sure that works together with your work life. And the main thing, the daily self-care. What is going to be first on your list today?

And if you have any questions, I would love to answer them for you. As I said, I've got plenty of videos on YouTube. Usually my videos on YouTube, I keep them between five and 15 minutes long. Today we've had a bit more time together. And I don't just teach the Flying Lady system. I show you in action. I post daily on Instagram and on my Facebook page. I would love to see you there. And I show you how I use the Fly Lady system or just daily routines on a daily basis to get some more joy into my life and take the stress and overwhelm away.

And I hope I have inspired you to do that today. Let me or the Get Organized HQ team know what you have gained from this video today. And you may have seen these in my YouTube videos. Why do I have pom poms? Because I am here to be your cheerleader, cheering you on every step of the way.

So enjoy the rest of the Get Organized HQ Virtual Summit. This is me, Diane in Denmark, signing off. I hope to see you soon.

Okay, bye for now. And rah rah rah, you can do it.

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Setting Goals that STICK (How to Actually Achieve Your Goals)

HANNAH ASHTON • TRANSCRIPT

Hello everyone, and welcome to my session Setting Goals You Can Stick To and how you can finish the year strong with this goal setting strategy. I've been using this strategy for about three years, and I have this strategy in the planners that I sell, and I teach it every new year on my YouTube channel and social medias, and people love it.

LOOKING AHEAD

So here's an outline of what we're going to be going over in the next half hour or so. Setting quarterly goals. It's quarterly goal setting strategy. We're going to go over what that looks like and why it's way more valuable than just setting yearlong resolutions or even setting monthly goals.

We're going to go over the difference between project based goals and habit based goals and how to achieve each of those. And then I'm going to give just some overall motivation for finishing the year strong. Some quick tips and tricks.

So I can guarantee that after this presentation you are not only going to feel motivated to set new goals, but also have a strategy you can follow and feel confident in. We're going to go over that at the end, but how goal setting makes you feel confident and build your confidence and builds that personal discipline ... I love goal setting and here's why.

WHO IS HANNAH?

Okay, I have been a content creator for ten years. I started creating videos of American Girl dolls. That was my first YouTube channel when I was around 12, 13 years old. I still am mainly a content creator on YouTube, also on Instagram and TikTok. But now I create videos around personal development, time management, productivity, organization, planning, and entrepreneurship.

Because I'm also a small business founder. I'm the founder of Dream Daily, which is a stationery brand for driven young women. We sell planners and journals that help women through life transitions, like college or postgrad or starting new habits. And so I've always loved all things organizing, goal setting, and planning. I've been creating content about it for years and years.

Also, some fun facts about me. I live in Nashville, Tennessee, and of course I love daily journaling, walks outside. I love the mountains and the beach. I can't get enough of both. And I love hosting friends at my apartment and just hanging out with them.

QUARTERLY GOAL SETTING

Okay, so here's a look at quarterly goal setting. This is what a year broken up into quarters looks like. If you're in corporate America, or you probably just know what the quarters are based on, if you have your own business, or been in corporate America, or it's just easy to understand.

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Q1 is January through March, Q2 is April through June, Q3 is July through September, and Q4 is October through December. So normally when we're setting goals in January, we're thinking of the whole year and we get started off strong. Okay? We're like, all right, I'm going to accomplish all this in a year. These are my huge goals. We're all feeling motivated. I love that time of year.

But then we all know when February, March comes around, we start to kind of fall off a little bit and we're like, wait, what's happening? The year is flying by, now we're in September. Can you believe it? And it's just, like the year is almost over. What have I gotten done?

So that's why I love quarterly goal setting, because even after Q1, we're going to have that checkpoint like a new year again at the beginning of Q2, and then we reflect at the end of Q2 in June, and we have another New Year, quote unquote, in July for Q3. And so it's like having many New Year's four times a year to kind of help give you that motivation and help you hone in on what's really important.

BENEFITS OF QUARTERLY GOALS

So again, why set quarterly goals? One, it's less overwhelming. So instead of looking at the whole year and thinking, here's everything I need to do personally, professionally, for my self-care, for my physical health, for my business, instead of looking at the whole year and getting overwhelmed, we're just going to look at the first three months, and then we just look at the next three months.

It's also easier to accomplish because we're breaking it down and you're not having that overwhelm. So you're able to focus in on one to three goals for three months at a time, making it easier to accomplish and to track as well.

There's also tons of room for course correction. For example, let's say you want to start doing Pilates in January, but then you take a few classes and you actually don't like it. Okay, quarter two, you can say, actually, I'm going to try yoga instead. And it's totally fine because again, we're having that restart that mini New Year every quarter.

HOW TO SET QUARTERLY GOALS

Okay, so here's how to actually set quarterly goals. We're going to start getting into the nitty gritty. May want to bring out your notebook, may want to take some notes, because this is what you can come back to when you're setting goals for Q4. If you want to start in Q4, September is the perfect time to plan for that, obviously right before October and Q4 starts. Or again, you can come back to this in January if you want to do the whole year at a time.

STEP 1 - BRAIN DUMP

Okay, so first you're going to brain dump. Okay, goal brain dump. List all of the goals you want to accomplish before the year is over, if we're looking at the rest of 2023.

STEP 2 – CHOOSE TOP 3

And then you're going to choose your top three. So what are the goals that are the most urgent, exciting, the goals that you were like, you know what, if I got this done, I would feel accomplished. I would feel like I finished the year strong. I would feel like I'm ready for the new year or whatever it may be. What do you really want to get done?

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What's most important to get done before the year is over?

For example, this may be to you have a sales goal for Q4 in your business. If you hit this sales goal, it's perfect. On a personal level, maybe hosting a Halloween party in October that's been a goal of yours. And you want to be able to host that Halloween party in Q4 or have the best wrapping paper your kids have ever seen. Of course, it doesn't have to be these huge lofty, business professional type goals. It could be something personal like planning a vacation for the next year or taking time off in December to be with your family.

STEP 3 – DIVIDE AND CONQUER

So then we're going to move on to step three, which is divide and conquer. So this is when, if you're looking at the year, you're going to move the other goals to other quarters. So obviously you can't have a Halloween party or the best wrapping paper in Q1. That's a Q4 goal that has to do with the holidays. So maybe you move planning a vacation for 2024 to January, instead of Q4 that'll go in Q1. I'll give an example in just a second.

STEP 4 – IDENTIFY PROJECT OR HABIT

And then lastly, we're going to identify, we're going to break down the goals that you decided on and see if they're a project or a habit goal. And again, I'll be going over and giving lots of examples in just a second.

So here I mentioned the two types of goals, a project goal and a habit goal. When I was setting goals for myself in college, I kind of realized that the goals I was setting fell into two categories. One, they're a project. They're a goal that has an endpoint. And you can break that goal down into parts. For example, starting a business or planning a vacation, that's not something that you repeat one step over and over. It's something that has a lot of different parts that has an endpoint.

Versus a habit goal. So goals that do not have an endpoint, instead, these are usually practiced daily or weekly. So, for example, going on a daily walk or journaling in the morning, that's something that's the same task that we do over and over again to form a habit. Pretty self-explanatory.

AN EXAMPLE OF QUARTERLY GOAL SETTING



So here's an example of what your quarterly goal setting strategy could look like for the whole year. And I broke them down into whether it's a habit or a project goal. I put the little H or the little P in blue next to it. So for example, Q1, we're starting the year strong. We want to go to the gym three times a week. That's a habit goal. And we want to journal daily. That's a habit goal. And then a project goal is we want to create a photography website for our new business. So creating a website has a lot of steps. That's a project. Q2, maybe we did achieve all of those in Q1. We're like, okay, great. Q2, we're going to try to get five new clients. That's a project goal. Q2, eat at home five times a week. That's a habit. Book

a summer trip. That's a project goal.

Now, if you find that you didn't achieve a goal from Q1, let's say you didn't journal every day, that was something that kind of you put off to the side. It didn't happen. What's great about quarterly goal setting is you can move that over, but when you're starting the year off, obviously you don't know which goals you're going to drop off, which goals aren't going to work out. So this is just kind of a look at when you're planning it.

But this will change as the year goes on and you start to see what's working, what's not working, what you did achieve, and what you want to move over to the next quarter to try to achieve again.

Q3, let's say, okay, I like going to the gym two times a week, but I want to throw in a workout class, so I'm going to try to go to yoga once a week. Now, that's a habit goal. I want to take my daily greens. A habit goal. I'm moving into a new house. Okay, that's a big project. A project goal.

Q4. Obviously, Q4 is a very busy season with the holidays, so maybe you have less goals. It could just be organize the new house that you just moved into that's, again, a big project. And prep your business for the new year. Okay, that's another big project. So we're going to keep it minimal with two goals.

FLEXIBILITY

Again, I recommend one to three goals per quarter. Three goals would be about a goal a month to really focus on. But of course, you can work on all three of them the first month of the quarter or achieve all three of them in the last month of the quarter. Having it be a quarterly system gives you that flexibility.

ACHIEVING A PROJECT GOAL

Okay, so let's do it. Here's how to achieve your project goals. Again, those goals that have multiple steps and that have an endpoint.

FOUR QUESTIONS

So here's a few questions to ask yourself, and I'll be giving an example with these questions too. So first off, pick the goal. Pick the project. What is your end goal for this project? Two, why are you wanting to pursue this goal? Three, make a list of all the tasks you know it takes to complete this project. And four, find 30 minutes each day to work on these tasks.

This is how I started my business as a freshman in college. This is how I managed to come up with this brand, this stationary brand, create this planner while also being a full time student and doing social media as a part time job. I listed out all the tasks and was like, okay, this is when I'm going to work on it. I'll explain that more when we get to it.

WHAT'S THE END GOAL?

So let's go through an example. So the example I'm going to share is starting a business. It's kind of easy for me to break down. So what is my end goal with starting a business? Maybe it's to open an online boutique within one year. So it's very specific. We've given ourselves a timeline, an end point.

WHY?

Why am I wanting to pursue this? Well,

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of course, we all need a why. Because especially with these large project goals, it's easy to fall off, it's easy to get distracted to, it's hard, okay? It's hard to achieve goals. So it's important to have that why that you can always look back to. So my why for maybe starting a business is because I want to share my love for affordable stylish pieces and create a job that I love.

WHAT IS MY TASK LIST?

The next part is to make a list of all the tasks you know it takes to complete this project. This may be a little overwhelming at first, but I promise it's going to give you clarity, okay? Because a lot of times we have these big goals, like, I want to start a business and we say that to ourselves every year. That's always a goal in January and it just never happens. So these next two steps are how this goal is actually going to happen. So do your research, take your time. You'll definitely find more tasks along the way. It's kind of going to be an ever growing list, but it's going to give you some sort of clarity, some sort of strategy.

So, for example, a few tasks that I knew to start a business before even starting it, I knew I needed to set it up as an LLC. I knew I needed to create and order inventory, I needed to buy a domain, create a website, create a marketing strategy, plan a photo shoot, so on and so on. Obviously, depending on how big this project is, this list may be ten items, this list may be 40 items. But just brain dump everything you know it's going to take to achieve this project goal.

HOW CAN I FIND 30 MINUTES A DAY TO WORK ON THE TASKS?

And then you're going to figure out 30 minutes in each day to work on these tasks. So I find it's often easier to wake up 30 minutes earlier. So I would write down, I will wake up 30 minutes earlier to start working on this dream of mine. And now I have a path for getting started. So no one's going to be perfect. Obviously, you can decide, okay, I'm going to add in 30 minutes every weekday or an hour every weekend, weekend, day.

But this is how you actually achieve these goals, okay? You have to start to check off those tasks. And I promise in the 30 minutes you now have a plan. So you wake up earlier, you're like, okay, I'm up earlier. Hannah, I don't know what to do. I don't know what am I going to do with this extra 30 minutes in my day because I really just want to go back to bed.

Well, here is where you go back to this list from the previous page and you start with the first thing on that list. The easiest thing. Start with the easiest tasks because once you start checking those off, it's going to build momentum. And the next day you're like, okay, I know what to do. I know I need to now work on this task or it didn't get done yesterday, so now I'm going to work on it again.

And you're going through this project with more of a plan and with clarity instead of just being like, oh, I want to start a business. But that seems like such a big undertaking, I don't know how to do it. So again, going back to my example of this is how I started my business. I woke up at 6:30 or 6:00 A.M. my freshman year of college because I had 8:00 A.M. classes and I wanted to work for 30 minutes to an hour on the designs for my planner that I was launching. And sorry to my roommate Skyler for running the coffee machine so early and getting up and probably making noise in our small little dorm room. But this

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is how I started my business that I now have four years later.

AMAZING PROGRESS

So it's really amazing how once you start and dedicate a certain block of time in each day to working on your goals and you actually keep up with it day after day and make it into a routine, it's amazing what you can get done.

And these lofty, huge projects and goals that you've had dreams of achieving actually start to fall into place. It's a beautiful thing. Oh, and if you're like, okay, Hannah, this seems like a lot. I'm going to have a freebie, some worksheets for you guys at the end. Stay to the end to see how to get those because I understand it can be a lot and this is going to break it down in those worksheets.

ACHIEVING A HABIT GOAL

Okay, so that's project goals. Now let's talk about habit goals. It's a little bit easier. Maybe you guys have heard of the habit loop. This was made famous by Charles Duhigg. There's books on it. There's a lot of content out there on it. It's basically a neurological cycle that happens for everything we do.

So every habit, good or bad in your life, whether it's picking your nails, peeling your nails, or it's cooking a healthy breakfast for yourself every morning, it uses the habit loop. And there's basically four parts to a habit loop: a craving, a cue, a routine, and a reward.

So I'm going to use the example of daily journaling. Again, this is the process I use to start journaling daily. It's now a part of my morning routine that I cannot live without.

And this is exactly how I made it a habit, using this habit loop. Okay, so for journaling in the morning, that was a goal I had of mine, a habit goal.

My craving in the morning, as soon as I wake up, the sun comes up, my alarm is going off. Obviously we're craving coffee. Okay? And so the cue for craving coffee was waking up, the alarm going off. The time of day, my routine normally was just to make my coffee, sip my coffee, reward being caffeine.

But how you change a habit goal is you change the routine. So the craving, the cue and the reward are all going to stay the same, but the routine is what's going to change. So instead of just making my coffee in the morning, that being my routine, I kept my journal next to my coffee maker. And while my coffee was brewing or while I was drinking my coffee, I journaled. And then of course, I get the reward of the caffeine. Okay?

So my body's like, okay, yeah, we got our reward. But over time as I started to keep journaling while drinking my coffee, I then felt the reward of journaling. Okay? So for me, journaling, I get more mental clarity, I work through problems, I feel less stressed, I feel more gratitude, and it really gives me motivation to start my day.

And so then my craving in the morning became not only coffee, but also those benefits of journaling. And I was looking forward to that reward once it was done.

So again, you can use this habit loop, this habit circle for pretty much anything that you want to achieve habit wise, whether you want to start working out more, whether you want to stop drinking coffee. There's all these examples online. I highly recommend

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you guys to go check them out because it's just an amazing way to look at creating good habits and taking away bad habits in your life. And it's changed my life.

So we love the habit loop. Again, not wasn't created by me, but I love sharing about it. I even have this in my planners. My Dream Achieve Workbook that I created because I love it so much and I think it's so important.

Again, there's going to be a freebie a worksheet for the habit loop. And so how to achieve your habit based goals. Stay to the end to see how to get this free worksheet.

FINISHING THE YEAR STRONG

Okay, so now I wanted to kind of go over just finishing the year strong. So you're like, okay, Hannah, you just gave me all of this amazing information. Hopefully you think it's amazing. On setting goals and quarterly goal setting project. Goal setting, habit goal setting. It's a lot. Where do I start?

Let's start with Q4. Okay, so go ahead and follow these steps. For Q4. Do the brain dump. Identify what you really want to get done in Q4. Identify what are the top one to three goals that in the next three months you want to achieve. Identify whether they're a project or a habit. Go back through this presentation or go through the worksheets I'm about to give you and figure out how you're going to achieve the project versus the habit based goals.

ONE GOAL FOR Q4

And just start with Q4, and then if that works well for you, if you're like, okay, I achieved maybe one out of the three or two out of the three or three out of three goals. Then you can look at it for the whole year. And for 2024, my next tip would be to start small. So if this is your first time ever setting a goal for yourself or first time really having a strategy going into goal setting, start small with just one goal and have it for the next three months.

So you're only going to have one goal for October, November, and December, and you're going to try your hardest. You're going to put in all these strategies, do your best to just achieve that one goal. And what I love about goal setting is that it builds confidence, and I'll explain that in a second.

PROGRESS OVER PERFECTION

Lastly, remember, this is so cheesy, but I had to say it progress over perfection. And what's amazing about quarterly goal setting is progress means so much because we're not just trying to finish a goal in a month or a week. Let's say you start daily journaling and you get in a good habit of it a little bit here and there, but you fall off towards the end of the quarter. That's okay. Quarter two, you can pick it back up. And that progress you made in quarter one is still going to help you.

Or for the example, let's start a business. Let's say you get half of your list of tasks done. You get 25 out of the 50 tasks done in quarter one. But you're like, dang, I really wanted my business to be done and started at the end of this quarter. That's okay. Your progress is still so amazing, and so you can then move forward. But let's be honest, achieving goals is hard work. If it was easy, everyone would be raving about, oh, I hit all my resolutions this year. I achieved everything I set out to. And that's just not the case.

PRIORITIES CHANGE

As the year goes on, we start to fall off,

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our priorities change. Maybe you end up having a kid and you were like, okay, wait, in January, I didn't think I was going to be pregnant this year.

Or maybe the business that you've always dreamt of having, you kind of start it and you reevaluate like, maybe I don't want this. Maybe I don't want to leave my corporate job to be an entrepreneur. Or maybe I'm an entrepreneur and I want to go into a corporate job.

So much can happen in the course of a year. And so that's why I feel like it's so important to constantly have these check ins four times a year and reevaluate where you're at, what your priorities are and what you're wanting next.

GOALS BUILD CONFIDENCE

Of course, I've said this a few times throughout, and I think it's so important to remember that achieving goals builds confidence. This is one of the main reasons I love sharing about goal setting with my followers, especially my younger followers, girls who are my age or younger in college and high school. Because, yes, it's important to achieve goals to better ourselves or have the things that we want in life.

But even more importantly is the confidence that comes internally, that self confidence that comes when we tell ourselves we're going to do something and we stick with it, and we actually do it. So that's why I say to start small. Like, if you've never achieved a goal in your life, start with the simplest thing. Like, I'm going to put my dishes in the dishwasher after I use them. I'm not going to put them in the sink. And once you start doing that and your body actually continues in that habit, your brain is going to be like, wait, I went out and I did what I said I was going to do.

And so you start to build this trust with yourself. You trust that when you say you're going to do something, that you can actually show up and do it. And so that's why I love sharing about goal setting. That's why I love teaching goal setting. That's why I sell my planners with goal setting strategies in them, especially again, for young women to help understand how achieving goals is great.

Because, yes, it's fun to check something off to achieve something that's on our vision board or on our resolution list, but it's also important to build that confidence and trust within ourselves, especially as women.

FREE GOODIES

So that is going to be it for my presentation. But don't head out yet because I have some special little goodies for you guys. I have this freebie worksheet. As I've mentioned throughout this presentation, these are worksheets that you can download, you can use digitally, or you can print them out, and they'll help you through setting quarterly goals, setting project goals, and setting a habit goal.

There's actually three worksheets, and to get this, you just have to DM me on Instagram. My username is @MISSHANNAHASHTON. Come over to Instagram. You don't even have to follow me or anything. Just send me a DM and just say, hey, I watched your Get Organized presentation. I would love that worksheet. And I'll send you the Google Drive link to download it super easy.

And if you have any questions about goal setting or this presentation or my business

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or anything in general, feel free to DM me as well. I check my DMs pretty regularly, pretty much every single day.

SPECIAL DISCOUNT

If you're interested in a planner or a journal for yourself or for someone you know, we have postgrad planners, student planners, journals for beginners, everything you can need. I'm giving you guys 20% off, which I rarely do. 20% off? It's usually 10 to 15% off, so you guys are getting an extra good discount. Giving you guys 20% off anything from my website shopdreamdaily.com. 20% off your total order. Just use code, GETORGANIZED at checkouts, and you will see that discount.

The fact that you guys made it to the end of this presentation means so much. I know there are so many amazing speakers and presentations happening with this virtual conference, and so it means a lot that you stay till the end. So definitely DM me on Instagram. Let me know if you did.

I just want to say thanks, and maybe I'll see you around on my own socials. But if not, I hope you guys have an amazing rest of your day and happy goal setting.

Good luck, guys. I know you can do it.

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2 Easy Ways to Organize Files and Calm the Digital Chaos

JENNIFER MAKER • TRANSCRIPT

Hello, everybody. My name is Jennifer Maker. Welcome to Get Organized HQ Virtual 2023. I am honored to be invited to speak at this wonderful event again this year.

Today I want to show you how to organize all of your computer files with a special focus on SVGs, PNGs, JPEGs, and other design and image files like that, which really tend to clutter things up. So you can calm the chaos and find things easier and faster.

FILES EVERYWHERE

If you've been downloading files and just leaving them right where they are, right in your downloads folder or on your desktop, you probably already noticed how hard it is to find and use your files. Even if you've been trying to organize files, you may notice it's getting harder and harder as your collection grows.

I totally get you. Most of us were never taught how to actually organize digital files, and we've just been doing whatever seems to make sense. And sometimes we don't do anything at all.

EASE OF USE

But I can help. I've been using computers and organizing my files on them since the late 80s. Seriously. And over the past few decades, I've come up with systems that actually work for the long haul. As a teacher, designer, and author, I work with hundreds of thousands of files on a regular basis, and these systems work for me.

Now, I love to be organized, but I don't love to actually do the organizing on a day to day basis. This is my truth. So my systems are made for ease of use, and I'm not going to recommend you do all the things that you could do to organize, as there's really quite a few. My systems are the simplest ways, because I'm that person who would rather just get on with things rather than spend my time fussing with my files.

So I'm going to share my two tried and true file organization systems that I think work the best in the real world, and you can pick the one that is right for you based on how you use your files.

OVERVIEW OF TERMS

Now, before I dive into explaining my two systems, let's do a quick overview of digital terms. For the purposes of this presentation, a folder is a container that holds one or more files, and a file is a single document, such as an SVG, PNG, or JPEG.

A file name is what we call a file. It's the name that appears on the file itself, and the file extension is the three or four digit abbreviation that appears at the end of a file name, such as SVG or PNG.

To unzip or decompress something means to extract the contents of a file that ends in zip. You can unzip something right in Windows by right clicking and choosing

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Extract All and on the Mac by either double clicking the file or by right clicking and choosing Open with Archive Utility.

KEEP OR TRASH?

By the way, many people ask if it's necessary to keep the DXF files if you already have, like the SVG. And no, you do not need to keep those. You also do not need to keep the zip file. Once you've extracted the contents, both can and should be deleted to avoid confusion and clutter. That said, I rarely get around to deleting them. I did warn you that I don't really like to organize.

So I'm going to show you how to organize files on both a Windows computer and a Mac computer. So I'm going to invite you into my computer so you can see up close how everything works.

GALLERY OF ART SYSTEM

So let's talk about the first file organization system, the Gallery of Art. This is a centralized folder with thumbnails and effective file names. My gallery organization method is for those of you who are more casual file collectors who have collections that are either smaller or simpler and have less need for hierarchy. This method also works best when you're dealing with one primary type of file, like all design files in SVG, PNG, or JPEG format.

To use my gallery system, you'll want to create or use one centralized folder on your computer or device for your files. Many of you may already be doing this by letting all of your files go to your download folder.

REMOVE HIERARCHY

But there's more to this than that. You need to remove hierarchy. So if you downloaded a zip file that has the contents and folders, you'll need to move it out of the folders and into your one big centralized folder, your gallery folder.

The advantages to a centralized folder like this is that all your files of a certain type are in it, so you don't have to look in multiple locations. Plus, when all of your files are in one folder, you can more easily browse thumbnails to find what you seek. In essence, you create your own file gallery that can be browsed and searched at will.

GALLERY METHOD FOR WINDOWS

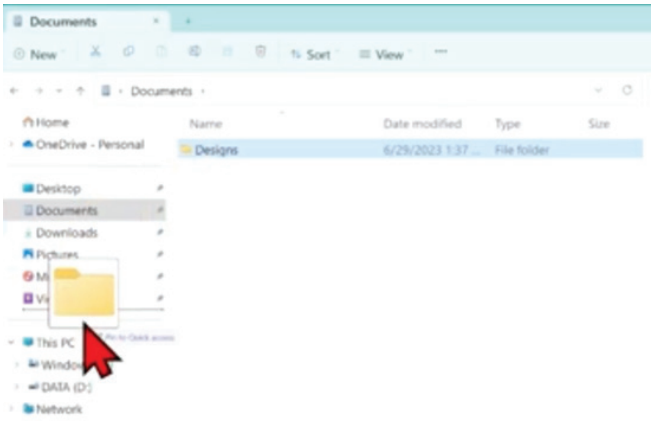
Let me show you how to do the gallery method on a PC running Windows Eleven. Mac users, I'll get to you in a moment.

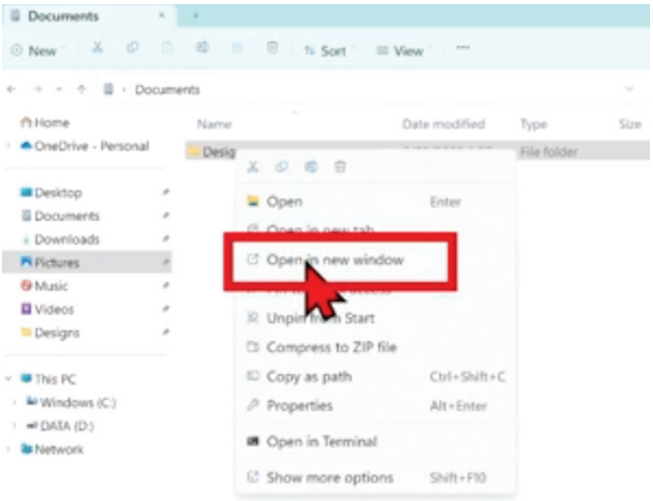
So select File Explorer, which is the yellow icon down here at the bottom, and then choose Documents. And you'll want to create a new folder by clicking on New and choose Folder. Now give it a name by typing in Designs or whatever you want to organize.

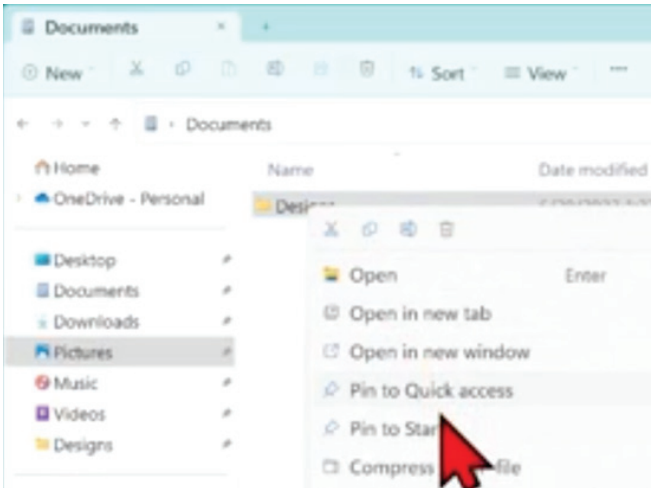
PINNING FOLDER

Now, before you do anything else, pin this folder to the sidebar by clicking and dragging it over like this. Now you have easy access to it. You can also right click the folder and choose Pin to Start. And now it's always available under the Start menu. The Start menu is right down here at the bottom. And there it is.

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MOVING FILES

Now just gather your files that you want to organize into this new folder. I recommend you right click on the new folder that you just made just like this, and choose Open a new window right here. Then position your Designs folder right next to your first window.

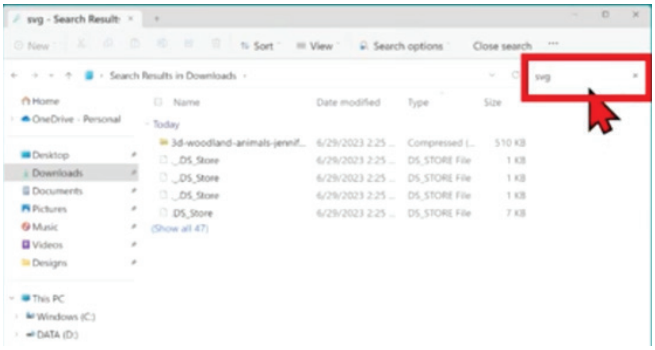
Now, in the first window, find all of the files that you want and then move them on over to your new folder. So I recommend you start in your Downloads folder. That's probably where many of your files are currently living, and you can just go ahead and drag them on over. You can click and drag and drop, and they'll move over to your design folder.

You can actually hold down your Shift key and select several at a time like this, and then click, hold and drag them on over. Or you can choose individual ones like this and then move them over like that. It's up to you.

FINDING FILE TYPES

You can also just search for file types. For example, if I type in SVG up here in the search bar, it shows me everything in a Downloads folder that is SVG.

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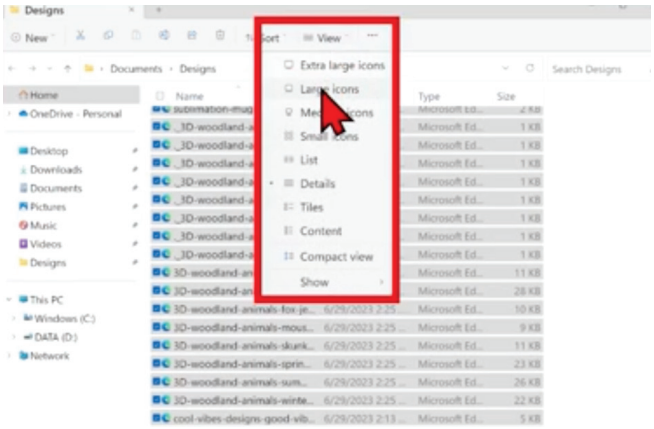


So right here I'll need to click show all 47. And these are all of the things that are designated as SVG files or have SVG in the file name. If I expand this, you can see they're all right here. So I can just select all of these in one go like this by holding down the Shift key on my keyboard, and then click, hold, and drag them all over.

So there's many ways to get your files into your folder, your centralized folder. You will find the ways that work the best for you.

BROWSING YOUR FILES

If you'd like to browse the items in this folder, like a gallery, which of course is one of the main benefits of this method, there's an extra step you have to take on Windows. If you mostly have PNG and JPEG files, you can go to the View menu and you can choose one of these icon views right here at the top. So I'll change it to large icons.

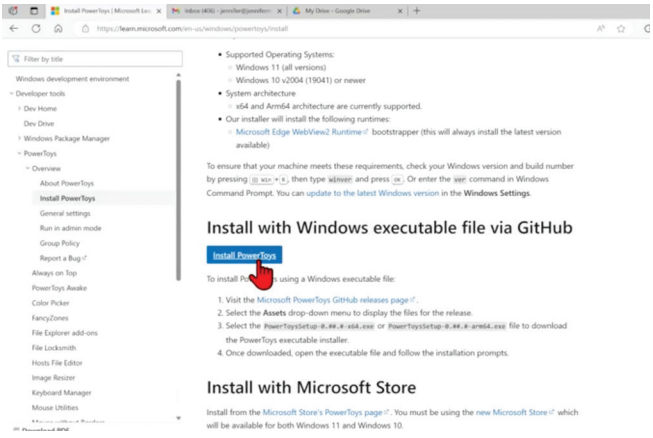


And wow, I mostly have SVGs, nothing else. Let's get some PNGs in here so you can see what this might look like. So I'm going to search on PNG, and here's a bunch of PNG files. I'll move these on over to my design folder. All right, so now these are graphic files that have an image in them so we can see the thumbnail.

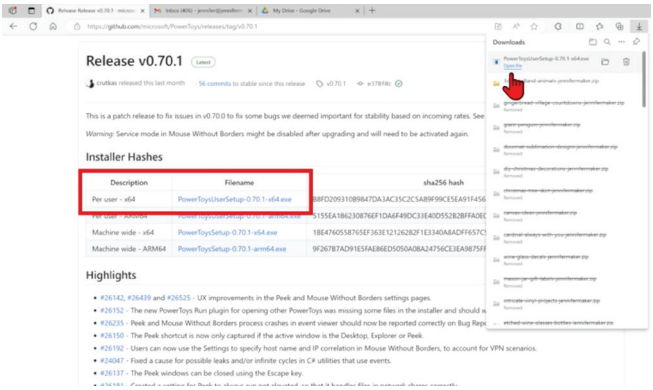
POWERTOYS AND SVGS

But of course, if you have SVGs, you can't see them. But if you want to browse those visually too, you'll just need to take an extra step and install a program called PowerToys, which is a free utility from Microsoft. You'll find it at jennifermaker.com/powertoys.

That brings us to this page. Let's go ahead and click on Install PowerToys. We'll then click this button that says Install PowerToys here,



and then we need to download the file from here.

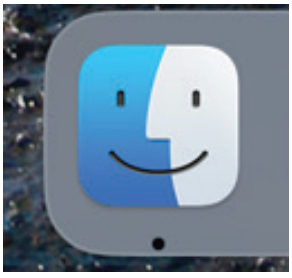


Once it's downloaded, go ahead and click Open File. You'll have to click I agree to the license terms and conditions, and then choose Install.

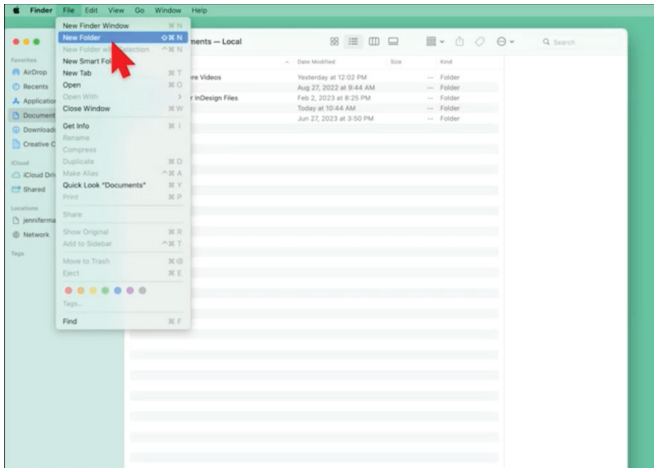
All right, let's see if that worked. Let's go ahead and minimize all of this. And there we go. We can now see all of our SVGs and PNGs and JPEGs in this folder. So this is really cool. And now you can just browse this if you are looking for something specific.

GALLERY METHOD FOR MAC

Now my friends on Mac can do this too. To make a centralized folder on the Mac, go to your Finder, which is down here in your dock and looks like two blue faces.



Then choose the Go menu at the top of the screen and select Documents. With the Documents folder open, go to the File menu at the top and choose New Folder and give your centralized folder a good name.



I will call this folder Designs, but you can use any other descriptive name that you will recognize. Now, before you do anything else, pin this folder to the sidebar on the left by clicking and dragging it over just like this.

If you don't see your sidebar, go to the View menu and choose Show Sidebar. Now you have easy access to your centralized folder. Now you just gather your files that you want to organize into this new folder.

I recommend you go to the File menu at the top and choose New Finder Window, and then position your Designs folder right next to your New Finder window. And just search for all your files and then move them over to your new folder by clicking, holding, dragging and dropping.

Now, because I'm organizing Design files today, I like to just search for a typical file extension such as SVG and then choose SVG Image from the drop down menu. And all of my SVGs on my computer appear in a list for me to click and drag over.

BROWSING YOUR FOLDER

Unlike Windows, Mac has a built in way to view the thumbnail. Just go to the View menu at the top and choose either Icons or

Gallery. Icons will give you little thumbnails like this, while choosing Gallery will give you the big previews and you can scroll through them. It's pretty cool.

Another option is to view in columns which will give you a thumbnail, but only when the file is selected. This is actually how I usually view my files, but everyone will develop their own preference.

IT'S ALL IN THE NAME

Now, whether you're using a Mac or you've got Windows, the gallery centralized folder method does require that you have decent file names for good searching.

So always pay attention to the file name when you add things to the folder, and rename if necessary. To rename a file, just right click and choose Rename. So for example, I can choose to rename this one to Daisies. So I right click it and I go down here under Show more Options and I choose Rename. And now we can just type what I want in here. So I'm going to type 3d daisy bouquet.

It works the same way on the Mac. Just right click it and choose Rename and type in a new name.

Good file names meet the following requirements. They're clear. That means the file name makes it easy to quickly identify and understand the file at a glance. They're consistent. The file name is in the same style to make it easier to sort and search for files. Don't start one file with, say, a color and another file with a theme. It's complete. The file name, spells out the words, and does not use acronyms or abbreviations, which would be hard to remember and also hard to search on. And they're concise. The file name isn't so long that you can't read it or causes issues. While you can have a file name of up to 256 characters, that is going to be really hard to read. I try to keep my file names under 100 characters.

IS IT GETTING TOO COMPLEX?

And it may seem like the gallery method could get unwieldy as your collection grows. Yes, but remember that these files are all digital. A digital folder can hold way more files than you're ever likely to collect, unlike a real life file folder. So you can just keep adding things. And we have excellent search functions that can find our files so long as they have good file names. And searching can be a lot faster than other organizational methods.

But what happens when you start to get duplicates or different versions, or special things for special projects? Or you have so many files in one folder that your computer starts to slow down, because this is totally a thing when you get up around 100,000 files or more.

LIBRARY OF ALEXANDRIA SYSTEM

And I know some of you might have collections that large. So once this level of complexity is introduced, you may want to consider my second method file organization system number two. The Library of Alexandria, a hierarchical structure based on theme or projects.

With my library file organization system, we add folders within folders that organize our files, not unlike the way a library is organized into sections, subsections, and collections. This method can help you keep similar files together, which can often make it easier to hone in on what you want, even when you're not sure of the exact file name

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that you might have used for it, or when you have so many files that you cannot possibly look at every single file in a gallery.

DECIDE ON A STRUCTURE

I use a library method for my own project files, which span many different types and even versions. To really use the library method effectively, you need to first decide on a structure. For example, I've chosen to organize my library by project, but you could instead choose to organize it by theme or by craft type, or by client if you sell things. Or really by whatever you want, it's what makes the most sense to you.

I like to use projects because then I can have a variety of projects. I have craft projects, business projects, people projects, and then I just list all of my projects in one big list, not unlike my gallery method, which allows me to just browse it quickly.

So to use the library system of file organization, you can create new folders within that first folder that you already made if you're building off of the gallery method.

So, for example, I'm going to come up here and change my view to Details. So we go back to the list view, and then we can just create new folders in here. So just click on New, do Folder and I'll do botanical, right? And now I could move things like flowers into the botanical folder if I want to.

So let's say you want to organize your design files into categories. So you could create a folder for animals, a folder for botanical, and a folder for celebrations. And then you just drop your files into them.
DON'T GO TOO DEEP

You can, of course, further organize things. So like the animals folder could have folders for farm animals, aquatic animals, that sort of thing. But I want to caution you not to go too deep and nest too many folders inside other folders. The general rule of thumb is not to go any deeper than five levels. Now you're already one level deep just by creating this folder in your Documents folder, and then you're another level deep with the subfolders the categories.

So I recommend no more than one more level past this two, if you absolutely must. If you go too deep, you'll find it really hard to find stuff that is buried in folders you cannot see.

REFERENCE FILE

If you do use the library system with subfolders for things, consider also keeping things like instructions, licenses, and other support files with your files so you always have them available.

I really believe that one of these two methods, the Gallery method or the Library method, can save your digital life.

EXTRA TIPS

Now, let me quickly share some extra tips that have really made a difference for me over the years.

SHORTCUTS

First, consider using shortcuts. You may be wondering what to do about a file that seems to fit in more than one category. Like, say, my floral animal designs here, right? It could go in both the cats folder and in the flowers folder. If this happens, and it will, I recommend you pick one folder and then you make a shortcut from that folder

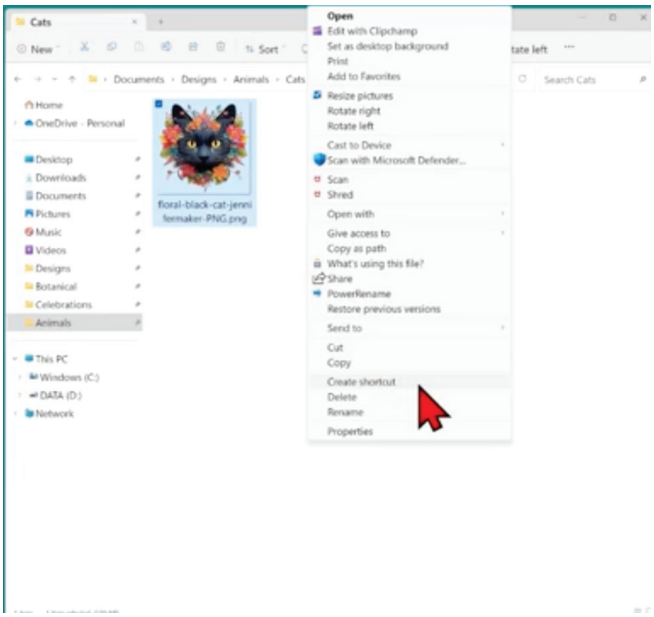
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to the other one.

So let's go ahead and move this into the animals folder. So I'm going to move it over to Designs. And then in Designs, we'll move this black cat right here into animals. And in animals, we'll create a subfolder new folder for cats. And we'll move . . . we're going to change the file name while we're at it. So we're going to rename this to floral black cat and let's move it into the cats folder.

All right, so there it is, sitting in our cats folder. Awesome. But we would also like to have it in the flower folder, right? It's got lots of flowers. Let's get a bigger look at this, right? Lots of flowers.

To make a shortcut on Windows right click on a file. Or you can also do this with the folder. So you right click on this and you come down here to show more options and you choose Create Shortcut.



Now you can drag this shortcut anywhere else on your computer that you like. So I'm going to click and drag it into our botanical folder right here.

Open up botanical and let's search by details and let's make a new folder in here for flowers because there's all different sorts of botanical things, right? And slide this over so I can see it more of it. And I'm going to take my floral black cat shortcut and it does tell us it's a shortcut right here. And we're going to drag this into the flowers folder. So there we go, we can still see it. Let's change this to extra-large icons. So here is the shortcut to the file.

Now the file only exists actually in one place. That's the original folder you put it in. But now you can have shortcuts anywhere else on your computer to help you find things if you like this hierarchical method.

Alternately, you can go to the place that you want the shortcut to appear and then right click in that folder. So I'll go ahead and right click right here inside the folder and choose New and choose Shortcut. And then I will click Browse to go find other cats that I would like to have in this folder.

So I will look in my Documents and then in my animals folder and in my cats folder. And here I have a peach white cat. So I'll choose this and I'll say okay. And I'll click next and finish. And now I have a shortcut of one of my other floral cats in my flowers folder, even though it's sitting in my cats folder.

To make a shortcut on the Mac, which is called an alias, just right click on the file or folder and choose Make Alias. Then move the New alias file into the folder you want. Or you can just hold down the option and command keys on your keyboard as you click the file, hold and drag it into another folder and voila! Instant shortcut.

WHERE TO SAVE

Second, think carefully about where you

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save your files. In this session, we saved our files on our computer hard drives, but you could also upload them to the cloud instead. In this case, the cloud means loosely, the Internet. And more specifically, it means to save something on Internet servers rather than your computer's hard drive.

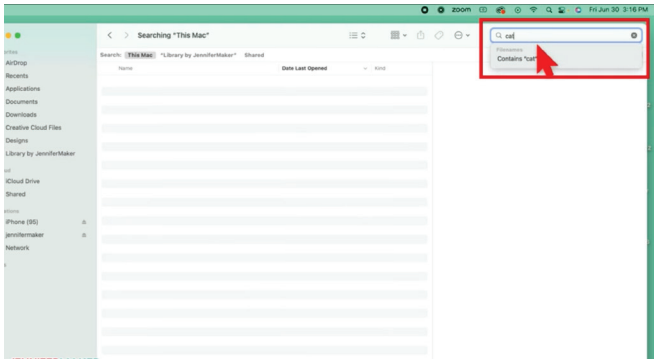
For example, you could upload files to Google Drive, which is free, or Dropbox, which has both a free and a paid version. I use both for different purposes. I really like to use these, as I can also choose to allow others to have access to my files, which is useful too.

UTILIZE THE SEARCH FUNCTION

And third, remember to search for everything. Don't just go and browse your gallery or open up your folders, use your computer's search function to its fullest advantage. On Windows, go to your Design folder, and then right up here in the upper right hand corner, you'll see Search and the name of your folder. You can click right in here and you can search for whatever you want.

So if I search for cat, I get all of my Cat images really easy and nice very fast too. On the Mac, click on the magnifying glass in the upper right corner. Type in your word and you'll get a list of matches. Click on one to go to it.

Or scroll down and click on Documents to see everything in that folder. You'll get a lot of results, so I find it better to search with the search bar on a Finder window and then choose Contains to make sure I'm getting everything with the word in the name.



Organizing your files like this definitely takes some time, but it is worth it for large or complex collections.

FREE FOLDER STRUCTURE

Now, I think one of the biggest drawbacks to this method is coming up with all the categories. So to help you out, I've pre-made a library folder structure for you that is handy for anyone with design file collections that are common to crafters and makers. I've organized it by theme so it works for a wide variety of crafts, including cut files, sublimation files, and printables. It works on windows and Mac. You just download and unzip it and then drag it right into your Documents folder and start filling it up. To get my library zip file, go to Jennifermaker.com/library-zip and enter your information so I can send it to you.

JENNIFER'S PERSONAL LIBRARY

You can also get thousands of free files to add to your own library by visiting my personal library at jennifermaker.com/library. I'm always adding files to this collection too. All the files that you saw me organizing in this video were from my personal library and are available to you totally free of charge. My library is famous for both being free and for being filled with amazing and awesome and useful designs.

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AI ART WORKSHOP

And if you want to know how to make your own designs to your own liking whenever you want, I invite you into my new AI Art Workshop, which teaches you how to ethically make fabulous designs in a wide variety of styles using generative AI. And you can use them for so many things, including sublimation crafts, print then cut, and printables. Learn more and sign up for the workshop today at jennifermaker.com/ai-art.

I hope you found this useful and I'm happy to help. If you have any questions at all, I invite you to join my community at jennifermaker.com/community and let me know how I can help you.

Until next time, this is Jennifer Maker reminding you to craft a life you love.

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Quick Wins for Chronic Procrastinators

JENNIFER ROSKAMP • TRANSCRIPT

Well, hello there. My name is Jennifer Roskamp and I am the creator and founder of the Intentional Mom, as well as a certified Lifetime and Mindset Freedom Coach who is passionate about helping women and moms step outside of the unrealistic expectations of perfectionism and the all too pretty Instagram reality that we all see, and step into what's actually attainable.

I'm here to help you find time for what matters to you in addition to the juggling act of all of the demands we have of everyday life. I am also the creator of the Intentional Mom Planning System, as well as Accomplished Academy and Accomplished Lifestyle where we are all about just getting something done.

So today I am here to share some quick win strategies when procrastination is something that you face on the regular. Okay? So first, I've got a handout to go along with this too. So make sure that you've downloaded that. That will help you follow along and take notes with what we are going to be talking about today.

SOME TRUTHS

So first we're going to start with some of those truths that I've got printed out for you, okay? So we're just going to run through them really quick here.

AN EVERYONE THING

So the first truth is that procrastination isn't just a you thing, it's an everyone thing. There's nothing wrong with you when you put off doing things. We all fall victim to that more often than any of us would care to admit. So first of all, recognize that it isn't something that's wrong with you or something that's just a struggle for you. It is a struggle that we all face oftentimes on a daily basis. Okay?

NOT A LABEL

Truth number two is this procrastination isn't a label that you have to wear. And honestly, there's no benefit to labeling yourself that way. You're here today. You are getting some awesome strategies that are going to help you make progress. And remember, when it comes to progress, any progress is always progress.

OPPOSITES

Truth number three. The opposite of procrastination is taking action. I'm going to say that again. The opposite of procrastination is taking action. And I want you to decide to take action today because armed with these strategies, you're going to be able to take action on things you've previously procrastinated on, which, P.S., even just two minutes of working on something counts as taking action.

See how easy it really can be? A lot of times when we think about . . . especially when we've been procrastinating on something for a while, we think we have to complete

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the project to actually be able to recognize that we have done the work. But in reality, you've done the work when you've taken any action at all, including just a couple of minutes of action. And that's important to recognize.

A HABIT

Truth number four, taking action is a habit you can build. And that's really what you're doing when you are starting. By taking action on something, you're creating a habit of showing up for yourself. And in reality, let's think about how often and how easily we usually show up for everyone else, right? If you were having coffee with a girlfriend, you wouldn't think of just not showing up for her, right? You would do your best to meet that commitment. And then if you weren't going to be able to meet that commitment, you would certainly let her know ahead of time and you would certainly work on making it right with her, most likely rescheduling or something like that.

But so often we treat ourselves way worse than we would someone else. And so taking action really is a habit that you can build and it literally is just showing up for yourself rather than feeding . . . So what we're trying to do is build a new habit of showing up rather than feeding, the habit of I'll get to it later. And that's often what we think of when we think of procrastination.

A MINDSET SHIFT

Because in reality, it really isn't about taking the action at all. It's a mindset shift that starts with knowing that all you have to do is create a new habit of showing up and try. The action that you take is really just a bonus then.

Really the hard work comes when you determine that you are going to show up for yourself. And you do that, that's the hardest part. After that, the progress that you actually make is really just the cherry on top. And so the truth is, when we take the focus off the action, the thing we have to do and boil it down to a decision to form a new habit. Suddenly taking the action feels doable when before it most likely did not.

THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM

And really this speaks to the reason why procrastination is such an ongoing struggle. It's because so often we are so focused on just taking the action, taking the action, taking the action, doing the thing, when really we benefit from attacking the root of the problem.

What happens before you actually decide to take or not to take the action? We're actually attacking the root of the problem, which essentially is boiling whatever it is you're putting down, to the mindset work that will actually unlock your resistance and quiet all of your excuses, even if they're justified reasons why you're not doing something.

Once we can quiet those and take the focus off of those and really negate those, then you can move forward with confidence, maybe even an excitement that this time can be different because it actually can. Okay?

THREE QUICK WIN STRATEGIES

So with this new mindset, we're ready to move forward with three quick win strategies that you can use to finally take action.

So when it comes to procrastination, I think it's really essential to realize that what

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you're doing isn't working right. You've been trying to do whatever it is and you've just not been taking the action that you want to take. So come along with me today and let's try something totally different.

BACKWARD THINKING

And that's what these strategies are. They are what I call backward thinking. This is the way that I call it in my ongoing coaching program, Accomplished Lifestyle. Okay? So basically, backwards thinking is creating a plan of attack. In this case, taking action by approaching through what I consider to be the back door.

So in the case of taking action, this means that rather than using strategies that really essentially try to willpower you into taking the action, let's give ourselves permission not to try. Essentially, do you see how this is the backwards part? We're trying to willpower ourselves into it, but I'm suggesting that let's not even try to do it, and I'll share with you what I mean.

STRATEGY NUMBER ONE: SNEAK UP

So strategy number one is what I mean first, okay? So strategy number one is this. Use the sneak up approach. So most likely, whatever it is you're trying to do, you've been planning a time that you're going to do it. You might plan it when you do some sort of monthly planning, some sort of weekly planning, some sort of daily planning.

You say essentially to yourself, this week is the week. And you're looking at your week and you're saying, all right, I'm going to do this on Tuesday. It looks like I've got some time on Tuesday. So then Tuesday rolls around and you're looking at your plans and you say, all right, I'm going to work on this this afternoon while the kids are taking a nap. Okay, so you are planning when you're going to do this thing. Okay?

So the sneak up approach says rather than plan a certain day or time this week that you'll work on something, make an agreement with yourself that you'll just start working on whatever it is one of the times you walk past that area or think about that area with no forethought at all.

NO EXPECTATIONS

You have not given yourself any expectations. You've not told yourself how long you're going to work on it. You've not nailed down when you're going to work on it. You are just essentially saying, I see you over there, that thing you want to take care of. I acknowledge that you're here and I'm going to get to you at some point.

It is unplanning, this thing. It is unplanning, taking action on this thing. That's what I consider the sneak up approach. You just know that at some point you're going to start.

THE HORRIBLE CLOSET

So let me give you an example of a time that I used this so recently, my master bedroom closet. Let me just say this. It's kind of a catch all for things, right? Because it's in my bedroom. It's totally off the beaten path in our home. It really only affects me when things get put there. And so that is a place where things get put.

So also something to note, I live in the north. I live in Michigan. And so we live where there are four seasons. And so anytime we have seasons that change, right, we move from colder to warmer or

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warmer to colder. And by the way, I should also mention that I actually have nine kids. I also am a Gigi to one, but I have nine kids.

So you can imagine when we move from one season to another, it really is quite a big ordeal to get everybody's clothing switched around for the appropriate season. And so it is something that with this many people living here and of course, many of them are kids, and so they're also growing. And so what they're wearing now may or may not fit them the next season. And what we have tucked away from the previous season may or may not fit them now because again, they've been doing some growing.

And so there is a lot of different pieces that make up the project of switching out seasonal clothing. And so because it is quite a big ordeal, while we're in the middle of that, my master bedroom closet is kind of where the holding place is for all of the clothing that we're switching out, figuring out is it going to be something that fits next season, is it not going to be something that fits next season, what actually fits this season. My closet is just kind of the place where all of the boxes, bins, or baskets line up while we are in this process.

And so, of course, in my master bedroom closet are also my clothes. And so when all of these baskets and boxes and bins get lined up in my closet and just kind of put there, my closet becomes very overwhelming to me. And trying to get to my own clothing can be quite a challenge.

TOO BIG, SO PUT IT OFF?

And what I know to be true for myself, and maybe you too, is that when projects feel pretty big and when a space that I need to take care of feels pretty overwhelming, that tends to be something that I will push off because it feels like such a big thing.

And I know it's going to cost me time and it really just is something that's not appealing to me at all. It is a task I don't enjoy. And so for that reason, my closet was just kind of sitting there and sitting there and sitting there, and I wasn't ever . . . it took me a long time. Day after day after day, the stuff just kept sitting there for me to start working with.

And it was something that I planned. This is going to be the week that I actually go through and sort that stuff and get it into the bins and get it put away. This is going to be the week. This is going to be the day. That's how I tried to attack the problem. And like I already illustrated, it just wasn't getting done.

PERMISSION NOT TO DO IT

And so I decided, you know what, I'm just going to tell myself I don't have to do it. And that's really what I mean by unplanning it. I said, you know what I'm planning? I keep planning a time where I'm going to work on it, but I'm not. So you know what? You just don't have to work on it. And that's literally what I told myself.

But I knew in the back of my mind that I was to a point where I needed to take care of it. And my own frustration with trying to get to my clothes was enough to motivate me to do it. I just needed to take those other expectations and requirements off of myself to kind of free myself up, kind of lift the weight off myself enough where I was actually willing to do it.

And so one day, again, you don't have to take care of your closet. Just let it sit there. That's the conversation I had with myself. And I was walking from my bathroom to get

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out of my bedroom to my main living area. But my closet is the go between, right? So I go from bathroom to closet to bedroom to out my door. And I was coming from my bathroom and I walked literally past my closet. I saw it out of the left hand side of my face, my left eye. I saw it, this big mess of a closet.

NOT AS BAD AS YOU THOUGHT

And I got to my bedroom and I stopped and I thought, you know what? I'm just going to start. And I literally backed up the bus and I went into my closet and I just started working. I didn't think about it. I didn't again, put any expectations for how long I just went in there and I just started working with what made sense to me in that moment to do. And you know what? It actually wasn't that bad.

Raise your hand if you've ever had that, right? You're putting off a task and you put it off and you put it off and you're building it up to be this big gargantuan thing that is just going to be so awful. And then once you actually start working on it, you're like, what was so bad about that? Why did I make such a big deal about that? Why did I take so long to get started on it? It's really not that bad.

MOTIVATED TO FINISH

That's where I found myself. And you know what? I just kept working and working. And when I didn't feel like working any longer, I just walked back out. But you know what? Because I had started the task, I then actually became excited to come back and finish it because I already started to see how much easier it was going to be for me to actually be able to get to my own clothes without tripping all over everybody else's boxes and bins.

So you know what? Within a few days, I actually had that big gargantuan task that I kept procrastinating on day after day, week after week, I finally had it done and it was all because I gave myself permission not to do it. And that is what the sneak up approach is all about. And that's strategy number one.

STRATEGY NUMBER TWO: TIME BURST

So let's dive into strategy number two. Strategy number two is what I call the time burst strategy. And if you've been through my Accomplished Academy or are In Accomplished Lifestyle with me, this is one that you know all about as well.

So basically the way the time burst strategy works is that rather than breaking something down into steps or milestones, you're just going to work on whatever it is for a set amount of time. For most of us, ten or fifteen minutes is about all we can manage before we're interrupted, before we need to start doing something else, like make a meal, or drive someone somewhere or check on something else, or getting distracted, or bored ourselves.

Because let's be honest and say that there are plenty of times where we're working on something and we are the ones who just kind of let ourselves stray. We just kind of say, oh, you know, just going to scroll here for a minute, I just need a break, right? And we scroll and scroll and scroll and minute after minute after minute goes by.

This is why I suggest a time burst strategy. Thinking of a container of time that is no more than ten or fifteen minutes because in reality I am all about keeping things real and working on something for thirty minutes or more just really isn't all that appealing to me. And when that's a requirement, it tends

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to be something that I push off.

So if I only ask fifteen minutes of myself, when I'm successful, at the end of that fifteen minutes, I feel things like accomplished. I feel proud of my work, like I actually did something right for a change. And often then when I get to the end of that fifteen minutes, I'm actually eager to just keep working again since getting started is often the biggest sticking point.

THE STORAGE CLOSET

So let me give you an example of this as well. So my storage room in the basement, it's kind of the place where we store a lot of things. We store things like our luggage. We store things like out of season decorations. We store things like kitchen things we use in our kitchen that are too big to actually keep in our kitchen, like a huge stockpot and a bread maker, a punch bowl, all that kind of stuff.

So there's a lot of different stuff. And what happened is people had been looking for things and we'd been getting stuff in and out of that area and things were just kind of all over the place and it needed to actually just be reorganized.

We had taken some things out that weren't going to be coming back. We had gotten some new things that needed to come in there. And so it really just needed to be reorganized. And this time burst strategy, again, when I thought about when I stood there in the doorway of my storage room and I thought, where in the world am I going to start? What makes sense to start with first? What are the steps I should take? It really felt overwhelming to me, which is why I switched to this time burst strategy where I assigned myself 20 minutes to go in there and just work.

DON'T KNOW WHERE TO START?

And again, I found that strategy much more freeing than trying to figure out where to start. Because so often we don't know where to start, what does make the most sense. And in reality, there's a lot of times where it really doesn't matter where we start, but we try to convince ourselves and we try to come up with a game plan.

And trying to develop the game plan just takes so much brain power, and there's, like, so much brain fatigue and decision fatigue that's associated with that, by the way. That's a real thing. Brain fatigue, decision fatigue. It becomes such a thing, and it drains so much out of us that then when it comes time to actually taking any action in the storage room, I'm all tapped out.

So that's where using the time burst strategy on that particular project, that again, I had been procrastinating, every time I walked past it, it's like, oh, that area I need to take care of that, right? And so once I just said, you know what? 20 minutes, just go in there and work for 20 minutes. That's how you're going to attack this problem today.

HOW OUR SCHEDULES REALLY WORK

Suddenly it felt okay. And the timer strategy is especially helpful when in this case, again, I really had no idea how long any one of these things were going to take. So for instance, if I had said, I'm just going to reorganize this bank of shelves right here until I got in there and started working, I knew I really had no idea, is that going to take me 20 minutes? Is it going to take me 2 hours?

And so if I had really tried to schedule that

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into my day, I wouldn't have known how to do that because I didn't know how big or small the job was. And so that's where a lot of times too, this timer strategy just becomes the more advantageous one to use. Because the way that we plan things into our day isn't really usually in terms of steps. It's in how much time do we have to give it.

And so when you are approaching it and saying, this is how much time I'm going to give it, it makes it much easier to schedule. Because otherwise we just don't know am I going to be able to get this done or not? Well, if it's a pocket of time, like 20 minutes, you know, yes, I have 20 minutes. I'm going to take 20 minutes right now. So that's strategy number two and it's called the time burst strategy.

STRATEGY NUMBER THREE: DOWNSIZE EXPECTATIONS

Strategy number three is this: downsize your expectations. If there ever was a quick win for chronic procrastinators, this is it. Downsize your expectations.

DONE IS BETTER THAN PERFECT

Basically what we're doing is we're tapping into the philosophy that is not mine, but it has a cool cliché ring to it, which is, done is better than perfect, right? And if you're like me raising your hand saying, you know what, I am kind of a perfectionist, this is going to be one that you want to tap into a lot. Remember that done is better than perfect.

We're kind of looking for average sort of work. So often from the time we're youngest, right, from the times we're very young, we're thinking about school and the goal is to get straight A's or 100%. And we're always shooting for that perfection and that just kind of carries over. And so we kind of put everything that we are doing through that filter of expecting perfection.

But if you live in the real world with me, you probably know that's not possible. So if we go into something downsizing your expectations, not looking for perfection, but looking for average, the reality is you can always do things more perfectly later, right?

But when procrastination is a problem with getting something done, make these types of shifts that are going to downsize your expectations.

BRING THE GOAL CLOSER

Example one. Make the end target or the end goal or what the completed project looks like. Make that goal closer, right? Make it not quite so done. So bring the end goal closer to you. That's one way that you can downsize your expectations.

REDUCE THE STEPS

Another way that you can downsize your expectations is to reduce the number of steps. And I'll give you an example in a minute so this will make really good sense. But you can reduce the amount of steps. Instead of making it quite so detailed, you can paint with a broader brush and actually get to that end goal line that way.

CHANGE THE TIMELINE

A third way that you can downsize your expectations is to change the timeline of when you'll get it done. So instead of saying I'll get this done by the end of tomorrow or I'll get this done by the end of the week, you

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might say something like, I'll give myself a couple of weeks to do this. As long as I get this done within a couple of weeks or by this end date, that's my goal. So that's another way that you can downsize your expectations.

Or really you can combine any one of those three ways. You could combine all of them if you would like. But downsizing your expectations means you're changing the overall size and scope and your expectations for completion. Okay?

THE CASE OF THE BINS

So for example, let me give you another example that relates to those close . . . because again, I'm right in that situation right now. Normally how I like to do this job is I like to, I have all of the bins, right, with many, many kids. We have lots of bins of clothes that are like too small for one person and waiting for the next one. And so normally when I swap out these clothes, I like to pull everything out of the bin and reorganize all of the bins, right?

Because I'm taking some clothes out and I'm also wanting to put some clothes in. And that inevitably means that maybe, for instance, if I'm hauling 5T clothes out for my daughter, that bin is now going to be empty, but it's going to actually have 4T stuff that needs to go in it.

So do I already have some 4T stuff when I pull her stuff out of the closet that's 4T? Possibly. So in this way it's kind of to do the job the right way, or the way that I like to do it, it requires all of that rearranging and reincorporating of new stuff.

Now based on that example, you can also probably deduce that that is a pretty big undertaking. There is a lot of time investment, there's a lot of rearranging and then rearranging again when you find more clothes. So it is just a really big deal.

JUST GETTING IT DONE

But remember, here I am where I'm really frustrated with my closet and having to step around and step through all of these bins to get to my own clothes. And so I can also choose to, and have chosen to, downsize my expectations, which means in the perfect world, under the perfect scenario, I would do all that rearranging and relabeling and all of that stuff.

But you know, what done is better than perfect. I can always change it later. And so what I actually did was I went out and I bought some more storage bins. And so the clothes that I'm needing to put in storage bin, like the 4T ones, in my example, I have now two bins of 4T stuff and that's okay, they're each probably only half full and yes, they could be combined together and I can always choose to do that later.

But for now I've been able to get new bins, I've been able to move everything out of my closet into these bins. And later, should I get more time, I can go ahead and do the job right at that point. But for now, I've downsized my expectations. I've changed the goal and I've changed the steps I'm taking to get there. Because done is better than perfect.

RECAPPING THE STRATEGIES

So strategy number one, just to review, is using that sneak up approach. Don't plan it. Don't plan when you're going to take care of this project or task. Just know that it's there, acknowledge it, give it a little nod. And sometime when you walk past it or it pops into your mind that oh, I need to do

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that, you go right then and there and you just start. Because again, a lot of times that starting is the biggest barrier.

Strategy number two is the time burst strategy. So rather than thinking about the steps you might take or where to start, or mapping out a whole game plan for how to get something done, you're not going to worry about any of that. You are simply going to give yourself a pocket of time, a time container or a time block of a set amount of time that you are going to go and start working on that project. You're not going to think about where you're going to start. You're not going to think about where you're going to end. You're only thinking about that plan of time, that amount of time that you're going to be working on it.

And by the way, it works really great to have a timer when you're working with this and maybe some tunes or listening to an audiobook or something like that. That just helps you move right along.

Strategy number three is to downsize your expectations. And again, remember, we can do that in one of three ways. We can change the end target or goal by making it closer, making you get to the end goal, or complete the project sooner. You can reduce the amount of steps I kind of did that as well. Or you can change the timeline of when the due date is for you to actually finish the project.

QUICK WIN ASSIGNMENT

So those are the three strategies I had for you today. Now here's your quick win assignment from me. Your quick win assignment right now is to think about something you've been procrastinating with. Choose one of these three strategies that you are going to commit to by the end of the day tomorrow to apply that strategy to. That's your assignment from me.

Again, my name is Jennifer Roskamp. Thank you so much for joining me here today. If you like quick win strategies like these, make sure to come check out where you can join me every single day in my ongoing coaching program called Accomplish Lifestyle. You can find out more information on that at www.accomplishedlifestyle.com. We'd love to see you there.

Until next time, make it a great day.

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How to Immediately Let Go of Your Clutter-Induced Shame

JES MARCY • TRANSCRIPT

Hello. My name is Jess Marcy. I am a clutter coach and the creator of Clutter Boss Academy. And this is how to immediately let go of your clutter induced shame, because all of that clutter, it turns out, actually it's not your fault.

Before I dive into my presentation, I want to share a little bit about myself. So I started as a clutter coach. Originally, I was a professional organizer working in people's homes, kind of very traditionally one on one. And what I noticed immediately is that I did not have the full skill set that I needed to help my clients tackle their clutter.

MORE THAN JUST THE STUFF

Clutter is about so much more than just the stuff. It's about the emotions connected to the stuff. It's about finances. It's about relationships. It's about so much more than just the actual stuff.

Over the years, I have shifted from working with clients in their homes to building programs designed to give my clients access to a wide breadth of resources that they need to complete their decluttering journey. Well, I guess to get started and move forward on their decluttering journey, because it's never really over, but we're always just looking for lots and lots of dramatic improvements.

HOW IT ALL STARTS

So I am the creator of Clutter Boss Academy, an online Facebook-based program that gives clients access to all different types of coaches and community support and teaches actual skills to help you declutter, get organized, and most importantly, stay that way forever.

But it all starts with letting go of any shame that you have about your clutter or around your clutter. There is a lot of shame and embarrassment that comes with clutter. It creates isolation and has a whole bunch of other social impacts.

So right off the bat, I like to start by talking about why clutter is not really your fault, how you can release that shame and start to move forward. So without further ado, here is today's presentation. How to immediately let go of your clutter induced shame. All of that clutter? Actually, it's not your fault.

THE CONSUMPTION TRIFECTA

When we think about clutter, the reasons that we have clutter, I like to call this the consumption trifecta. So there's three really important elements that make up the consumption trifecta, and they are the base, like the foundation of why we have clutter.

The first one is human nature. It's our human nature to collect resources, plus advertising and then ease of access. And I will go into detail about all of these.

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#1- HUMAN NATURE

Human nature. According to Derek Gonder in the Journal of Sustainability Science, early human societies had primitive and inefficient ways of collecting resources. So those that thrived were these societies that developed high rates of consumption and new innovations for resource gathering. So I want you to take that word resource and replace it with clutter, because what is clutter except for the collection of many resources?

We have clutter because we might need a resource for something in the future. We might need this very specific resource to get through whatever hardship we're facing, no matter how big or how small or how significant or how insignificant clutter is resources.

So early human societies had primitive and inefficient ways of collecting resources. They had a hard time collecting a lot of stuff. The ones that thrived were the ones that developed high rates of consumption. Those societies that could consume their resources could gather and use what they had. And new innovations for resource gathering, like farming, for example. It's an innovation for resource gathering. The ability to grow your food in one spot without having to move beyond the go constantly to obtain your food.

So this is really critical and important when we talk about letting go of the shame that you have around your clutter. At the end of the day, collecting resources, having clutter, it is part of our human nature. Not only is it part of our human nature, but it's the thing that has gotten us to where we are today. So when we are tackling clutter, we are really tackling something that is innately part of us.

If you look at this pantry from about 100 years ago, you would think to yourself, wow, this family's got it all together. They have collected a lot of resources to get through the next season. If you look at a modern day pantry, you think, these people have a lot of stuff, they have a lot of resources, they're humans. This is human nature, right? This is how it goes. But judgment. You might have judgment around this picture, less judgment around this picture, but really we're looking at the same thing.

#2 – ADVERTISING

What has changed is that we live in a society where we have advertising just in our faces all the time. Whether we realize it or not, we are advertised to nonstop. And the third part of the human trifecta is ease of access. We've removed all barriers to things coming in.

So the first part of the consumption trifecta is human nature. Why we have clutter because we're humans, we collect resources. And the second part is advertising.

So let's just talk about advertising for a minute. Advertising tends to be aggressive and fear based. It points out a problem that you never knew you had, makes you feel bad for having it, and then sells you a solution. And this happens in a split second.

You don't even necessarily realize that you're being advertised to or being made to feel this way, but you definitely feel like you should purchase a solution. The end result of this twisted process is a lower quality of life, more time spent working, horrific environmental damage due to overconsumption.

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HOW MANY?!

When I talk about advertising, I cannot overstate how significant this is when we are talking about clutter. On average, the average American sees 4000 to 10,000 advertisements every single day. Every single day. I thought that this could not possibly be true. There is no way that we're seeing 10,000 advertisements today. Well, not me anyway.

So I started counting how many advertisements I was seeing in a single day. And guess what? This number is spot on. If not, or this range of numbers, it might even be a little on the low side. Scrolling through my Facebook feed in just 1 minute I saw 21 advertisements. 21 in one single minute. That includes Marketplace advertisements on the sidebar, advertisements in my story, sponsored ads. Advertisements and ads are just absolutely everywhere. And that means that 4000 to 10,000 times per day we have to overcome this instinctual urge here's the page, this instinctual urge to collect resources 10,000 times a day.

IT'S SNEAKY

We need to make that decision that we are not going to collect any more resources. We're not going to bring anything else into our homes because we don't need it. But it's really difficult because advertising is so aggressive, it's so insidious, we don't even recognize it when it happens. There's product placements. There are people on social media who are influencing us. They're influencers who are influencing us to buy something because they like something.

I mean, I have fallen victim to this on several occasions and I am on the lookout for it. It's very, very difficult to battle this 10,000 decisions a day that we have to make to not bring something in.

ORGANIZED OR CLUTTERED?

And of course the organizing industry is part of the problem, not part of the solution. Selling us this idea that the secret to getting organized is to create more storage. Like what can you do with a case of our shoeboxes? Store more stuff. Store more stuff.

The reality is when we are trying to get organized in our homes, bringing more stuff in makes absolutely no sense because it's just increasing the overall volume of what we have in our houses. So if you bought a case of 20 clear shoeboxes you would be bringing in 40 individual items, boxes and lids into your home. And in the future you need to decide what to do with these 40 individual items.

What if they break? What if they're cracked? What if you can't find the top or the bottom? You're increasing the overall volume of stuff in your house. This is part of the problem, not part of the solution, as we are being sold that it is part of the solution. It is not. The Container Store, where space comes from. Pushing the limits of what one closet can hold. Why would we want to push the limits of what one closet can hold? That certainly is not a solution. Going into your closet and barely being able to open it or walk into it or see what's there is the problem.

So if we push that limit and cram even more in there we are not addressing the problem, we're adding to the problem. So advertising is a huge issue because we are being sold the wrong solution. And 10,000 times a day we have to decide not to bring more stuff into our homes, not to collect more resources. And we're humans, so

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we really love to collect resources. It's an evolutionary advantage, right?

#3 – EASE OF ACCESS

The third part of the consumption trifecta is what I call ease of access. And basically, we have removed every single barrier that has ever existed to things coming into our homes. So at this moment in modern history, we have an unprecedented ability to accumulate a tremendous amount of physical objects in our homes rapidly and inexpensively.

I'm just going to say this one more time because remember human nature, collect as many resources as possible so that we can thrive. Not just survive thrive, but what's changed? We're advertised to all the time and we have removed all barriers to things coming in. So at this moment in modern history, we have an unprecedented ability to accumulate a tremendous amount of physical objects in our homes rapidly and inexpensively.

We do not need credit cards to purchase things. We do not even need to be awake to purchase things. So parasomniatic shopping, shopping in your sleep is a recognized sleep disorder. In 2023, how many times have you just in the middle of the night, you have your phone next to you because you need to see the clock or somebody might call or whatever the reason is and you roll over half asleep. Scroll your feed. Scroll Amazon. Purchase something because you didn't need cash, you didn't need transportation, you didn't need to be awake. And then packages show up on your doorsteps. You don't even know what is in them. We have removed all barriers to things coming into our homes.

CHANGE YOUR THINKING

And really, when we think about clutter, I really want you to just kind of change the way that you're thinking about it, because clutter is truly an evolutionary advantage. That is no longer advantageous. It's no longer advantageous.

It is causing us shame, embarrassment. It is stealing our time, it is taking our money. And it really is just a matter of learning how to live in this world of container shipping and hundreds of thousands of containers coming across, crisscrossing the oceans every day, bringing us all of these resources to our doorstep without us even having to think twice about it.

PREDICTING YOUR PURCHASE

It's interesting actually, because advertisers now use something called predictive advertising. So they know your past purchase history, they know how much money you're likely to spend, and they can, using algorithms, predict what you're going to purchase next based on all of these factors that they know about you.

So it's almost like before you know what you want next, advertisers know what you want next. I mean, all of this really contributes to the consumption trifecta, the reason that we have so much clutter in our homes.

RELEASE YOUR JUDGMENT

I invite you right now to release judgment that you might have towards yourself or towards others shame that you might feel about your clutter embarrassment about the condition of your house. It is truly not your fault. It is not your fault. You are just a human trying to survive and thrive in a world that has changed completely.

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So let go of that embarrassment. Let go of that shame. And I would encourage you to take the next step now. Let go of the shame and learn the skills that you need to declutter, to organize, and skills that are bigger than just what to do, skills and mindset shifts that get to the why. Why are we collecting so much stuff?

REACHING JES

Get the support that you need and think about clutter like any other ailment that we struggle with in life. If you're depressed, you go to a therapist. If you need help with your clutter, hire a clutter coach. There is no shame in improving your situation in life.

I hope that if you have any questions, you please reach out to me. You can message me at jess@prioritizeyoursanity.com. I probably should have had a slide for that, but I don't. It's Jess with one s, jes@prioritizeyoursanity.com. I would be happy to talk to you about your clutter, help you further release any shame or embarrassment that you have around your clutter, and talk about really actionable steps to start to move forward.

Thank you so much for joining me for this presentation. And good luck on your journey.

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Make Dinner Easier With Freezer Cooking

JESSICA LITWIN • TRANSCRIPT

Hi. I'm so excited to be spending time with you today at the Get Organized HQ Virtual Summit. My name is Jessica and I'm the founder of This Happy Mommy, which helps busy families get dinner on the table quicker and easier. I'm also the creator of Meals in Minutes and Meal Planning Academy, which gives families a roadmap to turn those overwhelmed, difficult nights into making stress free and delicious dinners. So if we're meeting for the first time today hello. I am really happy to meet you.

LET'S GET REAL

But before we get started, let's be real for a second. Life can get really, really busy. Between work, school, extracurricular activities, and all of life's to-dos, making dinner can feel like the last thing you want to do. But the truth is, those people in your house, your kids, your partner, and anyone else in your home needs to eat. And they need to eat each and every day. And not just once a day, but many, many times a day.

Some days it can feel like feeding your family is a full time job and there is a constant open for business sign flashing in your kitchen. Do you ever feel like that? And if your kids want different meals, it can feel like you're a short order cook, catering special meals to each and every person in your home. Or you can feel like someone who spends more time rushing around the kitchen than actually sitting down and eating it. And that's never something we want to be.

YOU DESERVE BETTER

Honestly, dinner really shouldn't have to be so hard. You deserve to enjoy this special and wonderful time with your family. You deserve to sit down and relax with your family and enjoy a delicious meal. This is the time you can truly connect with your loved ones, when those electronics are actually put away or hopefully put away.

And you can connect and talk about your day and actually hear what's going on. So what's happening with your kids, your partner, or anyone else in your home? When I sit down with my family, I like to ask them what's one thing that made them laugh today? Or maybe something that made them happy today? Something that they really enjoyed that they did. And this is also a time when I can find out about the things that maybe weren't so great that happened today. Maybe the things that made them sad or hurt or were difficult or challenging.

THOSE SPECIAL MOMENTS

These are the moments that I can actually talk to them and really hear what's going on. Dinner time is so much more than just the food. Don't get me wrong, I love the food. But when you're sitting down with your family, those people that you love, it's the time that you can really connect with them. And that makes all the difference.

When dinner is easy and it doesn't feel like another job just to get dinner on the table

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and actually have something your family will eat, it gives you a chance to talk to them where you can actually hear each other without all those distractions that can happen throughout the day. Dinner is really that special and wonderful time during the day. Some days it feels like dinner is really the only time when everything stops and everyone is truly together and you can really just be with your family.

A LITTLE SECRET

But what if it feels like you're always rushing around trying to make this person one meal, that person another meal? Or you're rushing out the door just to grab takeout or a prepared meal? This relaxing dinner time can feel next to impossible. As a mom of two young girls, I know how busy life can be. That's why I want to share a little secret to making dinner easier. A true shortcut for getting dinner on the table fast. Like really fast. And that's freezer cooking. Okay?

If you've never done freezer cooking before, or maybe you've never even heard of it, I want you to know it's super beginner friendly and it can work for anyone and any schedule. And if you've never heard about freezer cooking before, give me a chance here. Let me explain. You're going to love how easy it can be.

WHAT IS FREEZER COOKING?

Freezer cooking is simply preparing meals ahead of time that you can freeze and cook later. There is no precooking, which makes these recipes super easy to make. Like really easy to make. You're just simply combining ingredients in a plastic freezer bag or disposable tin pan and then you're freezing them for one to six months.

Yes, that's it. It's really that simple. And then when you're going to make the meals and you're ready to actually cook them, all you need to do is simply defrost them in the fridge overnight and follow the recipe to bake it in the oven. So you just set the timer, you hear the little ding and dinner is done.

A BIG TIMESAVER

Freezer cooking is the perfect option for those busy weeknight dinners because everything's already prepared and waiting for you. Plus, since everything is cooking for the first time, it tastes fresh and delicious. Like really, really delicious. So on those busy weekday nights after a long day of work, rushing around, taking the kids to after school programs, or spending hours outside enjoying the sun, when takeout seems like the only option, there is an easier way and that's freezer cooking.

So instead of spending your precious time in the takeout line, you can spend that really wonderful time around the kitchen table. And if you want to save time in the kitchen and serve super easy and delicious meals, now is the perfect time to start freezer cooking.

And if you don't know what you're making for dinner tonight, you're in luck. Because we're going to make dinner together today when I show you how to prepare a super easy freezer chicken meal. And it's so good.

READY MADE RECIPES

Plus, I've also created a package of recipes just for you. It's called Easy Freezer Meals. You'll find the link in the download section of the page where you're watching this video. Now, Easy Freezer Meals includes the recipe that we'll be making together today, Tuscan, chicken, plus a grocery shopping

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list and freezer labels. And it also includes two other super easy recipes. So you can easily make six nights' worth of dinners in no time.

And once your meals are prepared, you can enjoy them anytime. You deserve this. You deserve this time. So now you don't need to worry about rushing home to make dinner. It's ready and waiting for you. All you need to do is bake it in the oven. How easy is that? Oh, my goodness. You are going to see how easy these freezer meals are to prepare. They just come together so quickly and easily. It just takes a few minutes.

BULK PREP

Now, when it comes to freezer cooking, there's really just two ways of approaching it. Now, the first way is probably the one that you're most familiar with. You can either bulk prepare meals over the weekend where you set aside some time to make a handful of meals. Now, in these big prep moments, you can prepare so many meals in the Easy Freezer Meals package that you can download today, I'll show you how you can prepare six days' worth of dinners in less than 30 minutes. It's truly amazing.

There's no precooking. You're simply preparing and assembling the meals so you don't actually have to worry about cooking anything ahead of time. When you're doing freezer cooking, you're really cooking it the first time after it's defrosted.

COOK ONE, FREEZE ONE

So here's the thing. If preparing over the weekend really isn't for you, there is another way to approach freezer cooking. And if you're new to freezer cooking, this is the place that I would recommend that you start. And it's what I'm going to show you today. You can prepare a freezer meal any day of the week, and you don't need to set aside any special time to do it. When you're preparing a freezer recipe like the ones that you can download today in the Easy Freezer Meals package, you're actually preparing two meals and it hardly takes any more time to do it.

With these recipes, you're making two nights worth of dinners, so you can cook one now and freeze the other one for later, or you can simply freeze both of them. It hardly takes any more time to prepare these two dinners. And now you've made one other night so much easier for yourself. Or if you are preparing a lot of meals, you're making more nights easy for yourself. And you can enjoy these freezer meals next week, next month, or even in a couple of months. Freezer cooking is really one of the best secrets to serving easy, homemade meals on your busy, busy nights.

BENEFITS OF FREEZER COOKING

Now, before we start to make the freezer meals, I want to talk to you about some of the benefits of freezer cooking. So the biggest, the number one benefit of freezer cooking is that it can save you time. A lot of time. And I mean a lot of time. There's no rushing around at 5:00, wondering what to make for dinner, looking through the fridge or checking for recipes on Google or Pinterest or wherever. You keep your recipes, hoping that you'll find something that includes ingredients you already have. And that last minute rushing around can be so stressful and time consuming.

SAVING TIME

But with a little prep and organizing ahead of time, you can avoid all that last minute

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stress, all that running around just to get something on the table. You can actually relax because dinner is already prepared and it's just waiting for you to cook. How amazing is that?

Plus, since these meals are already prepared, there's less cleanup. So if cleanup isn't one of your strengths and you really don't get any joy or any satisfaction from cleaning up your kitchen, you will love the fact that with this type of freezer cooking, when you're actually cooking your meals, there is hardly any cleanup and it's so easy to do. Talk about a huge time saver.

SAVING MONEY

So that was benefit number one. Freezer cooking can save you time, a lot of time. So now we're going to get into benefit number two and that's that freezer cooking can save you money. And I know the cost of groceries has gone up a lot. We're all feeling it, we're all seeing it. And finding ways to save money on groceries is huge. Freezer cooking is the perfect smart way to save. When you're freezer cooking, you can take advantage of bulk buying in stores.

Now you don't need to be a member of anywhere like Costco or any of those other bulk buy stores. You can really take advantage of it at so many different grocery stores. So what you're doing is you can find family size item or bulk buy packages of chicken breasts and marinade your way to a handful of dinners that are ready and waiting for you. And you don't need a big family to do this. Freezer cooking can work for families of any size and help you slash those grocery bills and save money while making tasty meals that your family will love.

I'm telling you, my family absolutely loves them. These meals are so tasty. They don't taste like leftovers, they don't taste like yesterday's dinner. Since you're cooking everything for the first time when you're making it, it really tastes fresh and delicious. So that was benefit number two. Freezer cooking can save you money.

HEALTHIER EATING

Now let's talk about benefit number three. Freezer cooking is a convenient food that's actually healthier. So instead of relying on fast food takeout or prepared meals, which can also make your food bills really add up, when you're making freezer meals, you can have complete control over your dinner. You can use healthy ingredients. And if you need to, you can even adjust the levels of salt or sugar, making meals that are not only quick and easy, but are also healthy. Freezer cooking is truly a healthy, convenient meal.

Once again, let's go over what the three main benefits are of freezer cooking. Number one was that freezer cooking can save you time. Number two, freezer cooking can save you money because you can take advantage of all that bulk buying at the grocery store. And number three is that it's a healthier, convenient food.

10 TIPS TO GETTING STARTED

All right, if you're thinking, okay, I'm in. I'm ready to start freezer cooking, but I have no idea where to begin. I'm here to help you. Now that you know the main benefits, let's talk about how to get started. And I really want you to know it is so much easier than you think. It really doesn't have to be difficult or complicated. And I have ten simple tips for you.

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1. CLEAN OUT THE FREEZER

Tip number one is to clean out the freezer. So before you start freezer cooking, you want to make sure that there's room in your freezer. For the most part, as long as your fridge and freezer is a little bit organized, you'll have plenty of room to store your meals.

2. NO GIANT FREEZER NECESSARY

Tip number two you don't need a giant freezer, deep freezer, or special freezer. A regular fridge freezer combo works perfectly. And if you're new to freezer cooking, start small. You don't need to try a week full of freezer cooking right away. Only do what works for you and your schedule. Even trying one or two freezer recipes this week where you eat one now and freeze the other for later is perfect.

3. MAINTAIN THE PERFECT TEMPERATURE

Tip number three your freezer should always be at zero degrees Fahrenheit, which is negative 18 degrees Celsius or below. Now you'll want to check these temperatures every so often to make sure that it's cold enough and that all of your meals will be delicious. And one little tip is a full freezer saves you energy, so keep it full. But just make sure there's plenty of room for all that airflow, so don't overstaff it.

4. GOTTA HAVE A PLAN

Tip number four plan, plan, plan. Planning is the key to freezer cooking. Whether you're batch preparing on the weekend or preparing a single freezer recipe on a weeknight, having a plan is important. Now, if you prefer batch preparing, you may find that you enjoy planning your meals on a Friday night, and on Saturday, you can go food shopping, and Sunday you can prepare your meals. Or of course, like we already said, you can prepare one meal anytime during the week.

5. DON'T OVERDO IT

Tip number five don't overdo it. Don't grocery shop and prepare a bunch of freezer meals in the same day. You'll enjoy the process so much more if you aren't worn out from shopping before you even start preparing your meals.

6. PACK IT RIGHT

Tip number six use the right containers. You don't want to be stuck with a lot of prepared food and nowhere to put it, so always check your freezer storage supplies before preparing your meals. For easy cleanup, you can use freezer bags for most meals. And for casserole dishes, you can use disposable foil pans.

7. SUCK OUT THE AIR

Tip number seven remove as much air as possible for a freezer bag. First, you'll want to flatten the contents. Close the zipper about 80% of the way before closing it. The rest just to make sure that there is hardly any air around it. This will keep your meal tasting really fresh and delicious, so that when you cook it, you won't believe that it was even frozen. You'll think that you spent hours cooking it in the kitchen that day.

8. FREEZE IT FLAT

Tip number eight freeze your meals flat. If possible, try to freeze your meals flat before

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storing it in your freezer. This just will help you save a lot of space and help you keep it all organized.

9. FRONT AND CENTER

Tip number nine rotate older meals. When you have a freezer full of freezer meals, it can be easy to forget what you have. So when you're adding a new meal, move the oldest ones to the front of the freezer. This way you'll use them first, and when you add a new meal, place them at the back so that they're used after the other meals.

10. SAFETY FIRST

Now, here's our last tip. Tip number ten time to defrost and cook. So some meals can take longer to defrost than others. But most meals defrost in the fridge in 24 hours. Once they're thawed, always cook them to the required internal temperature so that they're safe to eat. But depending on your oven, you may need to cook a little longer than the recommended time to safely enjoy your meal.

LET'S GET COOKING

Now that we know the benefits of freezer cooking, plus the tips to get you started, let's get to the cooking. Today we're going to make Tuscan chicken. And, oh, it is good. One of the best things about Tuscan Chicken is its simplicity.

THE INGREDIENTS

Now you just need a few basic ingredients to create a dish that's bursting with flavor. Simply combine chicken with oil, vinegar, lemon, plus some herbs and spices, and you have a meal that is so delicious. So here we go.

LABEL IT

First thing, when it comes to freezer cooking, you always want to make sure that you label your meals. And if you're downloading the Easy Freezer Meals package, you'll get these labels that you can just put on your freezer bag. But if you don't have any labels, you can always use a sharpie. All right, one more bag to label and we are good to go.

STIR IT UP

We can start to make the sauce. Now, the sauce is really easy to make. The first thing that we need to do is add in our oil. Then we have our red wine vinegar, our lemon juice, garlic powder, onion powder, basil, oregano, red pepper flakes, salt, and some pepper. Now we're going to mix that up to create our sauce. And oh, my goodness. I wish you could smell this. It smells so good.

Okay, now we can add our chicken breasts to our freezer bag, and we're going to add four breasts to each bag. All right, one more bag and you're going to love how easy this is. Really, it's just you see, our sauce is already done. It's ready to go. We are halfway through preparing our meal, and that just took, like, a minute. All right, one last chicken breast to put in our bag. There we go. I like to stand it up if I can. Give the sauce one more little stir.

GETTING SAUCY

Now what we're going to want to do is pour half of the sauce into each one of the bags. Half of the sauce in here, and I can pour the other half in there. I'm going to grab my spoon and get all the last bit of this delicious sauce. Now, this sauce is so good, you could even make some extra and put it on some vegetables. You can even use it

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on a salad. It is such a tasty sauce, and it is super versatile.

Okay, now you're going to close the bag about 80% of the way. And now we're just going to make sure that the sauce completely covers the chicken. We can just set this one aside and do the other one. Make sure your chicken is all covered with the sauce. It looks great. All little bits getting tasty all over. It's going to be so good.

All right, once it's all covered, we just want to make sure that we get rid of as much of air as possible just to keep it tasting super fresh. Okay, you can lie it flat, get the air out. Oh, it looks so good. We're going to lie this one flat, get the air out of this one too, and that's it.

DONE IN MINUTES

Your two freezer meals are prepared, and you can enjoy these delicious meals next week, next month, or even in a couple of months. You just pop them in the freezer, and they're ready and waiting for you whenever you need it.

So there you have it. Freezer cooking is really easy. You can simply prepare two meals in the same time it takes you to prepare one. You can also bulk prepare a bunch of meals and have so many dinners prepared in such a short period of time. Either way you approach it, freezer cooking can save you so much time, it can save you money, and it can help you serve healthier meals to your family. And isn't that exactly what you need this year? Even by adding one freezer meal a week, you are making dinner time easier in your home.

LEARNING MORE

If you want to know more about freezer cooking and how it can be an amazing shortcut to tasty homemade meals, be sure to check out Meals in Minutes. It includes six freezer meal plans and 50 recipes, which can make three months of easy and delicious dinners. When you make freezer cooking a part of your dinner routine, it's amazing to see how much easier busy nights can be.

Just imagine how you would feel if you could have dinner ready in less than 30 minutes every night without ever feeling overwhelmed. If you could get through busy nights with a freezer full of dinners instead of relying on fast food takeout or prepared meals if you could make budget friendly meals that use everyday ingredients simply by changing the way you plan and make dinner. If you could have dinner already made and stop wondering what to make for dinner or worry what to make for dinner. And you can actually relax.

Freezer cooking can help you serve delicious dinners even on your busiest nights and help you take the stress out of dinner time so you can spend more time making memories around the kitchen table instead of in the fast food line. So thank you for joining me today. And if you haven't already downloaded your Easy Freezer Meals package, be sure to grab it today. Bye for now.

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Setting Yourself Up for Success with Your Wardrobe

JESSICA PAPINEAU • TRANSCRIPT

TASHA: Well, please join me in welcoming Jessica. She is the founder and CEO of CSJ, and we are going to be talking about how your wardrobe can help you set yourself up for success. So thank you so much for joining us today, Jessica.

JESSICA: Oh, you're very welcome. I am so happy to be here, Tasha.

THE MISSION OF CSJ

TASHA: Yeah. So can you just tell us a little bit about CSJ, what you do, kind of what you would say your mission with this company is?

JESSICA: I own CSJ. It's an authentic fashion styling company. It's basically a concierge service that I offer clients where I work with them on curating a wardrobe that fully reflects their lifestyle and what season of life they're in and where it is that they're headed in their lives.

CONFIDENCE IN OURSELVES

For women, it's all about our confidence really is tied up in how we perceive ourselves to look, not even necessarily what other people think of us, but what we think and feel about ourselves. Right.

So my whole thing is when you feel amazing about how you look when you walk out the door for the day, no matter what your day is going to bring, if you feel great, you are going to be able to step into your power and truly be the woman that you were born to be. Right? And your true authenticity and gifts to give the world can really shine through, basically.

TASHA: So getting to this point of feeling confident, loving our wardrobe, it can definitely take some pre planning. It's not something we're going to wake up one day and be like, oh, look, everything is fantastic.

PLANNING

So let's start all the way back at the very beginning of this process. Can you talk me through what kind of planning needs to go into this sort of process?

JESSICA: So when I first start working with a client, when they reach out to me, they're typically, like, at this point where they hate all the clothes in their wardrobe. They're feeling stressed, they're feeling overwhelmed.

Whether it's a woman that is a high level professional or she's a stay at home mom, whatever it may be, as women, our time is so important to us.

So she's usually feeling that time crunch, like she never has enough time. And so she's just throwing on whatever is in that simple rotation of what I call good enough outfits. Right?

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WHAT ARE THE GOALS

And so she reaches out and she's like, I need help. And it's usually she's going through some type of a transition, whether that be like she's postpartum or maybe she's starting a new job or maybe she's starting a company.

And so what I do is I use a framework before even going in her wardrobe or in her closet, and I take this time with her to discover her uniqueness and really determine what are her goals.

Where does she see herself in six months or a year, two years and really allow her to give herself permission to go there and think about what she truly wants, and then from there start to formulate what her style is, what type of clothing is going to fit in with the lifestyle that she's aspiring to have. Right.

And then it's really a matter of mindset, like getting the mind right before even walking in the wardrobe. So really having a very clear idea of what the future of what she wants her future to look like. Right?

WORKING WITH THE CLOTHES

And so then at that point, it's a matter of getting actually in there and working with the clothes. And I always say I'm not a closet organizer. However, I do know that going through my formula and through my process, naturally, you are going to become more organized.

Clutter in your closet really is clutter in the mind, right. And you just can't be clear unless it's fully functioning and everything has its place, right?

4-STEP FRAMEWORK

So once we get in the wardrobe, I use another framework with all of my clients. And it's basically a four step framework where we're going in, we're inspecting and assessing. We then edit and eliminate. We categorize and curate, and then we shop strategically

So let me start from the top. So some people obviously do not use me for doing this service. I love to offer a ton of tips and tricks, even for those that are going to be doing it themselves, right?

BRING IN A TRUSTED FRIEND

And when someone does this for themselves, I always say, you know what, bring in a trusted friend. This is critical and key because as women, when we're looking at our clothes or trying our clothes on, we look in the mirror and our eye goes to that one area of our bodies that we don't like.

And what tends to happen is we focus there and we start thinking about how we can hide that area. And then we are not actually seeing what the whole outfit looks like on, right? So that trusted friend, that's really going to be honest and real with you.

INSPECT + ASSESS

So the first part would be inspect and assess is basically what we're looking for is, are the items in your current wardrobe going to be good for this next phase of your life? Right? Is it going to set you up for that success?

EDIT + ELIMINATE

And so we're being very mindful of that in

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the very beginning. Now, as we go through the wardrobe, it's really a matter of doing some editing and eliminating. So I use something called the three F's to determine whether or not an item stays or goes.

DOES IT FIT?

So the first F is fit. Does it fit you? If the item does not fit you, it does not belong in your wardrobe.

So oftentimes this is a tricky one because women have this idea, this has been my experience that if they have jeans in their closet that are two sizes too small, that they are motivating themselves to lose weight.

This is not true. What it's doing is instead of it being a motivation. It's actually making us feel terrible about ourselves. Right? It's body shaming, and we should not be body shaming. We should be focusing on what's working, not what isn't working.

So those pieces, even if you love the jeans or love whatever the piece is and it's too small, even if you're working on losing weight, take those items out of your wardrobe and store them elsewhere if you're not going to get rid of them.

FABRIC

Okay, so number two is fabric. So fabric a lot of people don't realize the importance of fabric. And so over time, fabric breaks down.

So there's definitely some obvious things here, like if your clothes have pills on it or if it was once black and now it's like a grayish color. We know that it's been overwashed and the fabric isn't great, but there definitely are some areas where there's like a gray area.

Like, is the fabric still good or is it not? How do we know? How do we really know? And fabric has shifted and changed and evolved over the course of the last 20 years, even the last I would say even the last five years.

And I'm sure a lot of people realize that fabrics, now, a lot of them are stretchy. So a good part of them have either Lycra or Elastin in the fabric. And so what that does is it creates that stretch. It also helps with lifting and smoothing and doing all kinds of great things.

TESTING FABRIC

But when that fabric breaks down, it's no longer doing its job. So how do you assess whether or not the Elastin or Lycra is working?

So there's a couple of things. One, when you take the item and you go to stretch it, if it crunches, if it's like making this crunchy noise or feel, that means that it's not working anymore.

So it basically over time with washing or putting it in the dryer, that sort of thing, it breaks down that fabric, and then it's not snapping back into place.

So you're pulling it and it's kind of like crunching, and then it almost stays there. Or it goes back a little bit, but not enough.

TESTING JEANS

The other thing that's really important to know, because I know a lot of people love to wear jeans. I'm a jeans and T shirt person.

Jeans right at the area, right at the top of your legs, like, right where your hips are when you look at your jeans before you put them on, if you see some bubbling in that

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area, that's how you determine on the jeans whether or not they are still working for you.

So you may put them on and say, oh yeah, they still fit, or they somewhat look good. They're not going to be as flattering because they're not lifting and smoothing that's fabric.

FASHION

And then fashion, fashion is a tricky one because sometimes we don't know, right? Like, is the item still in fashion?

And what we really want to assess is, are the core pieces in your wardrobe still in fashion? That is one of the biggest things, because when building a wardrobe, you want to make sure that the core pieces that are going to take you season to season are intact. Those are the pieces that you want to make sure are really looking great on the body.

BLAZERS

So, for example, your black blazer. How do you know? Is this black blazer still in fashion? Maybe. The quality of the fabric is great. It still fits you wonderfully. A good way to tell is go and Google what styles and blazers are in fashion right now, and it will tell you right now, anything goes.

Like, I'm wearing a shorter blazer today, but you could still wear a longer blazer. Linen, all kinds of different fabrics. So that's basically how I would go about it.

JEANS

Jeans. Another thing, you want to make sure that you have those core pair of denim. The fit and the fabric is great. They have that great rise to them, so they're hitting you in the right spot, creating a waist and making those types of assessments on all those core items.

OTHER CORE PIECES

T shirts, really big thing. That simple little black dress that you could throw on and accessorize in many different ways to take you from a go to dinner or cocktail to date night.

And so those are very important going into the next phase, which is then really taking a look at what you have to build on to those core pieces, which are like your accessories or what I call fast fashion pieces. Right. And the fast fashion are the ones we really need to pay attention to if they're still in style the next season. Right.

ACCESSORIES

A big thing is with accessories as well, are shoes and belts. Right. So sometimes people don't really take the time to assess, are the shoes still looking good? I mean, they're on our feet, so they're getting lots of wear, and we want to make sure that the leather still looks good.

These are really important things when you're finishing off your outfit. If you have on a great outfit and your shoes are looking bad, it is not going to set you up for success in your future. Right.

Same with your belts. Make sure they are in pristine condition. We really don't need in a wardrobe. We don't necessarily need an abundance of things. We just need the right things. All right.

CATEGORIZE + CURATE

So once you determine what you do have

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that's great and that you can work with, and you've eliminated the pieces that you know are no longer serving you in your lifestyle or where it is that you're going at that point, it's a time to really take note of the things you're going to need in your future.

So say you are stepping into a new position at work, and you're going to need more professional wear, and you realize, okay, I only have one black blazer. I'm going to need more than this.

MAKE A LIST

So at that point, it's a matter of jotting down. I'm probably going to need like maybe it's two suits. Even suits are really big right now. They're a lot more fun than they were in years past.

Maybe it's a linen suit with some great trouser shorts which are big right now. Or a regular ivory suit is such a great classic. And so maybe that's an area where you need, I always say, like your basic blouses, like a great black and an ivory.

NOT EXCITING, BUT CRITICAL

I find when I'm helping when I'm helping my clients, they're like, yeah, that's fine, but it's not very exciting to buy. And these things aren't exciting to buy, but they are critical and key to set you up for success in your wardrobe.

And once you go through and make this list and make sure you don't leave out the accessories, have a great pair of earrings, and maybe even if it's two necklaces that you know you're going to wear every day as a layered look, make note of that. Get rid of the ones that are tarnished and not looking great.

SHOP STRATEGICALLY + CREATE OUTFITS

And then really, once you have your list, it's about shopping strategically for the right pieces, right? And then the next step would be starting to create outfits for yourself. And this is about simplicity because we overcomplicate things, right?

As women, we always want to make it a little harder than it has to be. So it's a matter of taking the core pieces, right? Say it's your dark denim and a white T shirt and then putting the belt with it, putting the shoes with it, putting your handbag. And then maybe you take the black blazer that you're also going to wear with a suit. And that's a whole outfit.

PHOTOGRAPH YOUR OUTFITS

And what I always suggest is lay these pieces out and take a photograph. And this is what I do for my clients, but you certainly can do this on your own and give it a try, right?

So when you're laying in bed at night and you're knowing that you have a presentation, say, the next day, you're not wondering, oh my gosh, I never thought about it. What am I going to wear? Right?

And then laying in bed and stressing about that, you are going to be planned. You're going to have like a whole lookbook of outfits to choose from.

So instead of worrying about your outfit, you can actually be thinking about the presentation and be ready to go with your presentation so you can get up the next morning, put on your outfit, look in the mirror, feel like a million bucks, and step into your power and go and conquer your

day.

TASHA: And I love that idea of taking pictures of your outfits and putting them all into one album where you can just go on your phone or wherever you keep your photos to say, this is my outfit album.

So you're not just scrolling your entire photo roll, but these are the outfits that I've curated that I can look through. So it's really easy to go and find.

HOW TO STRATEGICALLY SHOP

And you mentioned a little bit ago, you mentioned strategic shopping and I was just wondering if you could circle back to that. What do you have? Once you have that list of things, how do you strategically shop?

JESSICA: It's easy to go to a store and get really caught up in all the pretty shiny things. Like you walk into a boutique and you see this beautiful floral blouse and you're like, I need that, right?

And statistically making that type of a purchase, I know this sounds really funny, but it gives you like a 20 minutes high, literally. They've done research on this. Then after that goes away, you take the item home, you hang it in your closet. It has the tag on it, right?

And then you go to wear it like you're going out for dinner or whatever. And you go to put the blouse on and you were like, oh my gosh, I have no idea how to style this outfit. I didn't buy the pants to go with it. I didn't make the right choice. I never had anything in my closet to go with it.

GO BY THE LIST YOU MADE

And so being strategic about the shopping means actually going by that list that you have, making sure that you have those core pieces and really not scrimping on how much you're necessarily spending on each of those items.

And again, I'll go back to less is more. I would rather see someone with three pairs of amazing jeans in their closet then the pile of 25, which is probably about average, if not on the low side of what I see in women's closets.

But those really great pair of jeans, that the fabric is great, they're cut in the right way for your body, that sort of thing.

And this does take strategy to really make sure that you have those right pieces and continuously referring back to the pieces that you need and prioritizing that. So buying those pieces before you go out and buy the shiny, sparkly, pretty floral things, right?

TASHA: Absolutely. I've definitely found that I have a harder time spending money on the things I know I'm going to get more use out of. Because just like you said, it's not as exciting.

You're like, oh well, who's going to be like, everyone look, I got this awesome black shirt today. But yeah, I think in the long term you'll look back and be glad that that's where you put the money.

Like the things that I wear the most often that are higher quality maybe, or just something that I made a purchase. I thought about it longer and it's really something I'm grabbing every day. I don't regret the money I spent on those things because the cost per wear is going lower and lower every week or so.

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MAINTAINING WHAT YOU PUT INTO IT

JESSICA: Part of this whole process is a matter of the maintenance, right? Maintaining what you put into it. Because, yes, it's going to take some time to get your wardrobe set up for your goals and where you're headed and all of that, but once you do, how do you keep that going, right?

And I always tell my clients, and they have me come in, or anyone that's doing it on their own, it's a seasonal thing, right. Really going back in and going back to the formula that I described and doing that very same thing seasonally. And even flipping your wardrobe, right.

If you live somewhere where you have defined seasons. I'm in Sarasota, so I kind of pull my pieces all the time because the seasons don't change that much.

But live up north, maybe you flip your wardrobe in the summer, you take all your winter coats and you're putting them in a different area, right. Maybe all of your winter sweaters, I do say, like, keep some of the lightweight ones, obviously, in there, but always make sure that whatever is in your wardrobe that you will always use and that it has a purpose.

BE FORWARD THINKING

Seasons change, but so do seasons of our life change, right? And as that happens, we want to eliminate what's not serving us any longer, because if you want to keep yourself in the right mindset, you need to be forward thinking. So if there's something in your closet that represents your past, it holds us back from our goals.

And so the other thing that I wanted to mention, Tasha, you had said you always feel good even if you spend a lot on an item, if you love it, right, and you know that it's going to last and it's going to fit well and all of that.

Sometimes what I notice with clients, and I teach them this, right, that if they have a piece, sometimes I'll pull something out of their wardrobe and I'll say, oh, my gosh, this is amazing, and they'll say, I've had that for like, 15 years. I didn't know I could still wear it.

WEARING THINGS IN A DIFFERENT WAY

And sometimes it's a matter of taking that really great piece that you wore a certain way ten years ago and reimagining it and wearing it in a different way.

So actually, blazers are a great example. When I was just talking about creating that outfit with the jeans with the white T shirt and the blazer, oftentimes that blazer maybe ten years ago was worn with a pant that's completely outdated, and now we can use it in a different way. We can use that blazer. So it's great.

TASHA: Yeah, lots of options. Clothing is always changing. But it is interesting how sometimes you can take something and still get good use out of it if you can look at it from a slightly different angle.

So thank you so much for just walking us through this process that you go through. As we start to kind of wrap up here, are there any just, like, last thoughts or tips that you want to leave us with?

FRONT TUCKING TIP

JESSICA: Jeez, I want to give a good one

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here. Let me give I've got a good one. Okay.

So a lot of women do not know the perfect way to do the front tuck with their tops. I put this out there on social media all the time because everyone always wants to know. Then I always do get those haters that say, well, this is, like, overdone everyone's tucking in the front of their shirts.

But there is a way to do it right and a way to do it wrong. So if you're tucking in, say, for example, a T shirt, you don't want to take the whole front and tuck it all in in the front and then let it just hang at the back.

You want to take your T shirt from the middle and just simply tuck it a little bit right behind the button on your pants or on your jeans, and then let the rest kind of hang down at the sides and at the back.

And basically what this does is it creates an arrow. It really will lengthen you and make you look leaner, and it will create an arrow to the smallest part of the waist. My last tip.

TASHA: So I was like, this is your domain. Nobody asked me.

JESSICA: I could give these tips all day long, but that seems to be one that people love.

WHERE TO FIND JESSICA

TASHA: I'm sure you do online. So I was actually just going to ask, where can people go if they want to learn more about the services you offer or hear more tips like that from you?

JESSICA: It's @thejessicaPapIneau is my Instagram, and I will also have a free wardrobe blueprint, and we can put the link in here. Somewhere down below the video, there's a link. So we'll put it down there. Yeah. And we'll also do a link to my website. I have this free wardrobe blueprint. So this will give your people a really good they can steal my framework.

TASHA: Yes, I'll put a link to that down below so people can find it there.

JESSICA: Okay. And one last thing. I know that I'm staying longer on here than

TASHA: no, go ahead.

JESSICA: But I just want every woman to know that they are worthy of spending the time to really think about what they want for clothing in their wardrobe, to take the time to invest in themselves so that they can think about what their goals are and then really step into that woman that they're becoming.

So whether they do this on their own, based on what we did today and the information and tips given, or that they reach out to me directly, but I do truly believe that everyone deserves this.

TASHA: Well, thank you, Jessica, so much for taking the time to share all of this with us today. And all those links will be down below, so people can find your website, your Instagram, all that, and learn more from you.

JESSICA: Thank you. Bye.

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Whole Home Cleaning Hacks

JILL KOCH • TRANSCRIPT

Hi everyone, I'm Jill and I'm so excited to be back for another year with Get Organized HQ. We're gonna have so much fun during our time together today. And the goal of my segment is to really teach you easy tips and tricks and fun life hacks for tackling chores and common messes throughout your home. Because while cleaning is pretty constant, it doesn't have to be complicated. And I created Jill Comes Clean, my blog and social media channels, to teach just that simple way to care for our home so it's not overwhelming.

Cleaning isn't all that bad. It's just about knowing the best method for tackling something. And if you didn't grow up loving cleaning or maybe even being taught how to clean - which is most people, by the way - then I've got you.

Now trust me, I myself am still learning new tricks every day, but I've enjoyed cleaning from a young age. It's probably my Type A personality, but that just means I've had a lot of time to trial and error things and learn over the years what works and what doesn't.

And here's what I found. One, most of the cleaning that we need to do around our home can be done with a few simple ingredients or tools. And two, there's a lot of fun life hacks or cleaning hacks that work too. And that's what I'm here to share today. So let's get to it.

BATHROOM HACKS

We're going to start in the bathroom because there's actually a lot of cleaning hacks in here, several of which can be used in your day-to-day and they almost become habit. So it just feels like part of your routine. It doesn't feel like you're cleaning, but it's going to help keep the space cleaner longer and then the others are going to be helpful on those deep clean days.

UNDERSINK TOWEL

If you often have a messy sink area after use, you'll love this one. And it's without a doubt one of my favorite bathroom cleaning hacks. And that's to keep a rag under your sink. I use a command hook to hang it inside the cabinet door. This is so simple, but it makes a huge difference. Every morning or night, after washing my face or brushing my teeth, I use the rag to wipe up the sink area and it keeps it cleaner so much longer. I then put it back and change it every few days when it's gross.

SOAP DISPENSING BRUSH

And that leads to my next favorite bathroom hack. And that's to keep a soap dispensing brush under the sink too. Fill it with your favorite bathroom cleaner or dish soap. And every few days when you're brushing your teeth, use it to wipe down the bowl. You can also use it for quick tub or shower cleans, but having it nearby makes it so easy to grab and quickly clean the

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space and it buys you time between those deeper cleans.

OVERFLOW HOLES

And while we're cleaning the sink, don't forget those holes. These are overflow holes so that if the sink fills with water, it goes in here and doesn't overflow. But if not cleaned, they can get really nasty and make a clean sink look dirtier than it is. You can use the soap dispensing brush to get the most obvious stuff, but to really get down in there, use a straw cleaning brush. Just hang on to it so it doesn't drop inside.

GLASS AND MIRROR CLEANING

Next, you can skip buying glass and mirror cleaner because all you really need to clean them is some distilled water and a microfiber cloth. Spray the water on the glass or mirror, then dry and polish with the dry microfiber. You want to use distilled water because minerals and tap water can cause scratches. And I find the waffle weave or tight weave style microfibers work best for drying glass and mirrors without leaving streaks. And if you still feel like you need something more than water to clean the glass and mirrors, just grab some rubbing alcohol. You can use it undiluted. Just spray and clean with the dry microfiber cloth. Rubbing alcohol is also great for cleaning and shining chrome fixtures.

CLEANING CADDY

One way to easily stay on top of keeping the bathroom clean is by keeping a cleaning caddy nearby. Nothing major, but just filled with the basics for the bathroom. So when you're in there and notice a quick mess that needs to be cleaned, you can knock it out right then and there.

TOILET HARD WATER RING

Still seeing a mess under the rim of your toilet even after cleaning? Hard water can build up there and even toilet brushes can't always get it. People cringe when I share this tip, but it works so well, and that's to get these scrubby dish gloves, pour some toilet bowl cleaner on them and scrub it by hand. It's the best way I found to really clean this area. Once finished, clean the gloves in the tub, then clean the tub and store them in a container away from dish gloves so there's no confusion.

And if you have a ring of hard water stains that just won't budge with cleaning, try a pumice stone. Make sure it's wet and use it to scrape along the hard water ring. It'll bust it up so your toilet can be sparkling clean.

SHOWER HACKS

Now when it comes to the bathrooms, the showers can be the worst because they are large and hard to clean. This is another area where the soap dispensing brush comes in handy. Take it in with you every few days and scrub the obvious messes. But when it comes time to really wash the walls, I love using a mop or a Swiffer with a microfiber cloth on the end to make it easy.

And to help keep your shower cleaner longer and cut down on soap scum and mold and mildew, try making an after shower spray. It's literally equal parts water and rubbing alcohol into a spray bottle, and then just spray all around your shower after each use. Just spray around the walls and the corners after each shower. It won't buy you weeks, but it can extend your clean by a few days. Hit the shower curtain too, if you have one of those. And if you have doors, here's another hack. Make sure you use a

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squeegee after every use. It becomes habit and really cuts down on the buildup on your doors.

MAKEUP BRUSHES

And let's not forget about those makeup brushes. The best method I have found with these is some castile soap or a gentle shampoo and a special cleaning tool like this or a silicone mat with scrubbers to really get them clean. The key with makeup brushes is to try and avoid getting the metal part with the bristles come out wet, because over time this can loosen the glue that holds the bristles in place. So add some soak to warm water, scrub, rinse and repeat until the water is more clear than it is like coffee. Then lay on a towel to dry. Avoid standing them upright to dry as the water will drip down to the glue. Or if standing upright, make sure the bristles are facing down.

KITCHEN HACKS

Okay, let's move on to the kitchen. I don't know about you, but I feel like I'm constantly cleaning in this space, probably because we're in it so much throughout the day. And the nature of things done in the kitchen tend to create messes, so I'm all for the tips and tricks in this space. Here are some of my favorites, starting with the microwave.

MICROWAVE

The microwave gets dirty so quickly, but luckily this is an easy one to clean. There's two methods I love here. The first is to microwave a bowl of water with sliced up lemons in it. Or you could do a bowl of vinegar water. I use about equal parts of each and microwave for five minutes. This will create steam as the water boils and it'll loosen stuck on food so you can then wipe it clean. Remove the tray and holder first and wash those separately in the sink.

My other favorite method is to use a steamer. There are several out on the market, but it's amazing how much you can do with one of these devices all around your home. They are a great way to clean with just water. They pack a punch and are worth investing in. Although most are pretty affordable, most of them, including the one I have here, come with several attachments that allow you to tackle different areas around your home.

For the steamer method, simply steam all around the microwave, focusing longer on tough, stuck on messes, then wipe clean. We had a yellow type stain on the top of our microwave that would not budge for years. I assumed it was just discoloration. Then one day I tried the steamer and it got it off. It's been my go-to method ever since. Don't forget the door of the microwave as well and clean the outside when finished.

STOVETOPS

The steamer is also a great option for stovetops. For flat tops like mine, remove the knobs and wash those in the sink. If you have a stove with grates, I've heard some people put them in the dishwasher or wash them by hand with a good degreasing soap, since they tend to get greasy. Then just hit all over the stovetop with the steamer, just like you did the microwave. You can also clean the stovetop with baking soda and dish soap and a nonabrasive sponge like a Scrub Daddy. But this tends to get messy, so I do this if I don't have a steamer or if the steamer doesn't cut it.

For really burnt on messes, I love a product called Cerama Bryte. Most stores have it,

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and you can get a lot off with that. And they have kits with razor blades that you can use to get off burnt or raised messes. Don't forget those hood vents while you're at it. The steamer can be used on those, too. It's just so good at melting away dried food and messes. The only mess the steamer leaves behind is some water. So just wipe clean with a dry cloth to finish and enjoy that shine it.

OVEN

And we aren't done there, because the steamer is great at cleaning the oven, too. This tends to be my first method that I go to. But if you don't have a steamer, my next favorite is baking soda and water and a nonabrasive sponge that will typically remove the surface level dirt.

But if there are stubborn spots that won't come up, then I reach for Barkeeper's friend or our friend, the pumice stone. I know it seems weird to use a pumice stone here - and make it a different one than the one we used for the toilets - but it's one of the best ways to get up those black spots inside the oven. Remember, you have to use it wet, so keep a bowl of water nearby so you can dip. Often the water is needed to prevent it from scratching. It's going to feel like you're scratching the surface, but it doesn't. So scrub the area with that stain until it comes up, redipping in the water as needed, then wipe clean.

SELF-CLEANING OVENS?

And if you're wondering about self-cleaning ovens, mine actually is. I just don't use it. Self-cleaning ovens use extreme temperatures to essentially melt the food off, that they require caution when using. And for me, I've always preferred to clean by hand. But if yours has that feature and you like it and use it, then by all means, stick with that.

OVEN RACKS

When it comes to the racks, there are hacks out there where you can place them in the bathtub and use dishwasher pods or dryer sheets. But I've tried those with little success. I found Bar Keeper's Friend or Scrub Daddy PowerPaste works the best. Easy Off might work, too.

CABINETS

Let's talk how to clean your kitchen cabinets. I get this question a lot. I think just because it can be confusing. Do you buy something from the store? What's safe to use on them? Do you use soap and water? What if there's grease?

It's sort of a gray area, not an area we think to clean too often. This is more of when you notice they're dirty or maybe spring cleaning. So you can definitely find stuff on store shelves to buy to clean cabinets. But you know me, I'm going to stick with the most simple method and for me that has been this three cloth system.

So what I do is I maybe take a bucket or fill the sink with some soap and water and one cloth is going to go in that you're going to wring it out really, really well, as good as you can. Now, I use microfiber, but you could use cotton rags as well. Old T shirts. Whatever works. So ring out the soapy one really, really well and then you're going to go around and wipe down your cabinets.

Then you're going to take another one that's just wet and you're going to follow with a rinse. It's going to help, obviously, remove the product or any soap. And finally take your dry one and dry. That way you're

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removing any extra water so there's not excess moisture on our cabinets. I like to do different colors just so that you know which is which. Especially between the soapy one and the wet one, so you don't mix them up. But that's been the simplest way I have found.

You can definitely buy store bought cleaners that do this as well. Just read the label to make sure it's suitable for your cabinet type. And if you do run into a greasy cabinet, my best tip is to use blue Dawn dish soap. That one's really great at cutting grease. Or Sal Suds by Doc Bronners.

And just use that as your soap so that you can go around and get the grease off of there.

STAINLESS STEEL

How to clean stainless steel is another popular question. And the hack I have for you here is one of my absolute favorites. Start by cleaning the stainless with a wet microfiber cloth or your dish cloth. You could even take it, dip it into your dishwater before you start washing the dishes, and wipe down the fronts of your appliances with that. That may leave some streaks, and if so, follow up with the best kept stainless secret and that's baby oil. Put a little on one side of your cloth. I prefer to use microfiber for this and wipe with the grain. Then flip your cloth to the dry side and go over it again to remove any excess oil.

It may come down to whether or not you have brush stainless or the shiny kind. I obviously have the brush, but I have tried every method out there and nothing has removed the streaks and made my stainless shine like this method.

STONE COUNTERTOPS

This next one is more of a tip than a hack, but I'm often asked the best way to clean stone countertops. Honestly, soap and water is a great simple cleaner or any cleaner designed for stone. You want to avoid vinegar, lemon juice or anything acidic as it can etch the surface. And if you want an easy, safe, multipurpose cleaner that you can use on stone countertops, just combine one cup of water with half a cup of rubbing alcohol and a drop of dish soap.

LIVING AREA HACKS

Okay, we've tackled bathrooms and kitchens, let's move on to the rest of the house, including bedrooms and other living areas. Some of my favorite hacks are found in these spaces. And wait till you see just how much we can do with a microfiber cloth.

DUSTING

When it comes to dusting our furniture. Skip the dusting sprays and grab a microfiber cloth. Dusting sprays can cause buildup and have a lot of strong chemicals and truthfully, you don't need them. A damp microfiber cloth is all you need. Just make sure it's only damp and not too wet. But it's going to attract dust better than just dry dusting. Dry dusting just pushes dust around and can actually cause micro scratches that dull the shine of furniture. Over time, damp dusting will give a nice natural shine and make your dusting job last a little longer.

GLASS AND MIRRORS

And you didn't think we were done with the steamer yet, did you? We're busting it

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out again for glass and mirrors around the home. Remember, you can use distilled water and a microfiber cloth, but if you have the steamer out for other jobs, you can use it here too.

FURNITURE AND DRAPES

You can actually use it to steam furniture as well to give it a refresh. Just make sure water can be used on your furniture. Check your tag. You'll want to look for a W or a WS. That means that water can be used on it and if it has one of those then you can steam it. Steaming is also a good way to clean or refresh drapes that can't go in the wash.

ELECTRONICS

Next, let's talk our electronics. These can get smudgy but they're delicate and require simple care. Start by just dusting them with a dry microfiber and that may be all you need. But if there are smudges that won't come off with just that, spray some distilled water. Again distilled because the minerals in regular water can scratch and wipe the area. Always spray onto the rag and not directly onto the device.

STAINS

Have stubborn stains on upholstery carpet or clothing? Let me introduce you to the best DIY stain remover. All it is, is a bottle of peroxide and you're going to add to it one teaspoon of dish soap. I like to use blue Dawn because it's great for stains but any dish soap will do. And one teaspoon of baking soda. Gently shake, but not too hard or it will leak. And spray the stained area. Oftentimes it'll start fading the stain without you even needing to wipe it clean. If it doesn't, go in with a wet rag and gently wipe the spot. You may have to repeat the process but it should work.

Always test a small area as it can lighten fabrics, but I have used this on white materials and colorful materials with no issue and it has worked nearly every time.

MATTRESSES

Mattress looking dingy? If you have stains or yellow spots, start by treating those with the peroxide stain remover. You should be able to just spray it and that's it. The stain should fade on its own as it dries. Then to refresh, just give it a good vacuum. You can use a vacuum attachment or they make these mattress vacuums. They have UV lights to kill dust mites and vibrating plates to shake dirt and dust loose so it can be vacuumed up. They also work on surfaces other than mattresses, like upholstery headboards, car interiors, area rugs and more.

DIRTY HATS

A question I get a lot in the summer months is how to clean dirty hats. I've heard people have had luck with sticking them in the dishwasher, but my go-to has always been to either spot clean with the stain remover or fill a bucket with hot water and add in one tablespoon each of borax, washing, soda and laundry powder. This is what's known as laundry stripping and you can actually do this in a bathtub. Just use a fourth cup of each item and soak your bed, sheets, sports equipment, clothing, blankets, pillows and more.

Submerge the hats and let them soak for about 20 minutes or so. Then take out and rinse and let dry. If they're white hats, place them in the sun to dry and this will sun bleach them and brighten them even more.

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LINT ROLLER MAGIC

Clean more than your clothing with a lint roller. These are great for cleaning lamp shades or decorative pillows. A wet rag works for lamp shades too. Lint rollers are also great at cleaning up broken glass and getting the tiniest of pieces a vacuum or broom may leave behind.

WATERMARKS

Heat stains or watermarks on your furniture? Grab an iron and a dry rag, turn the iron steam setting on and place the rag on top of the area. Sit the iron on top and gently move back and forth in short little spurts and it should draw out the moisture and lift the stain.

ARTIFICIAL PLANTS

And love fake plants but hate how dusty they get? Just grab some microfiber gloves and clean them by hand. The gloves are also a great method for dusting light bulbs, chandeliers and any intricate parts of lights or decor that can be hard to clean by hand with a cloth or a duster.

THERE'S MORE FROM JILL

And those are just some of my favorite tips and life hacks for cleaning our homes easily. But believe me, that's just skimming the surface. There are so many more. And I'm always on the hunt for others. And when I find them, I share them. So be sure to find me on social media at Jill Comes Clean, so you never miss a tip. Or jillcomesclean.com.

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Reduce Stress Through Balance

JILL WINGER • TRANSCRIPT

TASHA: Well, please join me in welcoming Jill from the Prairie Homestead. Today we're going to be discussing how bringing old fashioned skills into your life can actually help to destress your life. So thank you so much for joining us today, Jill.

JILL: Thanks for having me. I'm really excited to talk about this.

DEFINING TERMS

TASHA: Absolutely. So just as we dive in here, can you explain a little bit of what you mean? I guess let's define our terms, first of all, by old fashioned skills and then also how something like that can actually bring less stress.

Because I think to some of us, when we first hear that, it's like, how is that going to bring less stress? It's going to take more time, more energy, all of those things?

JILL: Yeah, great question. And it is a little bit of a paradox, and it's kind of why I like to talk about it, because it's surprising and sometimes shocking to people in a really fun way. And so basically, let's start with definitions.

FLIPPING THE SCRIPT

So old fashioned can mean a lot of different things, and it often has a negative connotation attached to it. So I'm kind of trying to flip that script a little bit because I think it can actually have a lot of positive things with it. In essence, I think potentially some of your audience is familiar with the homestead movement or the homestead lifestyle that's become really popular in recent years. And so there's a lot of crossover with what I call old fashioned living and the homesteading world.

The reason I prefer I mean, I still use the word homestead quite a bit, but I prefer the term old fashioned because sometimes when we say homestead, people think, oh, well, I have to move to a ton of property, and I need a milk cow, and I need chickens. And I'm like, not necessarily. And I think if we always stick those skills or ideas in the same bucket as other things, we kind of miss out on some of those benefits.

INTO OUR MODERN LIVES

And so what I advocate for is bringing in some of the timeless practices that our ancestors would have participated in, whether that's around food or gardening or working with our hands or being connected to community and nature and figuring out ways we can weave those in to our very modern lives. I live on a homestead in Wyoming, but I also run online businesses, and I homeschool children, and I have a restaurant. So it's not like I'm sitting here at Little House on the Prairie all day long.

People often think that. I'm like, no, I have Wi-Fi and studios and the whole thing. But in the midst of that busyness, I find that weaving in these practices that our ancestors have partaken in is really

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my secret weapon in order to keep me balanced, happier, more productive, even. And so, yeah, that's that grand paradox. We can dive into a little bit deeper into some of those specifics, but it's kind of a cool concept.

GARDENING

TASHA: Yeah. Let's just dive in. You mentioned gardening. Let's start there. So how do you find that gardening just helps you reduce the stress, all of that, in the middle of all the running a restaurant and running an online business and all of that?

JILL: Yeah. So there's something that happens to humans when we start to connect with soil. And I think that often we have a subconscious pull to that, but we don't really recognize that. We just think, well, I want a garden because I need tomatoes, or I want to have zucchini. I think people actually say they want zucchini, sometimes I feel like that happens as an accident. But you want the vegetables, you want the joy of the food.

DEEPER BENEFITS

But there's a lot of deeper benefits that come as well. There's some pretty fascinating studies about there's microbes in soil that have antidepressant effects that they're just starting to recognize. There's things in soil that help with our immunity and our overall health and ability to fight off other bugs that might come at us in other ways.

There's research that shows when people are exposed to green spaces, it brings their heart rate down, their blood pressure down. It just helps them feel calm. There's a ton of studies with children who might be struggling with hyperactivity or different neurological issues where if they put them in an outdoor environment, they instantly just are able to focus more and they feel more at peace.

And so it makes sense. Humans have always been connected to nature up until very recently, and it's only in the last 150 years where we've kind of gone, it's optional. I can be fine with my asphalt and my concrete and my sheetrock and my carpet. Right. It's not that those things are bad, but I think it's important, especially if we start to feel a little shaky in our modern lives. Maybe instead of saying, I need more wine, more Netflix time, more artificial. Those aren't bad, but less artificial, maybe, and more natural and see what happens, I think people would be shocked at how grounding it is.

NO YARD? NO PROBLEM

TASHA: Yeah, for sure. Do you have any suggestions for people who maybe don't have as easy of access to just getting outside? Maybe there isn't a park nearby, or they don't live on a lot of property or something? Like, what practices have you found that people can engage in whenever?

Maybe they don't live on what we think of as a homestead or something that you can get outside and be a part of.

JILL: Yeah. So let's start with maybe the toughest situation, if you will. Like someone who lives in an apartment, right. They don't have a yard. They don't have a backyard. So if I lived in an apartment, I think I would really prioritize planting things in pots. If I had a balcony, I'd use that. If I didn't, I'd use some windows. I think just that act of getting your hands connected to soil in some way is really important. So I'd be really focused on growing what I could where I

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am.

And there's plenty of grow lights and things you can get even if you have like, let's say you lived in a bunker with no windows and no balcony. Extreme. You could still grow things with grow lights. I do that even in my basement in the spring. So there's that.

WALK ON

There's lots of public nature spaces, even in big cities. So get out to parks. Make that a part of your weekly routine. Walking. There's so many benefits to walking. It feels like so kind of boring and obvious, oh, walking, blah, blah, blah. But it's really good to get out there. Fresh air, leave your phone on do not disturb, leave it at home, and try to just spend some time in solitude thinking and walking and breathing.

Those things go a long way and I think we forget about them because they're not shiny, they're not flashy. There also isn't corporations pushing them at us because there's no reason. You can't monetize walking very easily. Right. And so we kind of get it shoved to the wayside. But there's a lot of benefit to that. Even maybe going to a park, taking your shoes off and letting your feet touch the ground, there's some interesting studies around that, feeling the grass feeling the dirt. So, yeah, little things can go a long way.

EVERY LITTLE BIT COUNTS

TASHA: Yeah. So it sounds to me like not letting the fact that you can only do a little stop you from doing anything. I know I can be an all or nothing personality, but it's worth it even if it's only once a week to go to the park.

JILL: Yes, every little bit counts

COOKING

TASHA: For sure. So another thing that we might consider when we think about some of these old fashioned skills or practices that we want to embrace is cooking. And I know in busy seasons that can be the first thing to kind of fly out the window. It's like, oh, today was really busy. We're totally doing takeout tonight because cooking did not happen.

So do you find that how do you prioritize that in the middle of busy seasons? And maybe also why do you find that important to prioritize?

NOT ALL OR NOTHING

JILL: Yeah, so a couple of thoughts there. So first off, just so people know, I am very human and there are definitely days where I'm like, guys, we're having like popcorn for supper because I'm just not feeling it. So that's okay, too. Again, it's not all or nothing. And I can be very all or nothing and I have to always remind myself even three nights of home cooked meals, even if they're not extravagant, and they rarely are, extravagant, is still good.

PERSPECTIVE SHIFT

But I guess with the gardening and the cooking, for me it's a perspective shift in the middle of my very busy life, instead of looking at those as oh, my gosh. Another thing I have to do. I kind of see it as a way to relax. And so some people are like, I hate cooking. It would never be relaxing, but you can reframe that a little bit.

And so when I get done with a really busy day in the office, especially if I'm on the computer a lot, which I feel like mirrors a lot of modern people, we're all in that same

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boat. I spend a lot of time on the computer creating. I shut it off around 4:00, 4:30, and then I start to look forward to that time in the kitchen because it's such a different set of creative muscles.

ACTIVE LEISURE

On the computer it's just type, type, type, think, think, think, and then the kitchen, it's tactile. I'm immersing myself in the smells and the feels of the food. The chopping, the onions, the sautéing, the vegetables, the preparing the chicken. If you allow yourself to breathe and slow down as you do, it maybe even use that moment to listen to a podcast you've been looking forward to or your favorite playlist, that can become a sort of relaxation.

Cal Newport is one of my favorite authors, and he talks about this. He calls it active leisure, I think in his book, or something similar, where he's like, we have this idea that relaxation has to be us vegging on the couch all the time, and that's a piece of it. It's okay to take naps, but he's like, you actually can relax in a more deeper sense when you're moving your body gently and doing something that feels good, it's giving you that dopamine, and you can come away fulfilled, feeling purposeful and also feeling really relaxed.

And so that's my secret trick, I think, for cooking, it's less of a to do and more of like, okay, I get to do this. I'm going to feed my family. I'm going to connect with these ingredients. And that can be something you actually look forward to.

EVERYONE CAN BE CREATIVE

TASHA: And you mentioned creativity in that and being creative in the kitchen. How do you find that creativity relates to our mental health?

JILL: Yeah, there's so much around that. And I recently was writing a book and doing research, and I was just blown away at the science around it. We think of creativity as like, some people are artists, some aren't. Either got it or you don't. But it's really not true.

We all have the ability to be creative. Your creativity will look different from mine and that's beauty of it. Right. Creativity isn't always painting or drawing or graphic design. It can also be fixing a car engine or crocheting, or gardening, or writing words. And so there's lots of different ways to do that.

CREATIVITY AND MENTAL HEALTH

But there are some fascinating studies that show when we create, especially with our hands, like, we're doing something tactile. Pottery, cooking, gardening. We're moving our hands. It actually is releasing chemicals in our brain, like happy chemicals. And there's this cycle, Dr. Kelly Lambert calls it the effort driven reward cycle. We work with our hands, it's the happy chemicals in our brain. We start to feel good and we do it again. And it's really important for our mental health, that helps us feel fulfilled and purposeful.

That can actually help to kind of lift depression, feelings sometimes and anxiety. And so I think we get so stuck in our modern world where we're so screen-centric and I have plenty of screens too, so no judgment, but we're missing that movement of our hands and really immersing ourselves and I think that's part of the reason sometimes we feel so out of whack as modern people.

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WHAT DO I DO NOW?

TASHA: Definitely. So in your experience, I'm just curious, can you share how you can tell when you need to do something with your hands versus when you need to take a nap? Because I do think both of them are sometimes the most helpful response. There's not really a right or wrong but

sometimes the nap is most helpful and sometimes getting up and washing the dishes or cooking or gardening is the most helpful. So what are some indicators that you have found that help, you know, when you should lean one way or the other?

LISTEN TO YOUR BODY

JILL: Yeah, great question. So I guess I kind of listen to my body and I think it might be different for everybody. But I'll give you some clues on what my body tells me. So let's say I have a day where I have been sitting in the chair working on the computer for 6 hours. I just start to feel a little antsy. I don't know if you've ever felt that way. You're just like kind of wiggly like a kid in school who can't sit still and I'm just like I'm just tired. I start to not be able to type the sentences as clearly and the ideas aren't flowing and I'm just like it's taking twice as much effort to produce the same amount of work.

TIME FOR SOMETHING CREATIVE

That's when I'm like you know what, you need a break. And honestly when we look at the data we should be taking breaks about every 45 minutes. Little breaks. That's where our brains work the best to be most productive. Which feels to someone like me, who's like I'm a workhorse man, I can plow through. It feels anti productive to go walk outside in the middle of a project, but it actually can jump start our brains.

But if I've not been listening to that part of my body and just like plowing through for too many hours, when I start to feel myself flatlined on productivity or creativity, that's when I'm like you know what, I think I need to go switch it up. So I'll go out. That's when I go out and garden. That's when I go out. Not even like for hours, just for like 15 minutes. I pull some weeds, I'll go walk to the barn I'll go for a walk down the road with the kids. I'll go in the kitchen and start chopping some onions. And that usually my body kind of perks back up. And I'm like, oh, this feels good.

TIME FOR A NAP

Now, on the flip side, there are times this actually even happened. A couple of weeks ago, I had a ton of projects. I've been working really hard. And I got to one afternoon and I had this time of this nice big block where I'm like, I'm going to get a bunch of stuff done on the computer. And I sat down, and it's like nothing was coming. And I was like, well, do I garden? And I'm like, nothing sounded fun. I was like, I hate everything. I don't want to do anything. And I just was super grouchy, and I was tempted to force myself through it.

And I'm like, I think I need a nap because I'm like acting like a three year old who just is tantrumming. And so I went and lay down, and I passed out for 2 hours, like, out cold. And I'm like, oh, my body was telling me, you're done.

So I guess when I get really sour on life and all the things that normally make me feel happy, that's when I'm like, usually my body's like, just go to bed, Jill. Stop it.

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And then when it's more like that antsy energy, like, I need to change of scenery, that's when I try to bring in those creative pursuits. So is that helpful?

IN THE ZONE

TASHA: Yeah, absolutely. I think that makes sense. And I know sometimes in my own experience, I feel tired until I start doing I think that I'm too tired to for me, it's even like cleaning up the dishes from dinner or something. It's like, oh, I've spent all this time cooking it. But once I get started and like you said, a podcast or something that you can really look forward to, I don't know. I think you can get in the zone.

And it's interesting to hear you share some of that research because I'm like, oh, yeah, I totally experienced that. But I think my husband thinks I'm crazy because he thinks my hobby is cleaning the house. I find that so relaxing, though. And people are like, I'm sorry you're cleaning today? I'm like, no, it actually feels really good. I really needed it right now. And it's not like I specifically look forward to sweeping the floor. I'm not like, oh, this is my favorite thing.

But I just like, the end result in doing something productive and enjoying my home is so empowering, I guess.

JILL: Oh, I am right with you 100%. Yeah.

ADDING MORE

TASHA: We've talked about gardening. We've talked about cooking, cleaning here a little bit. Are there any other just like, old fashioned skills maybe, to even throw out as suggestions for people who are like, okay, I want to embrace more of this?

What are some of the things that people can be looking to add into their lives.

HANDICRAFT

JILL: Yeah, I think just anything like handicraft and it's even hard to put that in a category because it can be so big, it can be playing an instrument, it can be fixing things, it can be painting old furniture. That's one thing I do. Not a lot, but I love refurbishing something old. It feels really good to take it from unwanted to something that I really love. That's an old fashioned skill in our throwaway culture. We don't see that very often, right?

There's sewing, there's painting, there's writing poetry, all of that. So I think just picking something that's off your screen, even coloring, like those adult coloring books, those can be really good for you. Just moving your hands in a way that's not tapping a button is a really old fashioned skill that's kind of forgotten these days.

BEING IN COMMUNITY

Another one is community. And I think that doesn't necessarily relate to productivity as much. But depending on your personality type, we need often more face to face interaction than a lot of us are getting because we're getting so screen centric. And so a really old fashioned skill that's easy to overlook is just like getting out in your community, having people over for supper, having them over for a picnic, like just making those face to face connections can really bolster us because humans are designed to be in community.

We're designed to be in that environment. And our modern culture is kind of shoving us into these cubicles of online meetings, online everything. And so I think being purposeful about that can go a long way as

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well.

FINDING EVENTS

TASHA: Oh, 100%. And I have found that I've been surprised at how many community events there really are. I think I would have thought that I don't live in one of those communities that does events and I'm sure there are some communities that legitimately don't. But I have found there are more than I would have expected if I'm paying attention and looking even at the advertisements, they advertise them on the side of the road, but I just always look over those.

But they have movie nights in the park even, or little fairs or farmers markets that you can go to and just see people. So definitely just look around. You may have to look around on the screen a lot of times. That's where I find them.

JILL: Yes, I live in a town, or near a town of 175 people. It's the tiniest you can possibly imagine. And it still has events. There's baseball and there are movie nights and there's community dinners. And so I think it's just like you said, looking for it and being aware, it's a big help.

CREATING COMMUNITY

TASHA: And like you mentioned, inviting people to your own space. You can even invite them to your backyard to grill. It doesn't have to be high stress. But if you don't see the community, you can create the community. Yes.

JILL: And that has really helped. I'm an introvert, so I still need my quiet time. I think a lot of us online folks are introverts, but man, I feel just so much more grounded and happy and I feel so much more excited to do my work on the computer or to be more productive and more organized when I have connected with humans in a healthy way a couple of times a week.

So it's funny how these things we don't perceive as productivity hacks actually end up just making us more productive in the long run, even if we're not trying for that.

WHERE TO START

TASHA: Yeah, definitely. So as we kind of start to wrap up here, just what advice do you have for busy modern day women who are wanting to incorporate these skills into their life? Maybe where to start? Or some just practical action steps that we can take to start implementing this.

JILL: So I would say start small because I'm picturing someone being inspired by this. And then they're going over to the homestead blogs or homestead Instagram, which is beautiful and amazing, but it's also like a fire hose. Like just a lot of information, a lot of things.

START SMALL

So don't feel overwhelmed. Don't let the excitement of maybe some of these ideas make you feel more overwhelmed than you are. Just pick the things that feel most peaceful and they call to you the most. Whether it is planting a few things that are edible. Edible vegetables in your landscaping. Maybe it's experimenting with a new recipe. It's being creative with something that you're building or you're doing with your hands.

CARVE OUT TIME

And just carving time out for that. Just like you would an appointment or a soccer

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game for your kids. Like you're putting it on your calendar and you're like, for this block of time, I'm going to play with this new chicken recipe. I'm going to plant these tomatoes in this pot. I'm going to repaint this piece of furniture. So I think acknowledging how important they are, blocking it off.

And then just pick the ones that are most interesting to you. Don't try to go whole hog all at once.

TASHA: That's definitely how I can find that I can get set up for like, oh, I'm going to try and do all the things and then I don't do any of the things. It's like we talked about the all or nothing.

JILL: All or nothing girl right here, for sure.

FINDING JILL ONLINE

TASHA: Well, thank you so much for sharing all of this today. Where can people find you online if they want to learn more from you?

JILL: So my main blog with a lot of tips for this lifestyle and recipes is theprairiehomestead.com. And then from there you can connect to my podcast and have some books and things like that. So just kind of start there and then we'll connect further.

TASHA: Awesome. Well, we'll put a link to that down below. Thank you so much, Jill.

JILL: Thanks for having me. This is a blast.

TASHA: Of course.



Eliminating Things You Don't Have to Do (and Delegating)

JOANN CROHN • TRANSCRIPT

Hey, I am JoAnn Crohn. Thank you so much for joining me here, because we're going to talk about how to eliminate the things you don't have to do. Or the things you don't want to do.

Now, if you're coming in this session, you might be thinking, JoAnn, I have so much to do. How do I make these decisions? How do I decide? That is what we're going to cover here. Because I feel like the information out there is how to do more or how to fit more in your day or how to get in little chunks of time, when really the best option is to take things away.

So first, I want to thank Laura and Tasha for having me here at Get Organized HQ Virtual. It is such a fun time speaking here each year, and I am so thankful to them, and I hope that you are having an amazing time at this summit.

NO GUILT MOM

My name is JoAnn Crohn. It's so nice to meet you. If we don't know each other already, I am the CEO and founder of No Guilt Mom. I'm also the host of the award-winning No Guilt Mom podcast, and I have been doing this for ten years now, which is unbelievable.

And what I do is I help moms go after their goals and passions, like things they think they had to put on the back burner until kids were out of the house. As well as giving them strategies on how to have really great communication with their family so they develop a great relationship with their kids and with their partners.

PROCESSS OF ELIMINATION

Now, one of the ways to reduce stress and making sure that you're able to go after things that are important to you is through this process of elimination, because we have so many things available to us. And frankly, so many of those things sound fun. Like, they sound like things we want to do, while the other things sound like things we have to do.

Like there's a ball that's going to drop, or our kids won't get something they need. Or maybe we're caring for an older parent and they won't get something they need. Everything feels incredibly urgent.

I know a mom who has a full time job and is a volunteer bus driver for her kids' school because there's no bus drivers, and she's taking on so much that she can't find time for all the other things to fit in.

If you feel like you have a very full plate right now and you have no idea how to fit in, let's say stuff for you. Or maybe it's making a better connection with your partner, having date nights, having quality time with your kids, pursuing that hobby that you absolutely love, but you feel like you can't fit in the day. Or you feel like you can't get in any relaxation without kids coming in to interrupt you. This is a session for you.

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ROCKS IN A JAR

Because I'm sure that you might have seen that metaphor of rocks in a jar. Have you seen this metaphor? It's where somebody, it's usually a college professor, brings a jar to the front of the classroom and on his desk he has like, big rocks, he has middle rocks, and he has like pebbles and sand and stuff. And he asks his students, okay, how could we fit the most amount of things in this jar?

And then he demonstrates if you start with the sand, all of the little items, and then you pile in the pebbles, you're only able to put in one or two rocks. But if you start with the big rocks and they till to the top of the jar, and then you put in the pebbles and they fill in the spaces of all those little big rocks, and then you put in the sand and it fills in those spaces and all the little sand, then you could fit more in the jar.

And this is supposed to be a metaphor for how you use your time and your priorities so that you do the big things first and then the space that is left over those little things can be fit in.

TOO MANY ROCKS

But there's a problem with that. Because right now, at this point in time, we have way too many big rocks. Like, those big rocks won't even fit in our jars because there's just too many of them.

And we're up against this question of which big rocks can we drop, what can we eliminate? And what can we eliminate out of the pebbles and the sand to actually give us a little more breathing room, a little more space, a little more time doing the things we want to do, or discover the things we want to do. Because there are so many responsibilities that we have.

BE INTENTIONAL

So here's how you do it.

First of all, it is about recognizing what's going on. If you are somebody who has a huge to do list and you crank through that to do list each day, and at the end of the day, you find you are just exhausted and you have no time to do anything else rather than just lay there comatose watching Netflix.

I've been there. I know how it is. You are going to find this incredibly fascinating because all of our responsibilities and all of our to-dos, we need to first recognize that we are taking care of a lot of little stuff first. We're being reactionary. We're not being too intentional with our time when we do that.

HARD CHOICES

The next thing that we have to do is we're going to have to make some hard choices and we're going to have to deal with some discomfort. I'm going to get more into that as we go along.

DETERMINE WHAT YOU VALUE

So let's start with the first thing. Let's start with this. What do we want to be intentional about? And so I ask you right now, what do you value? What is the most important thing to you in your life?

Is it your family and your time with your family? Is it being able to do some kind of personal creative expression? And you could do both. I know that there's a little bit of guilt there because especially if you're a mom, how dare you say that your creative

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expression goes above your kids, right? So there's no guilt here. You could do both.

You could do both. Creative expression is a wonderful thing. It helps you be a happier person. And kids, they are a wonderful thing, and they have so many joys that come with them as well.

So what do you value? List out those values. If you have a notebook right now, write it down beside. Like, write it down beside you see it on paper. What do you value? I'm going to give you some other values that I want you to think about, though.

UNICORN TIME

Do you have a unicorn time? And what's a unicorn time? Well, it's this concept that comes from Eve Rodsky's book Fair Play, and she refers to it as unicorn space, but in no guilt mom land, we call it unicorn time. And what it is, is a personal project that you are passionate about that fulfills your soul and that you can share with other people. So some examples of unicorn time may be that you loved playing piano, and so now you're practicing piano, and you're going out into piano competitions and sharing all of your hard work and practicing with the world.

Or maybe you've always been interested in art history and you've always thought you wanted to take a class in it. And so you're going to a local community college, and you're taking a class in person in art history to pursue that passion.

Or maybe you're really passionate about kayaking, and so you're getting on the river with friends and you're going kayaking. What are you passionate about? What do you find fun? And this can be anything from live music to hosting parties.

GETTING TO KNOW THE NEIGHBORS

I recently started something in my neighborhood called Margarita Monday. I make really good margaritas too, because we lived here for a year and I felt like I didn't know anybody. Everybody stays in their homes because I'm in Phoenix, Arizona. It gets a little hot, and there's no reason for adults really to come outside. Like, there's playgrounds for kids, but you hardly see the adults, and especially because a lot of us work from home.

So we have this Facebook group for our neighborhood, and I just put it out there. I was like, hey, does anyone else love margaritas? I make a really good one. I'm thinking of having a Margarita Monday so that we can get to know each other and get to know our neighbors. And a few people responded. There was, like, 20 little hearts on that post.

I just want to give you some details. This is an example of how this can go. 20 little hearts on this post. So I made an e-vite with all of the info and maybe like four people RSVPed. I mean, the Facebook group of our neighborhood has like 200; 4 people RSVP'd. Then one canceled and then one came last minute. And so we had actually three women who I got to know over margaritas. That was my unicorn space. I love margaritas and I love getting to know my neighbors and especially how I can help other people.

I just did it again, actually. I called it Tequila Tuesday because it was on a Tuesday this time and I had to have the alliteration and two new people showed up and I got to meet two new people.

So what is your unicorn time? What fills

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your soul? What do you like to do? It doesn't have to be an artistic pursuit. It doesn't have to be anything complicated. It could be as simple as bringing together people in your neighborhood to talk and drink margaritas.

PLACE YOUR VALUE FIRST

So values. Determine what you value. Next one, place that value first.

So you can think of this a lot. Like, we get the typical advice about saving for our 401. You should always take the money out before you even see the paycheck because you're really not going to miss the money once it's gone and once it's put away. However, if you're trying to save after you see the money and after you spend the money, there's probably not going to be enough money left over to save, right? It's always how it happens. Unless you take it out first, it really doesn't happen.

This is the same thing with your time, and I'm going to say this again. This is the same thing with your time. You need to put your values first. You need to put in that fun for yourself first. That thing that is going to energize you to be able to show up for the people in your life.

PUT YOUR VALUE ON YOUR CALENDAR

You need to put that first. Put that on your calendar first. So if you have quality time that you want to spend with your family, like you want to spend more quality time with your family, pick a date in the future, put that thing on the calendar. Put it on the calendar now.

And you could pick a date that hasn't had anything planned on it yet. Because I know that if I asked you to put something in the next week, you already have your plans. Typically for the next week, it's already been filled. All that sand has come in and it has already been filled.

So pick a date in the future and put that value on the calendar. I've told you that I really value my relationships, especially outside my family, those connections with friends and other women. And so girls' outings are really important to me. I'm a girl's girl. I love it. So I have a girls' trip scheduled on my calendar, and we're going to Mexico. In fact, by the time you see this, we probably have already been to Mexico.

WHAT IF?

But I was so scared the first time that I started scheduling those girl trips because I was like, oh, my gosh, what if my kids need something? What if my husband has a work crisis and he needs me for something? What if something happens with my parents during that time and they need me for something?

All of these worries came up and all of those things that would probably fill up my time if I let it. So I put the trip on the calendar, and the trip I'm talking about, we went to Italy for ten days, just like me and my best friends. It was amazing. Put it on my calendar. Nothing got planned in those days. And when the time came, I went and I had the best time, and none of those emergencies came up. Nothing cropped up. Nothing happens like that.

Because when you put in what you value first, all those other things are either going to be taken care of someone else, or they're not even going to need to be handled by you. And if there was like, some huge emergency that happened during that time,

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of course I would adjust my schedule. But typically that doesn't happen.

So that's your second thing. Put what you value on your calendar. Do it. Do it after this presentation, find what you value and put it on your calendar.

DELEGATE

Okay, number three, let's delegate some stuff. And when I talk about delegating, I want you to delegate fully. So what does this mean?

Well, when somebody is totally in charge of a task, there is a process called CPE. And CPE stands for Conceive, Plan, and Execute. So, for instance, if you put somebody in charge of doing the laundry each week in your house and you've delegated laundry to them, they will conceive (see when the laundry needs to be done), plan a time in their schedule when they can do the laundry, and then execute. Actually do the laundry, fold stuff, put it away. Depending on what has been agreed to before, that would be a total delegation of the task.

However, sometimes we resist delegating because we want to hold on to the task so much, because we really want it done a certain way. And so we hold on to those conceive and plan steps and those conceive and plan steps are the bulk of our mental load. They are taking space in your brain to such an extent that you really have not delegated.

DELEGATE FULLY

Those tasks are still yours. They are with you. And to fully delegate, you need to hand those over to someone else. So an example is meal planning. I usually do the meal planning in my house. I just write out on our weekly calendar what dinners we're having, and then I tell my husband what ingredients we need and he does our shopping.

But for the past two weekends, I've been pretty busy with some work events that have been going on. So he's been doing the meal planning. Now, my meal planning, when I conceive and plan it, I'm like looking at recipes and I'll write on the board it'll be like crock pot chicken chili and like green chili enchiladas and margarita chicken, like all of these delicious sounding things. That's how I meal plan.

NOT MY WAY

When my husband meal plans, and this is how it is right now in my house, if you go upstairs, our meal board reads chili, steak, pork, chicken. That's it. That's it. That is how he meal plans. He meal plans just by protein, just by proteins on that board. That's it. That is what he shops for.

And then he buys packs of veggies. That like the steamer's packs that we could put in a microwave. And usually I cook some rice or some carb or like a piece of bread or a sourdough bread or whatever. They're very simple meals. We have salsas, we have sauces that we put on.
It might sprinkle some cheese, but it's very different than how I would meal plan.

And since I delegated that task to him, that is how he chose to do it, even though it is different from my own. So when you delegate, make sure you give over the task fully.

ALLOW TIME TO ADAPT

And here's another thing about delegating. You need to give people time to adapt. Because I hear a lot that, oh, I delegated

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this chore. But then they're coming back at me with all of these questions and they're throwing it to me again and I have to do these things. And so it's just easier to do it myself.

And in fact, that would be easier to do it yourself, but you need to put in that time for adaptation. Basically, we don't know how to fully teach something or fully explain something so that someone else would understand without feedback. Like the reason I'm able to conquer these things, and these things you might be saying to yourself in this presentation, is because I've received a lot of feedback from people on this topic before.

So it's the same with chores. If somebody, for instance, comes to you in your house, I'm going to use my son as an example with the dishes, and say the first time he loaded the dishwasher, like he left a lot of things on the counter. If I took that and I took those things on the counter and I load it into the dishwasher, I would still be doing that task. I would be doing part of the execution.

TEACHING MOMENT

But instead, if I see it as, oh, he doesn't know that these things need to go in the dishwasher too. That is a conversation I have then with my son. I'm like, hey buddy, those things, can you fit those in too? I bet there's a space for them somewhere. My son responds, I can't fit them in. There's no room. I'm like, cool. Okay, great. I'm just going to walk over here, and when they're all in, then we're going to go to school. And I walk away. And usually he calms down and he puts them in and he closes the dishwasher, and he gets the dishwasher running.

And it was just one of those steps on the path to teaching and delegating the chore. So if you have something like that right now and the person's coming back to you with questions, they're valid questions. They just don't know how to do it yet. So that just tells you that, oh, this is the process that I have to teach.

And if they come back to you, because here's another thing that happens. Say you write down all the laundry instructions on the door, and they don't read them, and they just come to you and they ask you the question about how to do the laundry every single time. Please don't explain it to them. You have a process for this. It's written on the back of the door.

You could say, I wrote that on the back of the door. Go look there. And then hopefully after a few times of that sticking with it, they will just look on the back of the door, and they will not ask you those questions any longer, but put in that time for the adaptation.

PLAN FOR DISCOMFORT

That brings us to our last one, plan for discomfort. When you start eliminating things off your to do list and when you start delegating and when you start only focusing on those things that you value and letting some other things fall, balls are going to drop. They're going to drop, and you're going to feel at first a little twitchy, a little uncomfortable, know that that's all normal.

One thing that I have delegated in my house is the trash, and my husband does that. And sometimes when the trash isn't done, it starts piling on top of the counter, and I leave it. I don't take that trash out. I see that trash, and I'm like, ugh, ugh. And then I have a discussion with my husband,

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and I'm like, hey, just to be clear, that's your job, right? This is a discussion I just had a few days ago. And he's like, yeah, that's my job. That's understandable. That's my job. And he went and he did it.

But sometimes those tough conversations are the things that we don't want to have. It's easier to do the tasks ourselves than to hold other people accountable to them. I'm going to say that again. It is easier to do the tasks ourselves than to hold other people accountable for them.

But if we never hold other people accountable, we're going to be doing that task for the rest of our lives. The rest of our lives. And I don't want that for you. You have way too much to share with the world. You have way too much that you want to accomplish; that it is time that you got to focus on the things that matter to you and let other people take care of the rest.

So going through that discomfort is a normal thing. And another part of it is dealing with that mindset around the discomfort, because you hear that word, consistency. Do you ever tell yourself, like, I'm not a consistent person. I'm really bad with consistency. Right. You're not alone with that.

CONSISTENCY FREEBIE

And I have a freebie for you. It is a link right below this video and it's going to help you with the mindset, especially if you are a parent. It is the lies we tell ourselves about consistency as a parent. And some of the things in there I hope will be light bulbs as of things that you can do differently and things that are going to help you through this process of letting go, eliminating things, and ultimately being able to do what you enjoy more.

So thank you so much for joining me and for watching this session. Let me know any questions that you have. I'll be in the Facebook group if you need me. You could tag me. JoAnn Madden Crohn.

And until next time, even if you may not be a mom who is watching, the best mom's a happy mom, the best person is a happy person. You deserve to spend the time on the things that you want to spend time on.

And I'll see you later. Bye.

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Organizing Tips

JODIE & JULIE • TRANSCRIPT

MEET JODIE AND JULIE

TASHA: Well, thank you to Julie and Jodie from the Design Twins for coming and joining us today. We're going to be talking about some of their favorite organization tips, specifically going through a project that they worked on for a pantry. So thank you so much for joining us.

And could you just do me a favor, introduce yourselves so that we know which of you is which?

JODIE: I am Jodie, and I live in the San Francisco area.

JULIE: Yes, I'm Julie and I live in the Seattle area.

TASHA: Okay, awesome. Well, thank you so much for hopping on today. I think this might be the first time in Get Organized HQ virtual history that we have done a three way interview. Yeah, we're going to be doing something totally new today, so let's just dive right in.

FINDING MOTIVATION

And can you tell me a little bit, whenever you're facing a big project that you're going to tackle, can you tell me where do you find the motivation for such a project? It can be kind of overwhelming depending on what space you're working on.

JODIE: True. And I think we'll maybe talk like a pantry is a massive problem, or project and problem. Usually both. And it depends. If you have a small pantry, there's massive challenges there. And if you have a large pantry...

JULIE: It's just a bigger problem.

JODIE: Yeah, but you've got issues either way. And I think motivation is key. I redid this pantry three times and I had a vision the last time for my dream pantry. But I had that vision for at least three years, and it was like, I knew it was going to be beautiful. But it took me three years to get motivated.

HAVING A VISUAL

I think what helped, it helped that I had a visual. The end goal, like you think of it like a marathon. You don't want to really focus on every step you take. You want to focus on the finish line, like, I'm going to get there and how am I going to feel.

So for the pantry, how is it going to look like when I walk into that pantry, how beautiful it's going to be. And picture that goal and don't get bogged down in all the steps because that could just block you right there.

JULIE: Well, and the other thing is, so I think you're right, Jodie. Focusing on the beauty and the visual end result is totally I mean, if you're a visual person, that is going to motivate you.

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WHAT'S NOT WORKING

But what if you don't have a visual yet? But just know that your pantry is painful. Like, if it is not working in your life, then you might just focus on imagining a pantry that serves you and imagining the life, like picturing you and the kids walking into the space or reaching into this space and knowing exactly where to go, where to reach. Then just envision that perfectly functioning space.

And maybe you're not there yet, as far as how it's going to happen or what it's going to look like, but just knowing how much it's going to help you every single day throughout the day. And improve your life and let that motivate you to tackle it, because it does get worse before it gets better. Right.

That project can be a beast, but it also like, no other space affects the entire family, right? So it's almost like the heart of the home is where the food resides.

JODIE: Well, and how all your tools and everything is organized to make the food happen. Both visual motivation, aesthetic motivation, and function. Like talking about every part, every step of this project, you're going to need to have both of these in mind. They overlap.

THINKING OF SPECIFICS

TASHA: Yeah, absolutely. And I think, like we said, we're really kind of using a pantry as an example. But I think what you're saying about having this vision, no matter what space they're tackling, if you're feeling overwhelmed. And you're feeling like, oh, this space isn't working for me, it could be a playroom or a bathroom or a work from home space. Like, any space, if you can have that vision of, like, okay, the reason I'm doing all this is to get to that end result really applies any space that we're working on.

So do you have anything... any tips, any maybe questions people can ask themselves very specifically for forming this vision? Because I think it's really easy to be like, well, I want a pantry that works. I want a pantry that doesn't stress me out. So what are some specifics that maybe people can think through in their space to help them be like, okay, what would a pantry that works actually look like?

JULIE: Yeah, I agree. You need to get to specifics. So if it is a playroom, you have to know the stage of all your kids, who's going to use that space, what do they need, and what are they going to do, and create the environment, the storage, the functionality of the entire room.

UNDERSTANDING THE NEEDS

So at least a pantry isn't quite as complex, but you still need to know who's going in there, what are the priorities? Because maybe right now it's trying to house too many things. So the more specific your understanding can be of the needs and how this space is going to serve you, the better.

So maybe you have a ton of cleaning supplies currently taking over your pantry, and there's not enough room for you to do it all. So maybe it's going to be, I am going to put all the cleaning things in this other closet, and I'm going to relocate that so that this space can serve the snack, the meal, prep, all of the things, all of the food. Maybe you need to make those hard decisions in order to make it work. Right?

It's so funny because Jodie has the

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biggest pantry that I have actually, in my life actually been in. I've seen them in magazines or online, but Jodie's is the biggest I've seen in person. And mine, it's like a "pantry," right?

It's a two door cupboard, and the shelves come out, but my goodness, we have the opposite problems. And I know her problems are real. That size is a beast. It's a beast.

WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS?

JODIE: Well, what happens is it's so big and it's so convenient. It's right there that everything... so out of the span, like it had been three years since I had organized it... and so everything goes in there. It's like endless, the amount of space from floor to ceiling.

And so that's a problem. So I did end up when you clean out anything, any space in your home, it always has that overflow. It's like the domino effect. They were relocated, like, back to the garage, where they should have been. Should have been, yeah.

And to the laundry room. You get more specific. Things need to be organized in the places, and so every part of your house tends to get a little affected in a good way. So you're getting things organized.

But yeah, I think another thing, Julie, we're going to say...

JULIE: The second question that you need to ask yourself.

JODIE: Well, I was just going to say that you can start with pain points, too, like, go to what isn't working. Okay, and zero in on is your family just so... I like to blame them.

I mean, for me, my problem is that is me putting all the things in there. That's probably me, but they don't pay attention to anything. Teenage boys, my husband, they can't find things. And if they can't find things, then that creates chaos. So for me, the bins with the labels really was essential because they wouldn't just put things back. Oh, no.

CAN VISION AND REALITY ALIGN?

JULIE: So the other question that we thought of that you need to ask yourself before you start is so you get a vision, right? We talked about having a beautiful vision, how that motivated Jodie to tackle it.

Does your beautiful vision align practically with your space? So is the dream pantry truly a dream? Like, are we even close? So you have to meld the aspects of that dream vision, maybe that you found on thedesigntwins.com for example, because Jodie's is pretty awesome, or Pinterest or wherever that came from.

If it's this huge thing of beauty and you've got a small space, what aspects are you going to be able to take from that? And how is it going to practically work for the space? And you can you can get inspired by the colors and then bring that to your space or whatever it is, bring your dream to reality.

JODIE: And mine was a real compromise, even though in the end, it turned out just the way I wanted. But it was still the result of a big compromise. I had other plans, and I had to bring them into what is possible for me to do.

So I'm looking forward to explaining that whenever we get to that point because it was fun.

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GETTING STARTED

TASHA: Yeah, absolutely. And I do think it's important to acknowledge that so much of what you see online is like, you kind of said it's not feasible for living with. It's not feasible for either the shape of the space that you have. I mean, sometimes that is the limiting factor.

Sometimes it's for the people that are in your home. Like you mentioned, you really need bins with labels and you might absolutely love these other bins that don't really do labels very well. But if that's not what's going to help your space and your family, you might be able to get it set to take a good picture of it, but it's not going to be able to be maintained.

So once you get this vision in mind for like, this is what I want, this is something that I think it's functional, like you mentioned, it's not just a dream, a dream pantry or a dream space. What's like the first thing that you would do whenever you dive in to organize a space?

CLEARING IT OUT

JODIE: You want me to start Julie? I mean, as long as we've done a little bit of thinking, like you said, we've got a compromise in mind. I just start taking everything out. Like absolutely everything has to come out.

JULIE: Yeah, everything comes out and then you start weeding out. So get the garbage bags ready. You're going to be going through the expiration dates, I mean, paring down, getting rid of and that's a beautiful part of it because it needs to be done anyway.

JODIE: So big trash bag, big donate pile. So I had boxes and boxes going to Goodwill.

JULIE: Note to self, what not to buy anymore because you're wasting it and on and on. Right?

IT'S A BIG JOB

JODIE: Yeah. But there's two things happening. There's the organization of the stuff and then there's also the remodel side of the project. So once I took everything out and it's basically... I recommend if you have a big pantry like mine, I did this over, I think it wasn't Memorial Day, but it was the other weekend. It was Labor Day weekend. And I knew my husband and one of my sons was going to be gone for the better part of three or four days. Perfect.

And I was like, okay, I had my time frame and I just went at it. The stuff filled...it covered most of my living space in my home, probably about 2000 square feet in my home. Tables, countertops, there were like 60 bins, large bins every floor. I mean, it started yeah, counters everything.

JULIE: I told you, it's the biggest pantry I've ever been in, so it's pretty big.

WHICH COMES FIRST?

JODIE: You don't realize how much stuff's in there. But I actually started with the cleaning, the remodel part. Just probably because that was the most exciting part to me. Like, if you're excited about getting rid of your stuff, go for it. Do that first. Doesn't really matter.

I mean, you're going to have to have both parts done. But I wanted to transform the space and that had to do. So you asked the question before, we had been discussing about cleaning. So that's a really good place at that point to start with the cleaning.

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Every inch, every corner, every shelf, every surface. Cobwebs, yeah.

And the demo part, like, if you're taking I had some old shelf paper, wallpaper I had to take down, and then I decided to paint.

CLEAN IT UP

TASHA: Yeah, absolutely. I think whenever everything's already out of the space is an awesome time to go ahead and clean it, even if it's not a big space. Even if you're doing a silverware drawer or something, take your opportunity to get those crumbs out, because when else is everything going to be out of the drawer for you to do? Just like a quick wipe down of it,

JULIE: Like a nice cleaning that you don't usually get to do is a step in every organization project you have. You're not putting anything back in there. You got your nice organizers. Don't skip the cleaning step. Now's the time. Now's the time. And it feels good.

JODIE: Yeah, it's part of that fresh start.

THE SECRET INGREDIENT

TASHA: Absolutely. So you mentioned that your favorite part of these projects, for you at least, is the remodel side of things. And can you just give some suggestions of what people can do, maybe to modernize a space? Maybe especially if they can't go in and just start knocking down walls, rebuilding the whole thing? Sometimes spaces can feel like they might need that. You go in and you're like, I just don't even know what I could possibly do.

But what are some things that are maybe a little bit more cost effective or just a little bit more doable for me myself, if I want to work on it on a long weekend?

JULIE: Yeah. Jodie's got the five letter word

ALL ABOUT THE PAINT

JODIE: Paint. It's all about the paint.

Well, and here's the thing. I had visions of custom shelves and cabinetry. That was part of my original vision, that inspiration. But I'm a DIY novice. Actually, the nail gun was part of my original plan because I have really... the shelving. It works, it's functional, but it's very builder grade. It was very ugly, like... I don't know what kind of board it was.

They were really strong, but my desire was to rip them all out. If I had been able, I would have started clean. But instead I chose a paint. I chose to paint the shelves and the walls in the same color. Now, a lot of times people use the shelves as a visual, as part of the visual to draw attention to the shelves because they're pretty. So maybe an accent wall and then the white shelves so they stand out.

But in my case, I wanted the shelves to disappear, so I painted them. If you don't like your shelves, they're not beautiful, paint them the exact same color as your wall and they practically disappear.

I took it one step further and I painted everything black. It's technically like a deep, deep, deep gray, but it looks black. So a dark color. Maybe you like a forest green. Anything like that is going to really recede and disappear so your eye can't go there. It'll just focus on the things you want people to see.

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GOING MONOCHROME

JULIE: Well, I think also that seamlessness, like that painting, it all monochromatic, all one color. The pantry is potentially the most junked, up filled, busy space.

So to do that was actually genius because now it's all one. So it made it so calm. It really makes sense. Versus, like, most pantries have always been white to make it brighter and what. No, the black was genius.

JODIE: Yeah. And I had seen a black pantry. It didn't have a window or anything. It wasn't that big. So it was all about the blackness. They did have this lighting, so I didn't in the end put up the light. But I do have the advantage of having a little window in there. I mean, really, it didn't suffer with light. As long as you've got a light in the pantry, which if you've got a room, you do, it worked out fine.

Then with the bins, like my husband said, this is his favorite room now, the bins.

TAGGING IT ALL

JULIE: We talked to him this morning and we were joking, "Bill, you need to come on and give your testimonial of the great third times a charm." Remodeling - her third remodel of this space. He's like, "oh, it's so good."

JODIE: What's his favorite room?

JULIE: Is that it was all black and then the tags. The tags are the labels that Jodie used, stood out so much and were finally easy to read, that it still looks good because the family can find this stuff and could be on board because all for that. All black, white tags with clearly written labels.

JODIE: Well, they're actually available.

JULIE: Bill's not available for the interview. But that was his two cents.

JODIE: Yeah, I used like, little chalkboard labels. So just the tags, just the words stick out.

TASHA: Yeah, absolutely. Emphasize the parts of it that you like and make the parts of it that you don't disappear. And then your eyes just drawn to the cute labels that you like.

So what containers did you find were your favorite to use for organizing a pantry?

KEEPING IT CONTAINED

JODIE: Well, I really went with budget friendly and with types of bins I had used in the past that had worked. So when you're going to decide on your budget, obviously your aesthetic, and based on the size, like, how many you're going to have to buy. So these were the most cost effective.

And I used the fabric folding boxes. They come in black and even the ones that I bought had this really nice white little edge, just a very small white edge. So they look very streamlined. They're so practical, super inexpensive, and allowed me to rebuy the 60 bins that I needed to buy and justify buying them all in black, it was kind of essential once the plan was all together.

Of course, I do have some other things just to warm up the space a little bit. I have some baskets, and those function in the same way.

Julie, did you have a question?

JULIE: Don't you have clear glass jars?

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JODIE: And I do have some, yes. They're plastic containers that stack up, and then you really just see through them. You still see the black in the background, so it's not distracting. You're really just looking at your eye is like, what's in that plastic container? Like if it's pasta or it's beef or rice or anything like that. So it didn't distract from the main aesthetic.

And you've got to solve a lot of different storage things.

REACHING THE BACK

JULIE: A lot of different types of food, potentially that you're going to put in there. So the air type, see through containers to last long, people can see stackable. Also Lazy Susans, so that if you're going to store, like, medicine or spices, something that you could see all the way around if your shelves are deep.

JODIE: I had never used a Lazy Susan before, and I found these really inexpensive black Lazy Susan, so that really was good. And then I have some tiered shelf risers, and those are used for canned goods, medicine. So I have an area for that too.

TASHA: Yeah. And I hear keeping that same color theme, even if you're using the different containers. I take it that helps it feel very cohesive in there.

JODIE: Yeah.

ORGANIZATION VS. AESTHETIC

TASHA: Absolutely. So we've talked a little bit about organization, but we've also talked about aesthetic, and so those can almost kind of come into conflict a little bit. So which do you lean towards between usability and just the look of the space?

JULIE: I'm going to answer this one. Okay. So there's no other space that really needs function as much as aesthetics. And Jodie was like, really focused on aesthetics, but she was smart enough that she had been through two previous remodels, like reorganizations. I should say reorganizations, but aesthetics were involved each time.

But if you are going for that photo moment to go in a magazine, fine. But most of us are putting in this work for our homes so that they can change the way we live in our home. And while aesthetics are important in this project, you have to put function just ahead of the beauty, because otherwise it's not going to last. It's not going to improve your life the way it needs to.

PLAN AHEAD

So I say as you're doing this, and I think thought beforehand, because as Jodie said, it's a monetary investment to some degree, buying these organizational things. So you need to think about how does your family . . . like, how old are they, what do they need? What can you count on from them? How are you going to make this easy for all family members and workable?

So it could be something that they are excited about. So the kids' stuff that you want them to serve themselves, they go down below. It's kid friendly, you know, that they can open those pieces or whatever, and then the things that you don't want them to handle go up high. So all of the practicality of being honest and realistic with the people who are going to use the space, that's going to create long term success.

So that all this hard work, besides regular normal maintenance, and a little training. A

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little training goes a long way. But that you can expect this time and effort and money that goes into it to last for years.

JODIE: Right. If you do it, if I took our camera in there right now and I haven't done anything to it, it would still look, it looks really good.

JULIE: Do you give yourself what, like A-?

JODIE: Yeah.

JULIE: The fact that Bill is super happy, I mean, right there, that says a lot.

ONE LITTLE ADDITION

JODIE: Yeah. And we actually even it was Bill's idea a couple of years ago to add a it's kind of like a little kitchen island. It's like a little kitchen. It's just small and it just happened to be the right shape and size and it fit right in the middle of the room.

And I think it might not be pictured on the blog post because I hadn't painted it black yet. So it used to be white and wood color. And then I painted the whole thing. It has a wood surface and is black on the bottom, but that really is great.

So that when we take the bins that are on the higher shelf, you can't really... maybe it's baking. Okay. I have a lot of baking stuff. So I pull out the baking bin and you can place it right in there. You don't have to take the bin all the way out into the kitchen or you don't have to put it on the floor. So it was brilliant.

And Bill also, every morning he makes his oatmeal. He brings his bowl into the pantry, fills it with he's got his oatmeal, his Craisins, his nuts, his shredded coconut. He's just pulling from all of the different things and it's right there on that little workspace. So that was a thought that just came. I can't take credit for that.

TASHA: Yeah, but that's awesome. Yeah.

JODIE: So even though my shelves don't have any counter space, every space, every inch is really used with organization and storage. But we were able to add that extra piece.

TASHA: That's awesome. Yeah. And I mean, depending on the shape and size of your pantry, different needs, and I can also see myself in some pantries. You're trying to juggle the bin and get it put back up while you're still holding the thing that you need. But sometimes just adding like a little workspace or something can really help a lot.

JULIE: And who else is sitting here listening and thinking, oh, my gosh, I need to redo my pantry. I am, I am like, oh my gosh.

WHAT WORKS FOR YOU

TASHA: Well, then you need to post about it because we kind of talked about pantries are so different, right. Yours is a lot smaller. And so I have a lot of counter space. I do not have a lot of pantry space. And so the needs and things are different. I'm not going to add work surfaces to my pantry space because I need it for storage.

But if you are heavier on the storage space and lighter on the work surface space, then it makes totally... mixing and matching. So we get a little bit of everything.

JULIE: I have shared. Like, I've redone my pantry at least a couple of times, but it's an extra-large cupboard is what it is. Right. And so I have shared it on Instagram, just

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not a blog post. Because it's like, does this deserve a blog post? But I feel like maybe my pantry is more common than Jodie's.

TASHA: Oh, yeah, absolutely. I think so. Yeah. But taking the ideas that you get from all these different places, and it's kind of like we talked about, with every space, there's going to be limitations of the space. There's going to be specific needs of your family. For the most part you can't copy and paste someone else's space.

You can go, kind of like you said you saw a pantry that was you saw the black pantry in a magazine or on Pinterest or something. So you took that inspiration and you added that to your own space. But I'm sure that you didn't create an identical pantry to the one that you saw.

A FEW MORE IDEAS

JODIE: Right. It's good to just have that as at least like a motivation or something. Or even if it's just a color, because paint is always my first go-to. It's budget friendly. You can get it done in a weekend.

The other thing that I like, and this would work for really any, like even a small size pantry, is thinking about peel and stick wallpaper as an idea either behind the shelves or if the shelves are going to be blocked. Like most of my shelves are really blocked. Like, the idea of putting it on a ceiling, I've seen that be really special. And even if nobody else sees that but you, if it just makes you happy and makes you feel like you've created something special, let that motivate you to make that area not just storage, but something.

JULIE: Yeah. Or a cute light. It doesn't cost a lot to get out that can light and make it something cute or something stylish that makes it feel special.

JODIE: Or change out the door. If you happen to have a door, you could change out the door.

TASHA: Absolutely. All sorts of little accents that can make a really big difference to how a space feels.

JODIE: Right.

GET MOTIVATED NOW

TASHA: Absolutely. Well, thank you so much for sharing all this today. We'll definitely leave the link down below to where the post is, because you have an entire post. I think it's on thedesigntwins.com, right? Where you have a whole post, that all the pictures, all the things of this whole project for people who might want to go check that out. So I'll definitely leave that down below.

But that said, is there any last thoughts or anything that you all want to leave us with before we wrap up here today?

JODIE: Don't put it off too long. It's worth it. It is so worth it.

JULIE: I think this is why Instagram first took off and visual inspiration. Instagram is now video. We're still inspiring. Let that get you excited, because the work needs to be done. I mean, there's so many positives that come out of a project that is difficult, that takes some time. There's so many benefits. Just focus on that end result and have fun with it.

Cheer yourself on. Get a girlfriend to come over and help you, and then you can pay her back and help her do whatever it takes to make the whole process feel doable, and if not, enjoyable and exciting, because, yeah,

our homes can really affect every single day of our lives. And just have fun with it.

And now I'm going to go redo my pantry. I'm not going to show you right now.

TASHA: Yes, absolutely. Well, thank you both so much for your time today.

JODIE & JULIE: Thank you. So nice talking with you. Take care. God bless.

TASHA: You as well.

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Craft Room Organization feat. BrandBox

JUSTINE HOVEY • TRANSCRIPT

HEY FROM JUSTINE

Hey, everyone. My name is Justine Hovey. Welcome to Get Organized. I'm so excited to be joining you again this year. I am a card maker and paper crafter. I create card-making tutorials over on YouTube. I have card making courses for handmade card making, and I'm also the host of the Paper Crafters Get Organized Summit and Podcast.

So my three passions in life are teaching, I'm a teacher by day, crafting, which is kind of my outlet to relieve stress, and then also organization. All come into one for what I do online for my business.

ORGANIZATION ENVY

So I wanted to talk to you today about craft organization. And for me personally, from being a part of so many Facebook groups about organization, talking to so many crafters, it seems like having a box like this, whether it's the DreamBox from Create Room or the BrandBox or the Craft box from BrandBox, rather, it seems to be kind of the envy of the crafting community.

But it does come at a pretty hefty price tag. But when I actually sit down and think about it, I crafted for a good 15 years without needing a box like this. There are some reasons which I'll go into which helped me decide to purchase a box like this. But the organization principles that I use to organize this box can be applied to an everyday space, whether it's in the corner of a dining room, in your own office. Maybe you have a garage or a she shed, it doesn't really matter.

CORE ORGANIZATION PRINCIPLES

The end of the day, there are some core organization tools that you can use and some concepts that I apply in my craft room that may help you set up yours, regardless of whether you have a fancy BrandBox or not.

CHOOSING AN ORGANIZING SYSTEM

Now, the main reason why I chose to purchase a craft organizing box like this is because due to home office and working in a home office, I no longer have a space that I could actually sit down and craft when I'm available and feeling creative. I always had to either wait for the weekend when the office was free, or I had to wait for... my husband works long hours. So it wasn't possible to craft in the evenings. The lighting wasn't good anymore, and it just was not convenient.

And so after 15 years of hemming and hawing, I finally got one of these because now I craft in the middle of a hallway, and I can open up the box anytime or close it up when guests come over. And I can get my creativity on.

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HOW IT WORKS

So let's go through some organization about the box itself that has really helped me. I'm going to go into some individual organization strategies as well for some various craft supplies that you may have in your craft room.

BINS AND MORE BINS

All right, so as you can see from my craft room here, it really is. Regardless of how this box folds up or doesn't or you keep it open, it all really is boxes. It's just a bunch of twelve x twelve bins, and you can see that I've also added some of my own boxes to the BrandBox so that I can organize things that are taller.

And I love the fact that there's adjustable shelves. So even if you were to have just like a Billy bookcase from Ikea, or an old bookshelf that you found at a garage sale, the idea of having bins in boxes is nothing new.

ORGANIZING BY TECHNIQUE

And so each one of my bins actually contains the products for a specific technique generally, or a specific kind of supply.

So by techniques I mean I have all of my embossing tools in my embossing drawer. I have everything I need for ink blending in its own drawer, all the tools. I have everything. If I want to do gel printing in the gel press drawer or the gel printing drawer. I have my gel press, my stamps, my stencils, my brayer, and the paints all stored together so that if I feel like doing gel printing that day, I just take out a bin, sit at my desk and get going.

Now this is a concept you can apply to your craft room as well. If you have bins that are dedicated to specific techniques that you enjoy doing, regardless of the craft that you enjoy doing, if you can take the bin, set it down on a table and get going, it's a very efficient way of being creative.

LET GO OF MICRO ORGANIZING

Now, one of the things I had to learn to give up and let go of when it came to craft organization is micro organizing. If I wanted to organize everything into the most specific category I could possibly think of, I would never actually get any crafting done. I would just be organizing all day. And although I do kind of find that fun, I'm sure most people, that's not why they're into crafting, to organize their supplies.

And what I mean by that is, for example, I was a scrap booker and I would have all of my, let's say, ephemera, it's called, like preprinted images or stickers or things like that, all sorted by categories. I would have all the holidays, Easter, Valentine's Day, Christmas, Thanksgiving, Halloween, summer. And within summer I would have sports and camping and travel. And then within sports I would have soccer and basketball. And I just had every single category I could possibly think of.

And this actually meant very tedious, tidying pot process that I often avoided. I also started to kind of just shove things in drawers here and there because I didn't want to put it away and it just did not work.

NO DIGGING, QUICK TIDY

So for me, having bins like this where my supplies aren't necessarily perfectly organized within the bin, but they're all in there and the bins aren't too big and

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overwhelming, like I don't have to dig through piles of stuff, has really helped with the organization. I can tidy up after any card project, usually in less than five minutes, because I literally say, okay, stamps go in this bin, dyes go in this bin, stamps let's go in this binder, and glue goes in this drawer. One and done.

And I don't have to sit there, open up the bin, open up little containers in the bin, or maybe they're in rainbow order or alphabetical order or whatever. I don't really do too much of that in the craft room. There's very few exceptions which I'll go into in a moment.

PAPER RULES

Now, there are some rules that I have in my craft room as well that I wanted to talk about before we go into any sort of specifics about organization. First of all, paper can be very overwhelming. As a paper crafter, we accumulate piles and piles of it, and oftentimes patterned paper, we feel like it's too pretty to even end up using. It sits there for years. It's tedious to organize because it's so thin. I could sit and go through paper for 4 hours and only make a couple of inches of dent in my stack.

So paper to me is something I very much limit coming into my craft room. So at the moment, what I do when I buy colored cardstock, for example, I have a lot of rules with paper because it just gets out of hand and I hate organizing it. So one of the things that I do is I only buy a multi pack of cardstock colors. So a sampler pack from a company that, let's say, has two pieces of cardstock in a specific color, and it has 24 different colors, so it's a pack of 48.

ORDERING SPECIFIC COLORS

I only am allowed to order that specific color in a larger amount when I use up those two pieces of paper. Because I can't tell you how many times I've ordered one of these cardstock samplers, because I feel like I have full set syndrome and I need to have all the colors of cardstock. And then my browns sit there, oftentimes my dull greens, like olive greens sit there. Any sort of dark yellows. There's just certain card stock that I don't use.

And the cardstock sampler is a perfect way to figure out which colors do I use all the time. For me, it's white, black, dark purple, dark blue, and gold and silver. And I've been able to discover that without getting too overwhelmed by paper.

SCRAPS

The other rule I have is when I'm finished my craft session and there is a piece of paper smaller than a quarter panel of a US standard size paper. So that would mean roughly four and a quarter by five and a half inches, roughly the size of like an invitation card. If it's smaller than that, it gets tossed into the recycling bin, because if I start keeping every little scrap of paper, I'm going to get crazy overwhelmed.

Any types of paper that are cut down already and small like this, I actually store underneath my die cutting machine because I'm able to just grab and go and die cut, because usually die cuts are quite small and I don't need to be using a full sheet of cardstock for that. So by having them directly next to the machine, it works out really well for me.

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DO NOT EXCEED BOX SIZE

Another rule that I have for my craft room is I do not exceed the box size. I know this sounds a little strange, but what I do is I have a specific box dedicated to each supply, and I do not exceed the size of this box. If I am at the limit of the box, I either don't need any more or I need to purge something in order to bring something new in.

So, stamps, for example, I have one of these clear bins. You can see I've given up the micro organizing. They're not really arranged in categories because I don't really have that many stamps anyway. If you're not a stamper, you might think that I have a lot of stamps, but I really don't, and I know my stash quite well. So at this point, I can flip through really quickly and I can figure out which stamp I need to have.

I also have a digital inventory, which I'll talk about in a second. And when I go into my stamps, this bin is not allowed to become fuller than this bin is. So once the bin is full and the stamp set doesn't fit inside anymore, it's time to donate or sell off some of my stamps to make room for new ones.

DIGITAL INVENTORY

I mentioned that I actually do a digital inventory, which is why I don't need the micro categories for my stamps. Actually, I do them digitally. So me personally, I use Evernote, and this is a really great tool to help me with my stamp sets.

If I'm looking for a specific sentiment or a specific type of stamp, let's say I need a whale or a dolphin or I need an I miss you stamp, all I need to do is type it into my digital inventory and I can find it easily.

SPECIFIC ORGANIZING

All right, so let's go into some of the specifics in my craft room on how I organize certain things. And again, just because I have a beautiful organizer like the one here, does not mean that you need one of these in order to have good craft room organization. All the things I mentioned in previously in this video are things you can apply to any space. And just by having bins, you already have one of these. All right, so let's dive into some specific organization.

CLEAR STAMPS

So, as you can see here, I have my clear stamps. I keep these in a clear pocket, they're called. Just so I can make sure that everything stays together. And anything that coordinates with the stamp set gets tucked in behind. So whether the company has chosen to provide a project guide for inspiration, or they have provided coordinating dies, or they have provided a coordinating stencil, or a foil plate, it all goes here behind the stamp, so everything stays together.

STENCILS

Another thing that I specifically organize that I think is really helpful are my stencils. This is one of the things that I do have categories for. I don't necessarily have them all kind of tabbed off with dividers or anything like that, but I do have a list of the categories on the outside of the binder. And what I do here is I just have a six x eight scrapbook that I use, the page protectors that are just very normal, six by eight. And I slip the stencil in, I stick a label on it and it's all ready to go. You don't need, of course, to label things, but since I do work a lot of the times for companies or I show card making tutorials, I like to be able to know what

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the stencil is called. So in case anybody's interested in buying it for their stash, then they definitely know where they can get it.

TECHNIQUE DRAWERS

Here's a perfect example of a technique drawer. These are my alcohol inks. So I actually have two drawers for alcohol inks because I do have a fair amount of supplies for it. And so all of my alcohol inks are in these tin organizers. And then I have another brand that are in this white Ikea organizer. Very simple, but you can see I have everything I need here to get going with alcohol inks when I'm ready to use them. I have a pair of gloves, I have pipettes, I have my alcohol rubbing alcohol, my isopropyl alcohol rather. I have the paper required for the alcohol inks.

Everything is here and ready to go, which makes for such quick and easy crafting. So if there's ever a moment I sit down in my craft room and I'm never quite sure what I want to do or get started. Most of the time I'll just look at the names of my drawers and then I'll say, oh, I haven't used alcohol inks in a while, or I haven't gel printed in a while, or I haven't done any embossing in a while. Let's do that. So not only does my organization inspire me to create and make it easy to create, but it also gives me ideas at the same time.

PURGE, THEN ORGANIZE

And as I'm ending this here, I'm going to end on one final little tip, and that is don't go out, especially after attending something like this, to get organized and buy yourself a whole bunch of organizers. Take out what you need to get organized, purge or destash what you need to get rid of, and then decide on the organizer that you need.

GENERAL AND ADAPTABLE

It's very rare that I buy an organizer that is a very specific organizer for something. So for me, obviously, there are a couple of specifics. In my room, I have a craft box that is dedicated for crafting. And I have some ink organizers here off to the side that are made for ink organizers. It's not exactly the most practical storage for other things, right? I mean, the only thing I could think of is, like, cassette tapes, but who has those? The rest of my storage, though, in this room are all clear bins, gift boxes and binders that I could use to organize so many different things.

Because a craft room is always something that's evolving. Crafters usually have more than one crafting hobby. So it is important that your storage and what you've purchased actually fits your supplies and can actually evolve to fit other supplies in case one day you don't end up doing this anymore.

All right, well, I hope it helped you, this video here, kind of realize that you don't need a crazy expensive organizer to organize your craft room. Although it is a lot of fun. There are the core elements of organization within a craft room that you could apply to any space. Thanks so much for watching and enjoy the rest of the videos.

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Back in Sync: How to Leverage Chronic Low Energy for Maximum Impact

KALYN BROOK • TRANSCRIPT

Hello and welcome. I am so excited that you're here today. I know there's about a dozen other things that you could be doing with your time, so I really appreciate you being here and I promise to make it worth your while.

A NEW WAY OF THINKING

Now today we are going to turn everything you've ever learned about productivity on its head,
especially in regards to time management. We're going to look at time management through a
different lens, the lens of energy management, especially in how you can leverage your energy to do your highest energy work during your peak energy hours. That's what we're going to discuss today.

And if you struggle with depression and anxiety or maybe a chronic illness, just an autoimmune disorder or some sort of, whatever it is medically that you feel like you have, this chronic low energy and fatigue, I'm especially speaking to you today because I am that person as well. And so the things that I have discovered and implemented in my own life I'm really excited to share with you so that you can start making some positive changes.

MEETING KALYN

And if there's anything that sticks out at you throughout this presentation, maybe a concept that you've never thought about before or a quote that really resonated, I'd love it if you shared your takeaway on social media. You can tag me at @KalynBrookeCo on Instagram and that way I can see it and also share. I really just want this workshop to be super impactful for you.

But before we get started into all the good stuff, let me introduce myself. My name is Kaylin and I've been married to my husband Joseph for 16 years now. We also have two adorable rabbits that keep us on our toes. And four years ago we decided to try full time RV travel. That's why in the beginning you probably saw my house looked a little different. That's because I'm in an RV. And now we spend our days exploring the beautiful United States while also working from the road.

I'm also the founder of KalynBrooke.com and BrainbookLibrary.com. In both places that's where I help women embrace a more mindful approach to productivity and also find ways to integrate wellness with their goals and to-dos.

I was diagnosed with depression, anxiety and OCD as an early teen. Quite the combo. And this is still a battle that I fight today. While those things don't define me, they are still a part of me.

And as a highly driven individual who wants to do all the things, and tries, I was continually frustrated by how little I could do compared to my colleagues. I would look at other people and wonder how are they able to produce so much when I feel like I

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barely have enough energy to take a shower some days.

LOW ENERGY STRUGGLES

And maybe you have experienced something like that. You experience low energy levels on a regular basis too and you can't help but wonder if something is broken about yourself. Maybe when it comes to social invitations and activities, you get really anxious because you know that it's going to knock you out for a few days afterwards. Or your emails and text messages pile up because you don't have enough energy to respond, especially if someone is asking a question that takes more than a one sentence reply.

And you tend to think of everything in terms of how much energy and bandwidth it's going to take out of you. And when you go looking for a productivity advice to fix whatever this is, because you don't want to rely on the coffee and the energy drinks all the time, you don't find tips that relate to you.

THE WRONG KIND OF ADVICE

And that's because the majority of productivity advice is for one type of person. So this is the person who magically wakes up at 5:00 A.M. without an alarm clock, then experiences that slight afternoon slump after lunch, and whose brain shuts down after 08:00 p.m.. So this is why we're often told to do the most important and hardest things first, is because that's when society says our brain is most alert.

A DIFFERENT BATTERY

But not everyone works that way. I kind of liken it to a phone battery. So someone who wakes up at 05:00 A.M. ready to go, they're like a phone battery that has been plugged in all night. But we don't all start at that 100% and then slowly decrease throughout the day. Some of us are already starting with a low battery or a battery that depletes faster than others. And then some even have a battery that increases throughout the day until it reaches full capacity at night, which is when their highest energy levels are.

So the saying that we all have the same 24 hours isn't actually true. Those 24 hours don't always feel the same because we're not all wired the same. But when we tap into our most productive hours and work in sync with our body's unique energy levels instead of against them, you're going to see a pattern that you can leverage.

You're also more effective because you know when to focus and when to rest and your quality of life soars because you can finally stop emotionally bullying yourself when you feel like you don't accomplish enough. And that's what I want us to explore today.

TODAY'S AGENDA

So during our time together, we're going to first learn about why time management is only as good as your energy management and how your energy levels impact what you actually accomplish.

Then we'll move on to discover your body's unique natural energy rhythms. They're all different for all of us so that you know two things: your best time of day and your best day of the week.

We're also going to explore what the biggest factors are that drain or boost your specific energy. Then we're going to look

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at ways to optimize your energy in a way that keeps you laser focused and eliminates decision fatigue. We'll talk about that term a little bit later.

Then we'll talk about how to strategically set healthy boundaries to protect your energy and make sure that you're using it for the right things. Because when you have a limited amount of energy, you really have to make the most of it.

And then we'll end today with three quick hacks that you can use to thrive on low energy days when you just can't avoid them. Because we have a lot to cover here, we're not going to dive deep into the ways you could increase your energy. So there are obviously diet and lifestyle changes you can try, but only you and your doctor are going to know the best course of action you can take if you're struggling with chronically low energy levels and just need to get that checked out. And in fact, I'd highly encourage you to see someone about that.

Today we're going to primarily focus on how to leverage the energy that you have so that you can maximize your own levels of productivity.

TIME MANAGEMENT VS. ENERGY MANAGEMENT

But first we have to talk about the difference between time management and energy management. What I found is almost every productivity book out there that I've read claims to have the secret to accomplish more tasks in less time. But when we exclusively focus on managing your time, you're tying what you accomplish to a clock. You start to treat your body like a machine, and then you get upset and frustrated when it doesn't perform how you expect it to.

On the other hand, energy management is tied to your capacity. So how much you can reasonably accomplish within a certain amount of time depends on whether your energy is high or low. I'm sure you felt this way when you approach the same task with different levels of energy. If your energy is really high, you can probably breeze through a quick pick up around the house in about ten minutes.

But if your energy is extremely low, you might only be able to fold a blanket or maybe rearrange the throw pillows back onto the couch before you're too tired to do any more. So it's less about how much room you have in your schedule versus what you have the mental and physical capacity to do.

Now, that doesn't mean we completely ignore time management. We can still practice time blocking and implement the Pomodoro timer technique and use a daily planner to help structure our day. But we need to bring energy management into the conversation too, because your time management is only as good as your energy management, and when you ignore your energy, you're constantly competing against it.

LEVERAGING YOUR ENERGY

I want us to instead leverage that energy, not so we can produce more, but so we can do our most challenging and most important work during our highest energy hours, which, funny enough, will result in higher levels of productivity overall.

If that sounds too good to be true, or you're thinking, this is not going to be possible for me because I struggle with low energy on a pretty consistent basis. I want to give you hope. There are times when your energy is

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going to be higher throughout the day and even during different times of week. Maybe not exceptionally high, but higher.

And once you figure out your body's unique natural rhythms, you're going to be able to tap into that power, too, and time management will become a lot easier for you.

STEP ONE: ENERGY AUDIT

So how do we figure out our peak energy hours? By conducting an energy audit. We want to see when exactly your energy levels rise and fall throughout the day and throughout the week, as well as what activities impact those energy levels the most, your energy givers and energy takers.

To do this, we need to collect data based on how we feel during each hour of the day. If you wanted to keep this super simple, I would suggest keeping a notebook or a pad of paper out for an entire day. Set alarms on your phone to check in at different times, and then jot down how you're feeling every time that alarm goes off.

ENERGY TRACKER

You're still going to get great insight from that, but if you really want to narrow down your peak energy times, what affects them, and make sure your data is as accurate as possible, I created an energy tracker in Notion to do all the heavy lifting for you. There should be a link to this energy tracker below, but if there's not, make sure you jot down this URL. It's kalynbrooke.com/EnergyTracker, and that's where you're going to find the download. I cannot wait to show you this energy tracker because it is so cool.

So we're going to leave the slides for a minute and take you into Notion and show you how this is set up. So when you duplicate this tracker to your own workspace - and Notion is completely free to sign up for, by the way, it also comes with a digital app so you can access this template on your phone on the go, and that way it's easier to check in. You have some daily check in buttons here during different two hour time blocks throughout the day, so you don't have to check in at every hour just at some point during these time blocks. And if you would feel more comfortable setting alarms for some time during these time blocks, go ahead and do this because the more data that you can have populating in this table, the better.

RATING YOUR LEVELS

Over here you have the rating chart, so when you do check in with your energy level throughout the day, you can put a rating for it. And then this stats tracker over here is going to summarize all of your results. It looks like a bunch of gobblygook here right now because it doesn't have any data in this table. So let's add some data and show you what this could look like.

So I'm going to add a new entry as an example and it already has the time block associated with it. I just need to choose the energy level. So I'm going to choose, let's say, a number four, and then you could add any notes that you wanted to add regarding why you felt like that was your energy level. You don't have to do this for every single energy check. That could get a little excessive, but if you pick a four or five or a one, one being the lowest, I do want you to try to fill this note section out if possible, because... and I'll show you here.

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ENERGY GIVERS AND TAKERS

Let's say I was a number four, which felt pretty great because I went running. What happens when you go back into this home page, it shows I went running under your energy givers. So any time block where you put a four or five and also notes, it's going to show up here if you put a one and then put any notes for that. So maybe I'm going to say I had really low energy because I was in a meeting. You can go over here and it populates under your energy takers.

And we already have some of the table filled in, so it's already pulling your best days. Monday, your best time is between 12:00 P.M. and 02:00 P.M. It only says that because we only have Monday filled in, and twelve to two is the highest energy so far. Once you'll get this entire table filled out, then these results will be a more accurate picture of your own energy levels throughout the week and throughout the day.

And again, if you need that link, here is the URL that you can write down and download that energy tracker. It's also going to come with a video tutorial that explains a little bit more deeply about the template. So don't worry if you don't quite understand how it works. I will give you more guidance when you download that tracker.

ENERGY UPS AND DOWNS

Something that you may notice when you fill in your tracker is that you have a high energy time of day and then it dips, and then maybe you see one or two more time blocks later on in the day where your energy increases before it dips again. This is called an ultradian rhythm, which is a biological cycle that alternates between high activity periods, which are usually around 90 minutes, and low activity periods, which are about 20 minutes.

THE BIOLOGY BEHIND IT ALL

Now, I was never great at biology in school, but stay with me here because this is actually quite fascinating to understand what your body is doing behind the scenes. Scientists think that there is a delicate balance between sodium and potassium that ultimately controls these cycles within your body. When you work really hard, you upset this balance and the brain needs a break. That's why you feel fatigued or in a haze after you've been crunching numbers or just doing something that requires a lot of concentration.

Once the brain recovers, it's this potassium/sodium ratio that goes back to normal, and then you can think clearly again. So the idea is to work when you have those high energy peaks and then take short breaks when you feel that fading out. If you push through that dip in your cycle, your body is going to trigger a fight or flight response that increases adrenaline, which is what we need when we're in actual danger.

You've heard of adrenaline before, and it removes most of your logic, because technically, if you're waiting around to think through an actual threat, you're probably not going to survive it. So why am I using this analogy? Because your body literally cannot handle you pushing yourself past its natural limits. The logic portion of our brain decreases and we end up putting out less than stellar work, and it also leads to burnout.

The whole point of this section is to recognize that there are times during the day and certain days of the week where your energy level is going to ebb and flow, and

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we need to respect that.

STEP TWO: OPTIMIZE YOUR ENERGY

Once you figure out the time of day and the day of week that you are at your best, you can optimize your energy by matching your work to your energy levels. And that's step number two. I'm going to give you some practical ideas to optimize your energy in just a minute.

However, before we dive in, we need to remember that what I'm about to share is more of an idealistic view of what we'd love to see happen. Distractions abound in the form of people, ourselves, our environment, and technology. And there's going to be times when we need to complete a harder task during a low energy time period. While we can do our best to eliminate those distractions and use our highest energy time wisely, you can only control what you can control. So I implore you to please don't beat yourself up over any obstacles or surprises that you encounter and remember that you are human and you are doing your best.

SECRET #1: THEME DAYS

So with that pep talk out of the way, let's talk about optimization secret number one, which is how to create your ideal week using theme days. Theme days are what gives you structure to your schedule and also reduces decision fatigue by guiding you on what you'll be working on for that specific day. Here is just an example of theme days.

On this slide, if you find yourself pulled in 50 different directions, theme days is going to help you batch similar tasks and events together so that you can stay focused and ultimately more productive. They also help you manage your energy levels by saving specific themes for days of the week when you usually have more energy.

On this Google Calendar screenshot, you can see my theme days here in dark blue for my work. And then this taupe mauve color for my home management day. I discovered that my best day was Tuesday. So that's when I do the majority of my writing and deep, focused work, like creating this presentation. Mondays are more of a recover from the weekend and get organized kind of day. So I'm usually distracted and have very low energy. I call this a potato day. That's when I do a lot of busy work.

Wednesdays and Thursdays are also deep work days, and then on Friday, I'm pretty much fried from brain work. So I call that my life admin day, and that's where I tackle housework, update my finances, sort through paperwork, and prepare for the weekend. Of course, life is not perfect, so when my husband's work schedule doesn't line up with mine and he has Thursday off and works on Saturday, then I have to rearrange these theme days.

WHAT WORKS FOR YOU

Here are some other theme day examples just to give you an idea of how this might play into your life. I have a friend who sets aside one day a week for hospitality. When someone wants to get together for a play day, or they invite a family over for dinner, as much as they possibly can, they will schedule it for this day every week. I believe it's a Thursday.

And then my sister in law volunteers for Awana every Wednesday. She also has kids that attend, and she makes dinner for all the workers that don't have time to

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grab dinner. Between work and Awana, her Wednesdays are extremely busy. So the next day, Thursday, is her at home day, and that's so her family can recover from the busyness and hecticness of the day before.

SECRET #2: TIGER TIME

You could practice the same concept with time blocks. This is optimization secret number two: time blocking your calendar. This means you do the work that requires the most amount of energy during your peak energy hours. I love how Amy Porterfield calls this peak energy time her tiger time. So I've totally taken that and adopted it. She protects this time like a mama tiger would protect her cub by not scheduling any meetings or running errands during this time block, and by putting her phone on do not disturb. My tiger time is that at 10:00 A.M. to 12:00 P.M. time block.

Once you find your tiger time during your energy audit, make sure you're using that time wisely on the goals and the projects and the tasks that move your life forward, and also take the most focus to accomplish. That's where you're going to see the positive results.

So during my tiger time, similar to Amy Porterfield, I'm not scheduling any work meetings because those are, in particular, pretty draining to me. My brain will not function enough to write a newsletter or a blog post or film a YouTube video afterwards. So to make the most of my energy during this tiger time, that's when I write. And then if I have a meeting, I try to schedule it for after the tiger time when my brain doesn't need to work as hard and it's okay if I'm zapped of energy by the time I finish the call.

EMPOWER YOURSELF

When you have so little energy to start with, it can feel really empowering to experience that boost of your tiger time. So again, as much within your control, try to focus on those high priority items during this time. If you grab the all access pass for this summit where you get access to all the recordings, I've included my priority Task Management Crash Class as a bonus. So if you need help discovering what those biggest priorities are and how to best manage your entire task list so those priorities don't get lost in the shuffle, this class is going to give you the formula I use for that.

SECRET #3: ASSIGN ENERGY LEVELS

Another way to understand which tasks you should focus on during specific times and this is my third secret is to assign an energy level to your tasks. I use Notion to manage all of my tasks. So that same tool I used for the energy tracker and I have one of three energy levels that I add to a task.

So three lightning bolts means this is a really high energy task. I should complete this during my high energy hours or my tiger time. And then the yellow two lightning bolts is more of a medium energy task and the green one is a low energy task. So I try to have a really great combo of those amount of tasks during each day. I find that I can only handle one to two high energy tasks in a day.

So when I'm looking at my weekly snapshot like this and I see three high energy tasks in a day, I have to look at that and say, what can I shift to later in the week? Because I know that I'm probably not going to be able to complete all of those tasks or at least not give all of those tasks my very best.

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TASK LIST MANAGEMENT

The other thing you can do with adding energy levels to your tasks is you could filter your tasks in different ways. That's another reason why I use Notion, because it's a digital tool that allows me to do this. One of my favorite views is to see all those low energy tasks in one table. So when I'm not able to do much of anything, I still have a list of tasks that I can come to that don't require a lot of brain power or physical energy. And it gives me something that I can still complete.

I have done a YouTube video about my entire task list management system and how to create your own master task list to manage all of your tasks. If you're interested in learning more about managing your tasks inside of Notion, I talk more about this on my YouTube channel. You can find it under the Master Task List video.

CYCLE SYNCING

Another way to optimize your energy, and I don't have time to get into it today, so I'm going to send you down a rabbit trail yourself: you may want to research cycle syncing. So this is optimizing your energy based on where you are in your menstrual cycle, because throughout the cycle, you have peaks of high energy and then times of significantly less energy. And depending on where you are, you could focus on certain tasks, different types of exercise, and even eat different foods that are going to be most in sync and supportive with your body at that time. It's really quite a fascinating topic, and I recommend this book, Woman Code, for more information on that.

But the main point here is that when you realize there are certain times of day and certain days of the week when you feel your best and that those time periods are limited, you'll start to treat those hours differently. And while I want you to protect those hours so they don't slip away from you, we also need to protect our overall energy to give ourselves the greatest chance of feeling our best outside those hours, too.

STEP THREE: PROTECT YOUR ENERGY

That leads us to step number three, protect your energy. Everything and everyone steals a little bit of your energy. Not intentionally, of course, at least not most of the time. But if you think about it, there's all these text messages you need to reply to, errands you need to run, dishes that need to be washed, a dog that needs to be walked, and, of course, the anxious thoughts swirling around in your head.

AVOID DECISION FATIGUE

Everything either takes a small piece or a big chunk of your energy. And while we can't avoid these demands entirely, we can approach them in a more strategic way. Here is perhaps a hard truth to accept, at least for me. Your brain can only handle a limited amount of decisions a day. So when your decision quota maxes out, you experience what is called decision fatigue, that term I mentioned earlier when we were talking about theme days.

Decision fatigue occurs when your brain is so worn out from making decisions that it can't make any more, or at least it can't make any more logical ones. So when you eliminate decisions wherever you can, you give yourself the greater chance of sustaining high energy levels for longer.

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AUTOMATE

Here's a few ways you can do this. The first is to automate as much as possible. The more you automate, the less your brain has to think. And the less your brain has to think, the more energy you'll have.

Here is a list of different ideas that I came up with of how to automate things in your life. Some of my favorites are creating a capsule wardrobe or a daily uniform so you don't have to make decisions about what to wear. Or even trying a savings app that automatically transfers a certain amount from your checking account to your savings every week or every month so you don't have to think about it.

You can subscribe to get your household items delivered. You can create email templates of the common emails that you receive, and Gmail allows you to do this easily, so with one click of a button you can send a relevant reply. Not all of these are going to work for you in your life right now, but I do want to help get your brain turning on what you could automate even beyond this list.

SET BOUNDARIES

The second way to protect your energy is to set boundaries ahead of time, especially on those energy takers that you will discover during your energy audit. I find that most adults need boundaries surrounding screen time, sleep, and social events.

SCREEN TIME

So if you're finding yourself drained while scrolling through Instagram or playing games on your phone, I would suggest setting a screen time boundary. There are apps that will help you with this and or put your phone away by a certain time every night. I like to decide on a cutoff time for when I do that. Generally it's around 09:00 P.M. So that I can get into bed and get a good night's sleep. Because sleep is incredibly essential to energy.

SOCIAL EVENTS

You could also set maximums on social events, so maybe you do no more than two in a week or no more than one or two in a day. I actually have a personal example of this that happened to me recently. So there was a Saturday when my nephew had a morning soccer game and then my niece and nephews were participating in the Awana Grand Prix, which if you're not familiar with that, it's a church function where kids create and race their own wooden cars. And then after that, we were going to be going to a park and celebrating my father in law's birthday later that afternoon and into the evening, I knew that I was not going to last all three events. So I skipped the soccer game, knowing I could always catch another one and then put my energy back into the two remaining events.

For me, two major events in one day is still going to be exhausting. So here is a bonus tip you can practice if you have a similar situation pop up if possible. Always plan a buffer day after a big day. This is a day where you can slow down, veg, and recuperate. Buffer days give you space to breathe before resuming normal life. And I have found they are so essential to protecting your energy.

So whatever is in your control, if it's in your control to take that next day off, or at least make that next day a little bit lighter in terms of tasks or events, I would definitely do that.

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DON'T DO LIST

Another idea to help you set and maintain boundaries is to create a don't do list. I know this maybe sounds a little excessive, but I find it especially helps me. To know ahead of time how to handle certain requests. So when my father in law tries to give me some cuttings from his garden, I can say, no, thank you, but live plants are on my don't do list. They stress me out, and I never take care of them, right. And I just don't want to invest my limited energy into plants.

So you could create this list on your phone's notes app, or create a list in the planner you use, like I have here. This list is going to be something that you will add to over time, and it can be a big help at eliminating the back and forth, wondering if you should say yes or no. You've already decided ahead of time. You don't need to waste energy deciding again.

RENEW AND RECHARGE

And the last way to protect your energy is to spend time on habits that renew and recharge. You will figure out your specific energy givers when you do your energy audit, but try as much as you can to carve out time to do more of those things. For me, it's running, being outside in general, a change in work, scenery, grabbing a book to read that's inspiring, or a fiction novel I can get lost in. Give yourself the greatest chance of success by doing activities that help you increase your energy whenever you can.

Practicing all of these things together, automating, setting boundaries, and focusing on recharging activities is going to help raise your base energy level to a higher point, so you can start out with a higher battery charge than before.

THE NEED TO PIVOT

However, as much as we try to manage our energy with all of these things, the truth is we're still going to experience low energy days. I've not given you a magic formula that is going to banish low energy entirely. There will still be days when you wake up and you have no idea why you're feeling so exhausted and crummy and unable to perform the most menial of tasks. And when that happens, I don't want you to get discouraged or think you haven't done enough to optimize or protect your energy. I want you to pivot.

And here are three quick hacks you can practice on the days when you're just not feeling it. That will still help you be productive, but in a more mindful way.

PLAN B

First, think about your task list in terms of Plan A and Plan B. Plan A is your original plan and the ideal way that you want your day to go. But when you realize that's not going to be possible, it's very tempting to consider the day a total loss and go back to bed. Here's what I want you to do instead. Shift to plan B.

Plan B looks at your list in terms of what you can drop and focuses only on the most important task of the day. This is where you really practice the concept of prioritization. You're ruthlessly calling your list to what you really have to do, not what you think you have to do. And thinking in terms of Plan A and Plan B removes that all or nothing, thinking that there is only one plan for the day and if you don't follow it, you somehow failed. When you have two plans for the day, you can always pivot to the

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more grace filled one when you need to.

You do not have to literally write down a plan A and Plan B for your day. This is just a mental exercise that helps you cull your Plan A list down to a more manageable one, which eventually becomes your plan B.

BREAK IT DOWN

So what if the most important task of the day feels really overwhelming and you feel like you can't even accomplish that? My second hack is to break that task down into the smallest increments possible.

Maybe this sounds a little silly, but bear with me here. What if you just washed one dish? Or wrote one paragraph? Or made one phone call? Or weeded one flower bed? You drove to one store. If a task doesn't feel manageable, break it down to just one part of the whole task.

This tricks your brain into starting, because I found that the task that has never started is often the hardest one. And if an action is so ridiculously easy, the more we're likely to do it. And once you start something, it's much easier to keep going. Momentum usually takes over. Since you washed one dish and your hands already soapy, why not wash two or three? Why not write a few more paragraphs or drive to more than one store? We can't always rely on motivation, but we can go further with momentum.

RESORT TO BRIBERY

And if that doesn't work, here is my last hack to try on a low energy day, you could bribe yourself. I love to bribe myself with a reward using an "if, then" statement. If I wash the dishes, then I can watch that new Netflix show. If I go grocery shopping, then I can grab Starbucks on the way home. If I finish decluttering this junk drawer, then I can have a piece of chocolate.

Even though you could simply skip whatever it is you needed to do and watch the show anyway. Order a Starbucks drink, or eat a piece of chocolate. We are adults, after all. Telling yourself that you have to wait until you complete a task makes that reward much more indulgent and therefore enjoyable. Our brains love that feeling of anticipation and pleasure, so we can use this to our advantage and inspire ourselves to complete a task we would otherwise not do.

BEWARE PERFORMANCE BASED THINKING

As I wrap up here, there's just one more thing I want to talk about, and it's easily the most important concept I hope you walk away with today. We need to be careful not to tie our self-worth to what we produce.

If you ever feel like you're not accomplishing enough or you're internalizing thoughts that you're a failure because of that. This is a key indicator you have created a performance based relationship with yourself and that you are somehow more valuable by the amount of items you complete in a day.

And I get it. I am the Type A poster child for this. I have been in therapy for months trying to break this tendency in my own life, and I still revert back to this. It's a struggle for me. But we are not what we do, and we are not how much we do. Our to do lists are simply a list of things we have to do or want to do, and they're not indicators of your worth or value.

I love how Elizabeth Gilbert in Big Magic says you should measure your worth by

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your dedication to your path, not by your successes and failures. What matters is that you keep moving forward, no matter how small those steps may be.

THE BIG PICTURE

And while it might not feel like you're making a lot of progress, I want you to remember this picture. Cement this image in your mind so you can think of it when you feel like life is feeling pretty static lately, because when you pull back and you get that bird's eye view of a larger snapshot in time, you realize just how far you've come. Low energy levels or not, you have showed up, and it has, in fact, made a difference.

Thank you again for attending this class. I do hope you gained some valuable insight today, and if you'd like to continue this conversation and get to know me better I'd love to get to know you better. Please look me up on Instagram at KalynBrookeCo.

And remember, you can also sign up for that free energy tracker which will add you to my email list. I send out a newsletter every Saturday morning about productivity, self-care, personal growth, routines, all that good stuff that I nerd out about and hope you do. Too many readers say this is the highlight of their inbox, so I hope I can see you there.

Have a great rest of your day.

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Practical Tips for Adding Function and Style to Your Next DIY Home Project

KARA FIDD • TRANSCRIPT

Hi, everyone. I am really excited to talk about practical tips for adding style and function to your next DIY home project today. So let's get started.

MEET KARA

My name is Kara. I'm a mom of two. I'm a military spouse. I'm obsessed with DIY. I am all about family friendly home projects that make life easier and a lot more beautiful. My goal for my projects is always to add as much style and function as possible.

So a little bit about me. I'm a special needs parent. My son and I both have ADHD. He also has a language disorder and a processing disorder. So organization in our household is a struggle and it's why I focus so much on adding function.

I used to work as a nurse in a correctional facility. Then I become a stay at home parent after my second child was born. And I started an online business in 2019, which sold in 2021 so I can pursue my passion and the thing that brings me the most joy, which is transforming spaces with my own two hands and teaching others to do the same.

My goal is to be able to one day give back to deserving individuals and family through charity builds. If I can do that, that will be my dream.

LOOKING AHEAD

So what we're going to talk about today in this presentation is DIYing with more function. As I mentioned, organization is a big hurdle in my family, especially as an ADHD household. So adding function to our space makes organization and routines so much easier.

We're going to talk about identifying problem areas in your home, working backwards to solve the problem and maximize function. I'm going to go over some tips and tricks for getting design inspiration. Your home can be beautiful and functional. It is possible to have both. And then we're going to talk about planning out your projects and I also have some examples at the end.

IDENTIFYING PROBLEM AREAS

First, let's talk about identifying problem areas in your home. So what are you struggling with in terms of organization and routine? This is usually what I start out with because if we don't know where we're struggling or what we're struggling with, we can't really work backwards to figure out how to solve that.

So try to think about what are some spaces in your home that you struggle to keep clean? What are some spaces that you struggle to be organized? Do you find that there's one space in your home that seems to be more cluttered no matter how much

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you try to keep it organized?

Is it your kitchen island? Is it the kitchen table? Is there just one spot that seems to always be a struggle to keep clean?

Another thing you can think about is, is there a space or a feature of your home that often frustrates you? Is there something that you are constantly getting stuck on? Is there something that you're constantly running into your husband with? We can't necessarily change the layout of our home, but we can always try to brainstorm ways to make it a little bit more functional and decrease those areas of frustration.

How we're going to solve that is by working backwards. What can you change to the space so that you can use it better? What can you change to the space?

That maybe we'll add some storage, because adding some storage can help decrease the amount of clutter. If you find a certain space is really hard to keep clean or keep organized, maybe we need to rework that space or add some hidden storage, things like that. What can you add? What can you remove from that area to make it easier for you to accomplish the tasks that you're trying to accomplish?

TROUBLESOME LINEN CLOSET

So I'm a very visual person, and I wanted to kind of talk about some examples in a way that maybe will visually help bring my point home here. So the first example I have is my linen closet. So you can see on the one half of the screen, so it's the left side. The problem I had in the space well, one of the problems I had was that the door would swing out and it would hit the main door.

So you can see that lighter color door is the linen closet door, and that darker color door is that main door to the bathroom. And they would hit each other if both were open. So that was very frustrating. That was my frustration issue with that space.

The biggest problem I had in the space that it was very hard to keep organized because it was too deep and too narrow. So it was really hard to get to the back and things would get buried and it would be cluttered. And we really just ended up just like, shoving things in there. And I never even went in there at all. So it was just one of those things that it was such a problem area. It wasn't functional at all. It wasn't easy to keep clean, so it really needed to be solved.

And I started brainstorming and I thought, well, if one of the problems is the door hitting the other door, how can I solve that problem? So my solution to that problem was to take the door off and replace it with a sliding door, which you can see on the right side of the picture. I replaced that with the sliding door so that that door just slides. The main door can open without hitting the other door, and the handles won't get stuck on each other. So that was one of the solutions.

The other solution was, how can I reach the back of the space easier? I can't make the closet any bigger again. We can't always change the layout of our home or our space or whatever room you're working on, but you don't always have to. You can just change the way that it works. So this way, I made each shelf pull out. I added these drawers on top of the little shelves, floating shelves, and they just slide out and I can reach the back. And it's much easier to keep clean. In fact, it's still clean. And I call that a win because it's been almost a year, I would say, since I did the linen closet. So it's still

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organized, it still functions. I'm still really happy with that project.

CLUTTERED COUNTERS

Another example is cluttered counters. So the problem I was having was that my counters were always cluttered. And I don't know why, because I have a pretty decent sized kitchen and I have a decent amount of cabinets. But I was finding things like the small appliances, bread and onions, like things that we typically don't put in the fridge. And I also don't have a pantry space. So I guess that's part of the issue. I don't have a large pantry space. I should say I have a coat closet that I turned into a pantry.

But anyway, things like bread and onions, they were ending up in the corner of the kitchen counters. And that was really frustrating because that's where I need to stand when I'm cooking. That's like right next to where the stove is, where I'm preparing food. And so that lack of counter space there was making it very hard to use my kitchen.

So how I problem solved that was I added this storage hutch that you can see on the right side of that picture. And it has a little appliance garage type of cabinet underneath it. And that's where all of my small appliances, that's where our bread, that's where our onions go, all of that stuff. I even hide some candy in there, honestly. But all of that stuff goes right in there, and then I don't have to worry about it on my counters. And it's a lot easier to keep my counters free of clutter.

EVERYTHING HAS A HOME

You'll also notice in the picture on the left that I had upper cabinets there. I moved them over to the other side of the kitchen. So again, I'm not changing the entire layout of the kitchen, but I'm changing the way that it works. So I moved that over to the other side of the kitchen. I added a little coffee bar underneath it. And so now we have even more storage, which again, makes it easier for everything to have a home.

If everything has a home in a place, then you can just put it away. I always repeat the phrase to myself, don't put it down, put it away. So if everything has a home, that makes that task a lot more easier.

WORKING BACKWARDS

Now working backwards to solve the problem. So I kind of explained a little bit how I identified the areas that I was struggling with, and then I brainstormed how I can kind of solve that. So once you realize what you don't like about your space, now it's time to work backwards to fix it.

So are we considering is it a storage issue? Is it a layout problem? Is it a functionality problem? Those things are going to be very different and we can't always especially if it's a layout problem, we can't always tackle that right away because that usually comes with a higher budget, right? But if it's a storage problem or a functional problem, we can probably tackle that pretty quickly because it can be done in a lot more affordable way.

KEEPING IT AFFORDABLE

To keep projects like this affordable, I try to focus on just three must haves for the space. Like what are three things that you really feel will help you use the space better and focus on those things and then you can come up with a plan.

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Don't be afraid to change your space so that you can use and love it more. A good example is some people don't need formal dining rooms or dining room at all. If you're somebody that eats dinner at your kitchen island and your whole family can sit there, and you don't ever use your dining room and you find that all of the clutter is landing on your dining room table, well, change it into something that you will use. Maybe it could be a playroom, maybe it can be an office. Maybe it can be a sitting room for you to enjoy your morning coffee. However you want to change that space.

I've even seen people turn dining rooms into butler's pantries. I mean, there's just so many other things. Just because it was made to be one space doesn't mean you have to use it as that space. You can get creative, figure out how you can use your home better. Okay?

GET INSPIRED

Getting design inspiration: I wanted to throw this in there because a lot of people get stuck and they have these ideas, but they don't necessarily know how to bring the style into it, right? And like I said, you can have style and function all in one. One of my favorite places to get inspiration and ideas, like if you're stuck on trying to brainstorm to problem solve and work backwards to fix your function issues and you're stuck with that, not only can these things provide design inspiration, but they can provide those solutions, inspiration for solutions as well.

PINTEREST

Pinterest is a great one. It's a visual search engine. It's there to inspire you, it's there to teach you. It's providing solutions to problems. So create a board for your space that you're wanting to upgrade and then you can pin ideas to it. Search things like bathroom storage solutions, small home storage solutions. Even if you don't necessarily have a small home or an apartment or something like that, if you find things that work in small spaces, that's where you're going to find all of those function solutions for sure.

INSTAGRAM

You can also start a folder on Instagram with whatever space you're working on and you can even add collaborators to it. So if you have a partner or a spouse that you want to add to that and then you can both save ideas that you come across and talk about it together, that's an option too.

So what I like to do is I start a folder called Bathroom. And when I come across bathroom designs or bathroom ideas that I think are really cool, I'll save it to that folder. And whether I'm even looking to work on my bathroom right now or not, if I know it might be a future thing that I want to do or a future project that I want to tackle, I'm going to have a folder going for it. Because you never know when something's going to pop up on that feed and it's going to be the perfect solution to a problem that you didn't even know that you had.

For example, the linen closet. A lot of people not necessarily having linen closets, but they had a very narrow, deep closet somewhere else in their home, in their space when they came across my video, thought it was a really good idea and wanted to do that for their closet.

So not necessarily has to be that exact space. Maybe you see a bathroom storage idea, but you're like, you know what? That would work really good in my kitchen.

It doesn't necessarily have to be that thing. But if you organize those ideas into different spaces in your house, then you'll be able to find them easier. You can go over them easier, and you can plan them out easier.

MAGAZINES

Magazines, you can go old school, keep a binder or a notebook planner or something like that. Cut out images and collect them with different styles and designs that you like. Just think about when you come across an idea, think about the things that you like about it. Think about the things that you don't like about it, and then use that as a jumping off point to plan your project.

FUNCTION MAXIMIZING PRODUCTS

So a tip that I wanted to throw out there is to choose function maximizing products. Okay? So if you can't renovate an entire room, you may want to consider products that you can swap for things that you already have that are going to add function. So for example, you can't necessarily tackle an entire kitchen renovation right now, right? But you could swap your standard builder grade kitchen sink for like a workstation kitchen sink that has a lot more features and a lot more functions.

Appliances, maybe you could save up to get a higher functioning refrigerator that can improve the function of your kitchen without necessarily meaning that you need to tackle an entire kitchen renovation just to get the function in that space.

You may want to consider products that improve style but also give you function. So for example, in my daughter's bedroom, we chose a fan chandelier or you might have heard them called fandoliers, but that gives you the function of the fan, but also the style of the light. So it's not necessarily adding function, but you're keeping function.

FUNCTION OVER STYLE

Let me rephrase. You're not having to sacrifice function for style. Again, we can have both. At the end of the day, always remember that function and style can happen together, but function should take priority.

So, for example, in my laundry room, I traded all of my laundry room decor for some nice baskets because I like the basket system when it comes to laundry. So each member of your family has a basket, and then there's an extra basket for towels and miscellaneous things. So I got rid of all my decor and I lined up baskets along my laundry room counter. And is it as pretty? No, it's not necessarily not pretty because I chose nice baskets. But it helps me stick to my laundry system, which helps me stay on that routine easier.

PLANNING YOUR PROJECT

Now that you have a good idea of what we want to add style and function to our space, it's time to plan.

TIMELINE

So things I consider when planning my project are the timeline. How long is this likely going to take? Do I need to break it down into phases? It's not always doable to lose an entire room of your house for a long period of time.

So, for example, I just did my daughter's bedroom and I tackled the entire space. And

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the reason I was able to do that all at once is because I did plan the budget and all of that, but she wasn't really using her room very much. So my son has bunk beds and they were sleeping in there anyway. They have their own rooms, but they choose to sleep in the same room. So it was really easy for me to lose an entire room of my house for the six months that that project took me. And it won't necessarily take you that long, but I'm just saying that if you have a big project that you want to do, you want to really consider, can I lose this space for this amount of time or should I break it down into phases?

I can't lose my kitchen for like six months at a time, so I have to break down kitchen renovation projects into phases so that I can function better.

BUDGET

Budget, what are your must haves in the space and how can you maximize the budget to get the most bang for your buck? Everybody's budget is going to be different. It's a very personal decision about what you're comfortable spending in a space, but I think if you can nail down like at least three must haves in that space, you can kind of prioritize where to put the budget and then add other things later on as needed.

It's also important to remember that certain things in certain houses, especially old houses, can start to spiral a little bit if it's going to be like a complete gut job. Like if you are going to gut your bathroom, you may want to have your three must haves in mind. But once you've gutted it, you want to make sure that there are no pressing issues because that's going to have to take priority over those other things. So it's just something to keep in mind when it comes to planning your budget. If you find that you have a home that has more issues, you may want to account for that right in the beginning so that you can avoid some disappointment.

Looking at the big project can be very overwhelming. So breaking your project down into actionable tasks that you can check off one at a time can not only be easier when it comes to overwhelm, but it can be easier on the budget too because you can kind of save and buy as you go and that sort of thing.

Adding function and maintaining spaces makes maintaining spaces and routines so much easier. It really does function over style always, like I said, decide where your problem areas are in your house and then brainstorm how to fix it. And then once you have a plan for better function, you can start planning out your design that's going to help maximize the space and the style.

TALKING EXAMPLES

And I do have a planner at the end that you can get for free that kind of walks you through that whole system and helps you plan and track your project as well. But let's talk about some more examples because again, I'm very visual.

ENTRYWAY

So this is my entryway. The problem was that there was no space for coats. There was really nothing there at all. It was just a blank wall you walk in and it's actually kind of narrow when you walk in because there's like a half wall and it's just a little overwhelming. There's no place to set things down as you come through the door.

So again, I kind of wanted to figure out how can I maximize function in this space? It is

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again a small space so there's not a whole lot. I had to really pay attention to the size of the table, anything like that. I had to figure out how to do it in a way that was also space like friendly with the space but also maximized function.

So I did add this nice little slat wall feature that had coat hooks in between it. So I feel like I got some a little design element and it helped with the style and it also helped with the function because we could hang up coats.

ENTRY TABLE

And then I built an entryway table. I had to do a custom table because again, it had to be very narrow but it is big enough for us to have a little bowl to set our keys in. We can set things down quick. I can put our shoes underneath it and people can set drinks on the table at parties, like during birthday parties and stuff. So it did add function to that space. I even was able to fit a little lamp on there so we can have some lighting in that space as well.

It just came together really nice. And I also added a little mirror so that can make sure I didn't have any crazy hair walking out the door. Right? So that was my function, adding space in the entryway.

DAUGHTER'S CLOSET

Next, my daughter's closet. So the closet you can see all the way on the left. I had bought a dresser and it fell apart within a year of owning it. And then she had all of her stuff on top. And I tried to hide it with a curtain because it was just very overwhelming to look at. It just looked messy all the time. Again, it's one of those things, where is there a space in my house that I'm having a really hard time keeping clean and organized?

Stuff would go on top of her dresser, but also the clothes hung down so things would get buried under it. It was just a mess all the time and I was really struggling to keep it organized. So I mapped out different areas of the closet and how I can kind of work the closet into different sections so that everything would have a home and have a space. So in that closet I added space to hang dresses and things that need to be hung. There's a basket which we use for like socks and stuff like that.

We have a concealed hamper. On the one side we have drawers, and then we have three small drawers which we use for things like that don't take up a lot of space, like bathing suits, gymnastics outfits. One of them is an underwear drawer. And then next to that there's shoe cubbies. So there's like something for everything.

And then on the top, we have three different wicker baskets that we store like snow clothes and things like that. And it works out really well. The closet is still organized, so there we go. We solved the problem, we maximize the function and it's an easier solution.

BETTER FURNITURE

Not to mention something like this. I used a dresser that I got from the restore for the middle part, you can see in the second picture that she's sitting on top of the dresser. And then I built everything else around it. So this helped keep the project a little bit more affordable.

And the old wooden furniture is just built so much better than that new dresser that I had bought on Wayfair. So it's just one of those things that we're actually getting

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more quality out of it as well. So it's kind of like a win win.

DAUGHTER'S BEDROOM

And then her bedroom that I just did. So the problem was that it lacked storage. There was nowhere for her toys. She had this little bunk bed thing. It wasn't like where you can't sleep two people, but there was like a space underneath it for them to play, so all the toys would get shoved under there. There was nowhere for her arts and craft stuff, so it very much lacked function and it just didn't function for her.

It was kind of like a little girl, little somewhere between two and three year old type of room. It still had the recliner from when she was a baby. Again, the bed just is kind of like a little kid's bed. She's still a little girl, but she is six going on 16 and she likes to sit and do her little makeup and she likes to brush her hair and get ready for school and put her dresses on and all that sort of stuff.

WINDOW SEAT STORAGE

She didn't really need a recliner anymore, that kind of thing. So I added a window seat which included so much storage. The window seat itself opens up and we can store things that we don't really need to access all the time, like blankets and stuff like that. And then on the side there are drawers so she can put all of her toys and all of her craft supplies in there.

I found her a little desk that also works as a vanity because it has like a mirror so she can do her makeup and get ready for school sitting there. Or she can use the desk to do her crafts, do her homework, things like that.

I added a little entryway area with lots of coat hooks so that she can hang her sweaters and bags and coats. There's a little shelf that she liked to style with art from her favorite movie. I even added like a full length mirror so that when she puts her dresses on in the morning, she can twirl around and all that stuff.

AMAZING BED

And there was a maximizing function product that I added. I did mention the fandolier earlier, but the other one was this Trundle bed, and I don't have a picture of it on here, but the Trundle bed is really cool because it's a twin size, so it doesn't take up a lot of space, but it comes out and you have two different sleeping spots, right?

So her and her brother can have sleepovers in her room. They don't always have to use his bunk beds. And then the Trundle part pops up, so you have the two twins right next to each other and it kind of gives you a king size space. So it's something for her to grow into. And I felt like that bed really functioned really well.

It even has a cool feature where you can plug in cords and stuff like that, which I mean, she's six so she doesn't really need that. But again, it's going to be a room that grows with her. So maybe as a teenager that might be something that she will use for, I don't know, charging her Apple Watch or whatever. But anyway, that was a good example of like a function maximizing product because the twin size still gives her plenty of space to play in her room, but it can also go out to be a king size as well.

So that was an example that I wanted to share. The room works so much better for her. She can use it so much better.

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STAYING CONNECTED

But anyway, so let's stay connected. Thank you so much for being here. I really hope that you were able to get some good tips and tricks today. I do have that Function Meets Style Planner. The link should be included below and you can also follow me on Instagram. I did not put my handle, but it's DIY.ourhome and I do projects almost daily in my Instagram stories, so you can follow for more projects and DIY home renovation ideas.

As always, feel free to reach out anytime. I'm always happy to help. I always check my messages in my emails, so I am definitely willing to chat with you there. Thanks again so much for joining me and I hope you have a great day. Bye.

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5 Steps to Unlock Your Money Confidence and Break Free From Debt

KATI KIEFER • TRANSCRIPT

Hi there. Thank you for joining me to learn how to unlock your money confidence and break free from debt. Do you feel like you're constantly juggling your financial responsibilities and family obligations?

RACHEL'S STORY

Let me tell you a quick story about my friend Rachel, a dedicated mom who homeschools her three children while her husband is the primary breadwinner for the family. Although they have made the choice to homeschool, they find themselves struggling with a substantial amount of debt, which adds an extra layer of complexity to their already busy lives.

Rachel's days are a constant juggling act. She stays up late planning the lessons to ensure they have a smooth day of learning. She incorporates educational field trips and hands-on activities into their curriculum to create an enriching environment. Despite the financial challenges then, evenings are often a whirlwind of household chores such as laundry, cleaning and organizing, leaving little time or energy for focused financial planning.

While she pours her time and energy into their homeschooling journey, Rachel also bears the weight of their significant debt. She often feels overwhelmed by the mounting bills, loan payments, and credit card balances that need to be managed on their single income. The financial strain adds an extra layer of stress and uncertainty to their daily lives.

It's no wonder Rachel feels torn between wanting to provide the best life for her children who outgrow shoes in a single summer, and feeling the stress and pressure of mounting debt to pay for those shoes.

DO YOU RELATE?

It can be hard to envision a life without debt because you're stuck in a vicious cycle of paying it off and then having an emergency pop up where you don't have enough to cover it, so you find yourself right back where you were in debt again.

If you can relate to Rachel's story, then you're in luck, because today I'm going to empower you to take control of your finances. And by the end of this training, you'll have a personalized financial plan to know exactly what your best next steps are to take to have confidence with your money. My goal is to empower you to take control of your finances so that you can sleep better at night and know what to do to work towards getting rid of debt for good.

CHALLENGE HOW WE THINK

Okay, the first thing we need to do is challenge how we think about money, because how we think forms deep rooted beliefs and attitudes that help us run our lives. Money affects every aspect of our lives, so it's important to identify what your core deep rooted beliefs are around money so that you're not sabotaging yourself and

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keeping yourself stuck and not flourishing as much as you could be.

What's interesting is that our childhood and life experiences can make us form a negative connotation around money without us even realizing it. Emotional triggers can play a huge role. Also, pay attention to situations or events that trigger strong emotions or reactions related to money. These triggers might include discussing finances, making large purchases - heck, any unplanned purchase can cause internal turmoil, and sometimes even just the simple act of overspending each week when you buy groceries can make you feel like a failure that manifests in having money confidence problems.

Observe your thoughts and emotions as you go throughout your day in order to notice the thoughts and emotions that arise when a trigger happens. Then try to trace them back to an underlying belief or attitude.

FIVE QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

Thinking about money means you need to take time for introspection and self-reflection. Set aside a quiet moment to delve into your thoughts and feelings about money by answering these five questions.

Number one, what role does money play in my life? Consider how money impacts your lifestyle choices and overall well-being. Reflect on whether money is a source of stress, freedom, security or fulfillment.

Question number two, how were my beliefs about money formed? Explore the influence of your upbringing, cultural background, and past experiences on your current beliefs about money. Consider the messages you received about money from family, society, and even commercials from the media.

Question number three, what emotions arise when I think about money? Identify the emotions that surface when you think about earning, spending or managing your money. Explore the connection between these emotions and your financial decisions and behaviors.

Question number four, what are my financial goals and aspirations? Clarify your short term and long term financial goals. Consider what you want to achieve financially, such as becoming debt free, owning a home, saving for retirement, or even funding your children's education or paying for future weddings.

Question number five, how does money align with my values and priorities? Reflect on whether your financial choices and goals align with your core values and life priorities. Further, evaluate if your use of money reflects what matters most to you, such as family, education, health, or giving back.

By asking yourself these questions and possibly even journaling through them to help uncover those deeper answers, you can gain a better understanding of your relationship with money. Uncover any limiting beliefs or patterns and begin to shape a more intentional and positive money mindset.

REPLACE THOSE LIMITING BELIEFS

Another important part of building your confident money muscles is to replace negative self-talk with positive and empowering statements. Challenge and reframe negative thoughts about money with more constructive and optimistic

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perspectives. Here are a few examples to get you started.

ALWAYS IN DEBT?

Number one, sometimes people say to themselves, I'll always be in debt. Maybe you believe that being in debt is an inevitable part of life and there's no way to escape it. You might feel helpless or resign to a cycle of debt, leading to a lack of motivation to address and overcome it. This belief can hinder someone from seeking strategies to manage and reduce debt, which perpetuates a sense of financial struggle.

Here's how to reframe that to a money confidence statement: being in debt does not define me. I'm grateful I had the ability to borrow and I'll pay it off soon.

TOO BUSY?

Let's do another one. I'm too busy with family responsibilities to focus on finances. Overwhelming daily tasks and caregiving responsibilities leave little time or energy to address financial matters. Believing that financial success requires significant time and effort, which seems unattainable in the current circumstances. This belief can perpetuate a cycle of neglecting financial planning which inhibits progress towards financial goals.

Let's reframe it to a money confidence statement. I prioritize my family's well-being and financial success by efficiently managing my time and finding moments to nurture my financial growth.

NOT GOOD WITH NUMBERS?

Now here's another one for you I'm not good with numbers or finances. OOH, I hear this all the time. Here's the thing, believing that financial matters are complicated or beyond understanding can be easily solved. Feeling intimidated by budgeting, investing or other financial concepts won't help you reach your goals. This belief can lead to avoidance or reliance on others for financial decisions, which limits your control and growth.

Let's reframe it to a money confidence statement. Everything is figureoutable to quote Marie Forleo and I have the ability to learn what I need in order to manage our money so that we make sound financial decisions and reach our financial goals.

TAKE SMALL STEPS

Recognizing and challenging these limiting beliefs and fears is crucial for Moms to overcome barriers and achieve financial success. By reframing these beliefs and taking small steps towards financial empowerment, you'll pave the way for your own financial wellbeing and create a positive financial legacy for your family too.

I've also included a link to a free download below that'll help you reframe your negative beliefs into positive and empowering thoughts that lead to actions.

Now I can almost hear you saying in your head, but Katie, how am I supposed to get our money under control? Give me some solid action steps that will help me gain control while not taking up time I don't have. Don't worry, I've got you covered.

THREE ACTION STEPS

Okay, let's get into this. Let's now walk through three practical and simple strategies that you can start today that'll help you gain more control over your

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money.

STEP ONE: BECOME FRIENDS WITH YOUR BANK ACCOUNT

First, I want you to become besties with your bank account. When you have a bestie, you tend to check in with them regularly, right? You want to know how they are doing, what's going on with them, and if you can help them or encourage them in any way. The same goes for your bank account. If you want it to do good stuff for you, then you need to get to know it.

Log into it regularly to check what's going on in there and then regularly think about your goals and what it's going to take to achieve them. This is how I approach the concept of budgeting. Instead of making a full monthly budget, what if you watched your bank account and only tracked a few key categories so that you could change those and watch them make a difference in your monthly spending? And saving. This approach allows you to streamline your financial management, and by becoming a bestie with your bank account, you'll know what's going on so you can make sure your spending aligns with your monthly goals.

The first thing people say when they come to me for help paying off debt is, if I had extra to pay it off, I wouldn't be in debt to begin with. Oh how I get it. Kids are expensive and they cause extra spending all on their own. New shoes, playing sports, constant eating. It's enough to buy a small island. Since you can't put them back, let's figure out how to manage the money you do have, and then I'll share some practical tips to help you have more of it each month to put towards debt.

BUDGET IN REAL TIME

You see, creating a budget doesn't take into account ebbs and flows in the timing of when bills need to be paid versus when paychecks are deposited. So many times, people who are on a strict budget still overdraft because they didn't look at things in real time. Budgeting in real time is easy.

You simply need to look at a calendar and write down the days your bills are expected to come out of your account. Then enter the amounts you get paid on the dates you expect them to be deposited in your account each day or weekly. Look in your bank account to watch for exceptions. Now you'll be able to see the ups and downs in your bank account on every day and whether or not you have extra money in your account that you can put towards things like debt.

Here's the thing as you'll learn in a little bit, even $20 can make a huge difference in how quickly you pay off your debt in total. So don't dismiss the small amounts just because they don't feel substantial enough. Once you factor in the compounding interest that a $20 payment can save you, you'll be surprised to find that it could shave years off your debt payoff plan.

ASK YOURSELF

Here are the things to ask yourself as you become your bank account's best friend. Number one, what are you spending money on each month? Make a master list of all the bills you pay monthly. This serves two purposes. One, it gives you a sense of control, because if something happened to you, the information is in one place and no one has to track it down anywhere. Then two, it allows you to see at a glance what is going on with your money.

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Secondly, do you still use those things you're spending money on? Look at that list and make sure every item on it is being used and valued. If not, cancel them. You can always sign up again later.

Third, are there any services you could negotiate to a lower rate? I have a quick story for you. My husband and I had USAA for our car and home insurance for over 24 years and over the last year they kept raising our rate every single month. Eventually I logged in and I saw that it was going to be going up by $400 the next month. And my husband said, that's it. This is unacceptable to absorb in our monthly spending. We have to call and negotiate.

Now, I'm not going to tell you it took a quick 15 minutes, like they say on the commercials, but it was not hard. We just answered a few simple questions about our coverages and then they gave us a quote. We were pretty sure we'd save at least the $400 that I knew was going up by the next month, but are you sitting down? That phone call ended up saving us almost $900 per month. We're not talking the six month premium. This is monthly. It was insane.

So I know it's a pain, but if you have a list of your bills, then take them one by one and each month just call one to try and negotiate a lower rate. Especially if you have three teen boy drivers like I do, that was causing your rate to be astronomical.

Lastly, you need to ask yourself, does what you're spending on align with your personal family goals? If one of your goals is to take a family vacation each summer and you aren't saving up monthly for that goal, then first, it's not going to happen unless you use a credit card, adding further stress to the situation. And lastly, it's easy to see that a simple tweak of cutting three streaming services you're possibly not even using might allow you to take that trip without feeling like you're missing anything.

STEP TWO: BE MINDFUL

The second practical strategy you can start today that'll help you gain more control over your finances is to incorporate mindfulness exercises into your daily routine. Now, I know this sounds like it isn't specifically working on your money, but just like we talked about first in this session, your mind has the power to help you control your money. And that means just taking 60 seconds a day to focus on how you're feeling with deep breathing exercises or journaling that will reduce stress and increase self-awareness, especially with relation to your money.

STEP THREE: CELEBRATE SMALL WINS

The third thing that'll help you gain more control over your finances is to celebrate small financial wins. Acknowledging small financial victories is a powerful motivator to help you along the way. This means if you spend less for the week on your groceries, celebrate. If you pay off one debt, celebrate.

Recognizing the progress you made, no matter how small, will reinforce positive behaviors, boost confidence, and motivate you to continue taking steps forward towards financial success.

Doing these three habits consistently, checking in with your bank account like it's your bestie, incorporating mindfulness exercises of breathing and journaling every day, and celebrating small wins will prove to yourself that you can make significant changes to your money, moving you closer to achieving your money goals at the same

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time.

CONQUERING DEBT

Now, let's talk about conquering debt. Listen, I love spreadsheets and analyzing numbers. I even have a whole course that'll automatically identify and tell you which debt method you should use. It analyzes eight of them and then which debt to pay off sequentially.

VARIABLE DEBT

But the premise is very simple: if you just keep paying the total amount of debt payments that you paid last month on your variable debts. Now listen, this is key. Those are the ones where your payment changes each month. Not a car loan or a mortgage. Those are fixed loans because they have a fixed term, and the payment stays the same every month. If you just keep paying that same amount you paid last month, you will get out of debt in probably four years max, regardless of how much debt you're in. Whoa. Right? Hold on. Let me say that again.

In case you zoned out, first of all, you have to make sure you're not still using your cards. Cut them up, remove them from Amazon, stop using them, then add up all your debt payments from last month and pay attention to how much they are.

KEEP IT UP

And you keep paying the original payment from last month. You see, the minimum payment will drop by like one to $2 per debt, which is how the banks keep you in debt forever. Instead, if you just total them up and then pay attention when they go lower and keep your total debt payment the same by putting the difference towards your first debt, the one you want to pay off first, then you'll be out of debt in no time flat.

RUNNING THE NUMBERS

Let's do a quick example to see how this plays out in real life. So if the current month is September, and we're assuming you did not add any new debt to the mix, so all things were equal from one month to the next, then look at how much you spent in total for August on variable debt payments.

Remember that's excluding the car payments or your mortgage, when you get that total for August, look at how much those same payments were in July. Most likely, the amount you paid total in July was one dollar more per debt than it was in August. That means the total amount you paid in July is what you need to pay from now on until your debt is paid off. By making sure that the total payment never lowers, you are paying towards the principal of your debt, and therefore you'll get out of debt much sooner.

PAYMENTS TOWARD THE PRINCIPAL

Do you understand? It's the power of making payments towards the principal that allows you to pay it off so much sooner than if you just continued paying the minimums. The next question everyone asks me is which debt should I pay off first? So let me make it super simple. Don't overanalyze this. You can't get it wrong.

Choose either the debt with the lowest balance or the one with the highest interest rate. This is the first debt you're going to pay off, and I like to call it your Victory Debt because you are about to gain victory over debt one step at a time. Pay attention to

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how much your debt payments are in total and keep paying that same amount you paid last month. Whatever that difference is.

Pay that small amount typically around $1 to $2 per debt towards your Victory debt. This means you will have to log in and make an additional one-time payment to that first Victory debt of a small amount, most likely around just like $10. Don't worry. Even though it feels like a small payment, it will gain ground quickly.

ADD IT TO THE NEXT DEBT

As you pay off one debt, you'll continue to keep the total you've been paying for the month the same amount. And now you'll make up the difference by paying that amount towards your next Victory Debt.

That means after you've paid that first debt off, choose your second Victory debt same way either the next lowest balance or the next highest interest rate, and then systematically keep your monthly total payment the same and keep making extra payment towards that next debt. You'll have them paid off in no time. Literally, the average time is four years or less when you use this method.

FINDING $20 A WEEK

Now, are you ready for me to blow your mind? Okay, do you realize that it only takes $20 a week to come up with $1,000 per year to put towards debt? $1,000 will put a nice dent in anyone's financial situation.

Okay, so here's a few ways that you can get an extra $1,000 to put towards paying off debt. In other words, these are ways to earn or get $20 out of your current spending so that you can set it aside. It's like a micro goal of sorts to help you achieve big things with small steps.

SELL YOUR CLUTTER

The first way is to sell your clutter. Now, decluttering your home and selling items you no longer need or use is not a revolutionary concept, right? But make it simple. By planning to sell just one item a week, you can utilize online platforms such as eBay, Facebook Marketplace, or local buy/sell groups and turn your unwanted items into cash that can be put towards speeding up the debt repayment process.

GROCERIES AND MEAL PREP

Now, number two is grocery shopping and meal prep. Creating a weekly meal plan and making a shopping list before heading to this grocery store can easily save you $20 per week to put towards your money goals. I suggest taking a photo of your shopping list before you head into the store or shop online to help you stay accountable to what you thought you needed before you entered so that you avoid impulse purchases.

Consider bulk cooking on weekends or when you have some free time and freeze meals for later use. My family has been cooking chicken in the Crock Pot every Sunday to use for meals throughout the entire week. I put frozen chicken breasts in the crock pot with some ranch or Italian seasonings on it and about a cup of some salad dressing I find in the back of the refrigerator just to add liquid. And then I cook it on low for 6 hours or high for 4 hours, and then we've got chicken ready for the entire week.

You see, it's so much easier if you have your protein cooked ahead of time to be ready to make meals and avoid eating at a restaurant. I'll then take that chicken and

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make chicken quesadillas on one day or chicken Alfredo the next.

SELL HOME COOKED MEALS

Then third is to offer a home cooked meal for friends to buy. If you enjoy cooking, consider preparing and selling home cooked meals or baked goods to busy individuals or families in your community. You can promote your services through local social media groups or even just word of mouth.

I have a friend who sells around 20 pies a week to friends in our homeschool group and another friend has chickens, so she sells a dozen eggs for $5. If she sells just four dozen eggs, then she's at her $20 weekly goal.

SELL HANDMADE CRAFFTS

What about selling handmade crafts? If you're a DIY addict, then consider selling your handmade crafts through online platforms like Etsy or Facebook Marketplace. You can create items like jewelry, home decor, or personalized gifts. Remember, this doesn't have to be a huge undertaking. Your goal is just to sell one item for $20 every week.

BABYSITTING

Now if you have young kids, then you might consider offering babysitting services for friends, neighbors, or even family members. Lots of times it ends up being a play date with your kids too, except you're getting paid for the time. That's a win-win in my book.

GOIING TO THE DOGS

Now let's get really local. So many people work during the day and would love to have you let their dog out each day to break it up and get out a little pent-up energy. My kids did this for several families in our neighborhood before they were old enough to work at a real job. They charged more than $20 a week, that's for sure. So the potential is really there.

VIRTUAL ASSISTANT

Now, let's not discount the online world. You could offer virtual assistant services to busy professionals or small business owners like salon owners who need help with administrative tasks such as posting to social media, email correspondences, or even scheduling meetings with future clients.

Of course, most of these jobs pay more than $20 a week, so the potential is much higher. But what's great is that they are work from home jobs so the work can be done after your kids go to bed. I have a team of four virtual assistants and have hired many of my local homeschool mom friends to help me pin pins on Pinterest or schedule posts for me on Facebook and Instagram.

USER TESTING

There is also an online company called User Testing that pays you to record your screen and talk through things as you look at websites. It's actually really fun. I've had it done for my website, and I've been paid to test websites for others. They were paying about $30 per test when I did it back in 2019.

Now, these are only a few examples of how the power of taking small steps can get you ahead financially. I want to take a second and just say thank you for joining me today. Shifting your mindset takes time and

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consistent effort. You're a busy mom, so you need to be patient and kind to yourself throughout the process. Exercise grace for yourself more than you give to your kids each day.

With perseverance and commitment, you can quickly develop a confidence around money, including a positive money mindset that will empower your financial journey. Remember, every effort counts, no matter how small. By implementing these actionable steps and staying committed to your financial goals, you can make progress in tackling debt and improving your financial situation and stability. Don't forget to celebrate the small victories along the way to stay motivated.

If you would like help with creating a personalized financial roadmap, please sign up below. All right, bye for now.

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How Kids SAVE You Time in the Kitchen When You Find Cooking Routines

KATIE KIMBALL • TRANSCRIPT

KATIE'S BABCIA

"Niech będzie pochwalony Jezus Chrystus!" That's what we'd call out every Sunday after church when we went to my Babcia'a house. Babcia is Polish for grandma, and that's a Polish phrase. It's about the only Polish I know. And it means praise the Lord Jesus Christ. From inside the house, my tiny little four foot, nine inch Polish grandma would call out, "na wieki wieków, amen!" Which is the answer forever and ever, amen. And that was how it was every single Sunday, my whole childhood.

We would come in, Babcia would have the kielbasa on. It had been on since eight in the morning. The whole house smelled of the kielbasa spices. Same every Sunday, fried eggs deep in butter. Because back in the 80s some people were caring about fat, but not my Babcia. They were floating in the butter.

And my brother and I, my little brother and I, would be allowed to go down into the basement, into the root cellar where Babcia had a column of canned strawberries and canned peaches and canned pears. And pickles and sauerkraut and other stuff we didn't care about, because we were there for the fruit. And we would have the traditional little sibling discussion, sibling rivalry. Who chose last time? How are we going to choose? And we would carefully nestle that glass quart jar in our arms and bring it upstairs.

Usually my dad would be pouring the orange juice into these same little glasses. I had the orange one with the rooster, my brother had the blue one with the cat. Same every week. And everything remained the same until later in my high school years when Babcia started seeing people who weren't there. And we couldn't trust her to be alone in the house because we were afraid that she would turn on the stove and not know what she was doing.

SPECIAL GLASSES

And I know that's a really common story, but what makes it special to me are those traditions. I mean, they were so special, to have that weekly sameness and that weekly tradition around food. That when my brother and I inherited to each those little glasses with the animals on them. And my children ended up breaking both of mine. They were so important to me that I got on eBay and spent far more than normal people like you and I should spend on little glass juice glasses.

We put one in each of our four kids' Easter baskets that year. But the reason I did that, I think, looking back, the reason I spent so much that it seemed so important to replace those glasses was because they signified those memories, those traditions. And that's exactly what we do at Kids Cook Real Food.

WHAT KATIE DOES

I'm Katie Kimball. I've been teaching kids

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to cook for seven or eight years now online. And we do so much more than just talking about cooking. It's really about not just routines, right? Not just managing our time, but how our people fit into our time, how our routines become traditions, how we can really connect our family members and give our kids those deep, lasting memories.

When we gather around healthy food, whether that's canned fruit or eggs floating in butter, whatever the definition of healthy food or family food is for you, that's what I want to be a part of.

IT COMES DOWN TO PEOPLE

So today we're going to talk about how those traditions, how we manage our time around routine, really comes down to the people, and especially the little people. For those of us parents and grandparents, it can be difficult to get kids into the kitchen, to kind of get over our own roadblocks and teach our littlest ones to cook. But I am here to promise you that when you teach your kids to cook, when you say yes, when you let them be in the kitchen with you, in the long run and sometimes the short run, it actually saves you time.

It saves you time. And more than that, it creates those memories. If my elders, my aunt and my babcia and my dad, if they had said, oh, Katie and AJ shouldn't go down to the cellar to get the fruit, it's faster and easier for us to do it ourselves . . . that's a really common refrain that I hear a lot from moms in our generation faster and easier to do it myself.

ADDING AGENCY

And, well, okay, so maybe we only saved the adult, like, 60 seconds, right? And it was a big risk.

I mean, this was children carrying a big, heavy quart jar up the stairs. We could have dropped it, dropped a quart jar and had strawberries and juice all down the stairs, right? But I'm so glad that my family did allow us to take that risk. I'm so glad that was part of our family tradition, because it gave me and my brother a little bit of agency, a little bit of ownership, and I think a deeper stake in those memories and in each individual breakfast.

Imagine if we'd been allowed to help cook, I think how much deeper and more profound those memories would have been. And that's what we were going to talk about today.

SAVING TIME

We're going to talk about how kids do save me time in the kitchen and will save you time. So if that's your motivation for doing the things, for saying yes and getting the kids in the kitchen, I'm going to give you very practical strategies on how to get started, no matter what age of child or grandchild you have.

We're going to talk about how to find your routine, in other words, how to get organized with your time when you're committed to incorporating your kids in the kitchen.

And finally, a little bit about how we get organized with our food and our routines here in the Kimball household.

MOMENT OF REALIZATION

I remember when my kids were little. Again, I have four kids, and right now. I have a second grader all the way to a senior. And when your kids are little and you're like building the family and more kids are

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coming along, sometimes you hit these points where you're just in overwhelm, you're just in survival mode. And I was in one of those points.

I think we had all four kids at the time, because kid number three, my John, kid number three, was about five, I think. And I asked him, I was buzzing around the kitchen, and I needed an onion. Here in Michigan, we keep our onions in our basement. It's just how we roll with our potato, onions and potatoes, they go in the basement. I don't know if that's the same in other locales.

And I just needed an onion in the middle of my cooking, and I asked John to go get an onion from the basement. Not a difficult task for a five year old, but for some reason, I felt this intense guilt for asking him for help. And later I thought, you know what? Or maybe it was in the moment, I thought, you know what, why am I feeling so guilty? Like, he has strong little five year old legs. He has tons of energy. It is not a problem for him to stop playing with his cars on the kitchen floor and go downstairs, get an onion, come back upstairs and give his mom the onion. That was not difficult.

And looking back, I think, boy, that was one of those moments where whatever my sort of gut feeling was, that inclination to feel the guilt was wrong. It was totally wrong. And I was kind of starting to see that, like, wait a minute, Katie, you are overreacting. These kids are capable of doing tiny things, and maybe they need to get a little more involved in the kitchen.

TWO REASONS FOR YOUR KIDS TO COOK

That was right about the time that I decided I really needed to teach my kids to cook, both because I needed a little help in the kitchen. I was completely overwhelmed, and it was time to share those responsibilities. My oldest was ten, seven, I guess he was four. I guess John was four.

But also because I really do want my kids to be able to have those skills when they go off to college, when they leave. I mean, I've got an 18 year old leaving home, so the rubber is about to meet the road here. I'm about to figure out if all the parenting choices I've made are actually working and if he's going to go off into his adult life able to cook.

SOUS CHEFS

But I mentioned that kids do save me time, even in the short run. Okay, so first, I know that my kids are often asked to be sous chefs. If I'm buzzing around the kitchen, and maybe I'm getting a little behind because that's kind of how I roll, I can say, Gabe, my eight year old, will you grab this cucumber, peel it and cut it? Because that's a skill he has. I can have John, who's now eleven, make a ranch dip or make homemade guacamole. That's a skill that he has. I can have Leah or Paul, my high schoolers, cut some carrots or maybe cut up some vegetables for the main part of the meal, or grab some frozen veggies and sauté them in olive oil or bacon grease.

It is absolutely amazing to be able to ask my kids to be those sous chefs. The only way I could do that, though, is if I'd already taught them to cook. Because it's an absolute disaster to be trying to slow down and teach your kids to cook when you're in that high speed mode, when it's dinner time and ready to go.

SAME EXPERIENCES

Other members in my community do have

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similar experiences. This is a story from Jenny Kraft, who is a military mom. You know, she's busy. She says, this afternoon I interrupted my ten year old during his playdate to ask him to peel and cut a cucumber for tonight's salad. And he was more than ready. See, he was actually motivated. He was actually excited to do it.

Lisa Tim is a homeschooling mom, and she had a surprise when she taught her kids to cook. She said, my kids actually want to help me in the kitchen every day and they never asked to help me before.

MEANINGFUL FOR KIDS

We know that when kids are able to do things that adults can do, things that maybe kids are . . . it's new to them and it feels big and important, and it is. They get that actual motivation to keep helping. We started my kids making one dinner a week a couple of years ago, and it's been incredible. So for about three or four years, my kids make one dinner a week.

And the way I started them out was I was volunteering a high school youth group every other week. And I asked my two oldest, who are nine and twelve at the time, if they would be willing to make pizza every other Sunday so that I could go serve at church. Because my husband knew I would not be able to get dinner ready on time and leave the house at 5:30 to get to church. So they were willing to help.

And there was something incredible about them doing the same recipe every week. It was just like this gradual release of responsibility, this gradual learning and mastery. They mastered that recipe. Like they knew by the end of that year, exactly to the minute, what time they needed to walk into the kitchen, who was going to grab what ingredients. It was like clockwork. They knew that while the crust baked for the first ten minutes, they would play a card game. They had playlists of songs that they loved. And recently, my oldest, Paul, he's been so busy senior year.

And we know that there are these endings and this graduation, like feeling all the feels. And Leah, his sister, is really missing that because he hasn't been able to help her make dinner at all this year. She's kind of been solo on her own because she doesn't want her little brother to help her yet.

All the kids have their opinions, right? They all have strong personalities in different ways. Anyway, she's lamenting that time because, like me and those memories with my babcia, that time was so precious to her and she's really missing it now. We do get to keep Paul. He's taking a gap year and staying home. And guess what? He's going to be expected to make a meal with his sister. They've branched out. They have lots of meals they can make now.

But for that first year, there was something incredible about building that mastery and building those, again, relationships. That time in the kitchen is so, so powerful.

GIFT OF INDEPENDENCE

Now, if that's not enough to give you a little motivation that maybe teaching your kids to cook is a good idea. My kids also all pack their own lunches, except the second grader. He's in transition mode, so he packs about 25% of his lunch about 25% of the time. He's learning. By the end of third grade he should be fully independent at that process. So I'm about to graduate myself from packing lunches. Tah dah!

And they're also pretty independent at

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breakfast. We just went through a very different kind of phase where my mom was dying of ALS and she lived in our home. And in the mornings I had to give her her tube feeds because she had lost her ability to swallow. So for a number of months, I was not able to help my kids with their own breakfast. And it was so just important. I don't even know what adjective to use. It was so important and such a gift to all of us that they could make their own oatmeal, they can make their own eggs and sausage and avocado toast. And we only have cereal once a week. So they were cooking real breakfasts while I was serving my mom.

And for them to be able to see that, that this is how we respect our elders, and for them to be able to sort of be a part of being a support in the family and things not falling apart, I think our goal some days is just to not have things fall apart when big stuff interrupts. And having your mom move into a hospital bed in your living room, that's a big thing. And it was beautiful and it was important and it was special and it was something I needed to do. But it would have been a lot harder if I had not already given my kids that gift of independence in the kitchen.

HOW TO START

So how do you get started Katie? I don't know how to teach my kids to cook. That's a huge thing. I cannot add teach kids to cook to my to-do list. I hear you. And you know what? I don't think anyone should add teach kids to cook to their to-do list.

BREAK IT DOWN

Because the trick to getting started, okay, the strategy to getting started is to break down that huge to-do list item. Just like you would manage a project and organize your time with like a big project is to break cooking down into tiny, tiny chunks.

So I say if you've got a two year old, three year old, up through five or six or seven, teach them to measure a teaspoon of salt or a teaspoon of sugar or a teaspoon of oregano, okay? That is something, my friends, that you can add to your to-do list for like, tomorrow. Because it's not a big thing. It's not a big deal. And in fact, I'm going to teach you a little trick that we use at Kids Cook Real Food for teaching the littlest kids, who don't understand maybe numbers or fractions yet, how to measure those teaspoons and half teaspoons and tablespoons.

TEACH MEASURING

There we go. What I want you to do is have your littlest child lay out your main teaspoons, right? The tablespoon, the teaspoon, the half teaspoon, the quarter teaspoon. Put them in order. You can do the same thing with the cups, the normal cup, the half cup, third cup, and quarter cup. When you put them in order, you teach them new names. The new names are going to be dad, mom, kid, and baby. Now, I know not every family has that structure, and that's okay. My team and I have tried a bajillion other permutations of this, from elephants and mice to buses and trains, it never works as well as just simple dad, mom, kid, baby.

Children understand that from storybooks. Even if that's not your family structure, within 30 seconds, boom, the kids will understand this system. And then you can teach them to measure a flat teaspoon. Okay? So you're going to take like a butter knife or teach them with your finger, maybe your pinky finger, and a little bowl of salt or sugar. It's not expensive ingredients.

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And just show them again and again how to scoop a teaspoon. And we say no holes, no hills, snow plow it flat. That's like a five to ten minute activity, depending on the age of the child and maybe their amount of focus.

Once they know how to do that, my friends, the next time you are cooking, you can say, oh, I need a tablespoon of taco seasoning, or I need well, and you'd call it a dad, I need a Daddy spoon of taco seasoning. I need a Mommy spoon of basil, a Mommy spoon of oregano, and two Mommy spoons of salt. Right? Maybe you're making a homemade Italian sauce. You can set your child up at the table, give them exactly the herbs or spices they need, use this language that you can do from afar. You don't have to slow down your own cooking. You don't have to stand there and hover over them.

The first couple of times you might kind of check their work and eye it up. But you give them a little bowl, they do one herb or spice at a time. They bring it to you. You add it to the food. And then guess what? When you eat that dinner, you can say, oh my goodness, dinner is so good tonight. Guess who helped make all the flavor in this dinner? Oh, your two, three, four, five, or six year old is going to feel like such hot stuff that they were in charge of the flavor and that they learned to measure by themselves.

That confidence, that feeling of being so involved, is going to get them super motivated to come back and learn more. So that is step one.

MOTOR SKILLS

Now, again, if you've got little ones, I'm going to tell you a little bit more about how I want you to start working with them. Measuring that teaspoon of salt is a great place to start. You can also focus on any other basic small motor skills in the kitchen. Okay? This is what preschoolers do, right? They're learning to hold a pencil. They're learning to hold scissors. These skills are not easy, but they can extrapolate onto the kitchen in things like this little guy is demonstrating, pouring.

You don't need special things. It's a one cup measuring cup and a cheap creamer pitcher that you already have on hand. The little ones, of course, we want to get them measuring. We want to teach them how to stir. Have them hold that spoon right along with you. And you can teach them to cut soft fruits and vegetables, like cooked vegetables or soft fruits, like a pear or a melon with a butter knife. They feel so big when you let them use a knife. And spreading is one of the other skills that we do at this little kid, this kind of preschool age.

ALL ABOUT CONNECTION

Now, of course, we talk about those human relationships. Connection is so important at this age. So I really want you to take advantage of the fact that they are intrinsically motivated and that they want to connect with you as the adult, okay? So yes, I told you to toss them to the table and speak to them, but they're still working together with you.

And remember, when they do our learning, it's not right before dinner because that's stress time, right? When they're learning, they get that five or ten or fifteen minutes shoulder to shoulder with their mom or their dad or their grandma or an adult in their life who loves them. And that is so important for these kids to really feel that connection.

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THE RIGHT KNIFE

Now, if you've got bigger kids, they're not going to want to want to be pouring with creamer pitchers. So pretty much as soon as kids can read or when you and they both feel comfortable, we want to motivate them with maybe some sharp knives, right? It's very important, though, to do this in the right manner.

You've got to choose the right knife. That butter knife in the middle, that's what you start with first, no matter what the kid's age, then you can move up to short pairing knives. And then if and when the child masters that short paring knife, you can move them up to the chef's knife.

My son John, kid number three, he asked at age seven. He'd been using a sharp knife probably since age five or six. At age seven, he requested to learn a chef's knife. And a lot of people go, oh, my goodness, seven years old, a chef's knife. Isn't that too early Katie? But it wasn't, because he was motivated. And he had shown me for two plus years that he was safe with a sharp paring knife. So I stayed very close very many times, more than just one time of training. But he was able to level up to a chef's knife at age seven.

Not only is choosing the right knife very important, but the proper technique is important, too. That's why at Kids Cook Real Food, we have really fun phrases and fun ways to teach kids to hold the food and to hold the knife. And don't worry, I've got a great way for you to teach your kids that in about two more slides.

THE RIGHT FOOD FOR THE KNIFE

But first, I want to remind you to choose the right food, okay? You do not pair a paring knife with something like an onion or an apple. Those are too big, they're too solid and hard, and it's just not the right connection when you're starting your kids. Again, we mentioned butter knife, soft fruits, cooked vegetables, right? Bananas are the classic. When they move on to that paring knife, zucchini and cucumber are the first two things I would recommend you try, because they're that nice, medium density, they're easy to cut through. You can actually do those with a butter knife as well, and they're nice and long.

So I want those fingers to stay hey, hey, out of the way, one of our seven fun phrases we use, on one side, and then the dominant hand is cutting on the other end. Once you're using a paring knife, thin carrots work. Thick carrots are too hard. Celery is possible. Smaller things like radishes, mushrooms, strawberries, those can all be done safely with a paring knife. Once you move on to the chef's knife, now you can move up to some of the bigger and more solid fruits and vegetables.

HOT STOVE

Another really good motivator for the big kids is fire, working at the stove. To help kids who feel a little bit anxious about working at the stove, or Moms or Dads, grandmas, if you feel a little bit anxious about your kids or grandkids working at the stove, I would recommend playing a game we call Hot or Not Hot. You work with the stove off and you ask the child, okay, here's where the fire or the flame or the hot surface is going to be. What do you think is hot and not hot?

And you just have them touch different things. Touch the burn. Not the burner. What do we call it? The clicker the dial? The

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knob. Touch the knob. Is this hot or not hot? The edge of the stove, hot or not hot? And you help them find places and also put a pot up there, right? If this pot has been on the stove for half an hour, what parts of this pot are going to be hot or not hot? Okay. And you're going to help them gain that confidence because they understand what is going to be safe for them. This is a hugely helpful game for kids.

And then you can start to teach them to turn on the stove. Make sure that turning it off and turning it off quickly as part of your training at our house, when you turn the knob toward the sink, that turns it off. So that's how my kids remember, oh, like water puts out fire, we turn the knob toward the sink and it's off.

MNEUMONIC TRICKS

I encourage you to make up little tricks and little mnemonics like that with your kids so that if something scary were to happen . . . and typically here's the thing, scary things don't usually happen, but sometimes kids get scared, right? So if they get scared and their brain is starting to kind of shut down and go into lizard brain, we want them to be able to quickly and easily turn off the source of the heat so that they can then take care of whatever's making them nervous or call for help. But turning off is like really important when you are teaching how to use fire and of course, knives very similar.

You want to stay close when your kids are trained properly, which is what we're kind of the tip of the iceberg here today. And it's what I continue to do in our Kids Cook Real Food e-course. You, like Amy Bailey, might be able to say we've had the best experience we've ever had in the kitchen after working with knives and fire, right? How many parents get to say that?

FREE CLASS

Well, parents, I would love to give you again, this was kind of a quickie training, but I would love to give you a little bit more in-depth training in the form of our members favorite class, our Ten Minute Knife Skills and Safety video. This is all the way from butter knife to chef's knife. It teaches our seven fun kid friendly phrases for how to hold the food and how to move the knife. This is your free gift through Get Organized HQ. Kidscookrealfood.com/GOHQ. That's Get Organized HQ.

And when you go there, you can just stick in your email and I will send you that ten minute class. There's no expiration. You can use it with your kids anytime you want. And that's all ages two to twelve. So, see, I'm not going to leave you hanging without . . . tell you go give kids knives and not give you a good training on that. I think that's really, really important.

GET ORGANIZED ABOUT TEACHING

So we've talked about how kids actually save me time, and could save you time in the kitchen. We've talked about how to get started, whether your kids are little kids, kind of medium sized, all the way to the bigger kids who might be more motivated by knives and fire.

Now we got to talk about how to get organized with your time. This is going to be a little bit routines and organized schedules to make sure that your kids can learn well, right? If you just do one knife training, or one measure mommy spoon of salt training and they never get to practice, it's not going to sink in. It's just going to be . . . it won't be that tradition or that routine. Their hands won't get muscle memory. They're

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not going to learn very well.

WHEN TO TEACH

So I have already mentioned big hot tip number one from Katie. After seven plus years of teaching kids to cook, do not teach a new skill right before dinner, right? That is like the most stressful hour of the day because you almost always have time limitations. So I highly recommend that when you're teaching something new and again, break it down into just little tiny chunks.

It's not about making the muffin recipe. Sometimes it's just about cracking the egg or measuring that teaspoon of baking soda or measuring that cup of flour. You got to start with the little pieces and then eventually you can bake the muffins, right?

So think of those little pieces. There's like seven or eight skills, by the way, in baking muffins, if that's a goal you have for your kids. After snack on a weekday, after school, on a Saturday morning, right after breakfast, or right after lunch on a weekend. Yes, I'm telling you to cook food when their bellies are full because they're happy people. They're not trying to get through the skill so that they can get to the snack. Teach the skill. And then you want to have some sort of a routine for them to reiterate, for them to practice and rehearse that skill.

KIDS SOUS CHEF ROTATION

So then you want to have maybe a sous chef . . . one of our cooking class members says that she'll say she has a sous chef rotation. She has quite a few kids, and it stresses her out to have all of them in the kitchen at once. And so for her, the best routine or the best way to organize her time is to say kid A is a sous chef on Monday, kid B on Tuesdays, et cetera. And then she allows them. I'm sure she gives herself days where it's just mom in the kitchen, too. So the sous chef with a parent each night is a really great way to, again, have that one on one time with the child and form that connection, but also give them the needed repetition that humans need to truly learn a skill.

KIDS COOKING NIGHT

I also mentioned that we instituted a kids' cooking night quite a few years ago. It's something that I kind of need to get back to because again, kid number three, John, is eleven now and he is definitely old enough. So perhaps, perhaps we will get back on that horse. It's hard to find a new routine. I get it. Especially when the routine has already sort of fallen apart or has fallen by the wayside because something interrupted it. But it's a great idea.

Just like you might have Taco Tuesday, can you have kids cooking Saturday or kids cooking Thursday? Figure out how that looks for your family. And of course, just as much as having that sous chef with you builds connection, kids cooking nights build that independence.

And we want both. We want both for our kids. We want them close to us so that they feel confident enough to then walk off into the world and be independent. So we balance both.

OR BREAKFAST

One of my kids, Leah, she's my only girl and she gets up earliest. The kids have such an early school start time and she has a lot more to do to get herself ready for school. And she hit a point where she just did not like that feeling of not knowing what was for breakfast. Right? Sometimes she

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would forget to ask me the night before or whatever.

And so at the beginning of this past school year, she said, mom, for my new responsibility for this school year - because that's one of the routines we have. They get a new privilege and a new responsibility each year - for my new responsibility, I would like to take charge of me planning breakfasts. Simple whiteboard that we happen to have in the basement. Ultra-fine dry erase marker. And every Sunday she would sit down and plan breakfast because she was motivated, because she wanted to know what it would be as the first one up in the house.

What was great about that is that we ended up sort of planning dinners most weeks because she'd be like well, what are you making for dinner Monday night? I kind of want to know. That would help me stay on my routine. And she's super involved and again, kind of building that routine. Like, man, she is an organized fourteen year old. It is so, so cool.

KIDS GROCERY SHOPPING

Another way to get kids involved is to take some shopping, right? Give your kids an opportunity to try something new. Say, okay, all kids, let's go in the produce section and choose one thing that you are willing to learn with me. How to wash, cut and prepare in the next week. Maybe you don't do that all at the same time. Depending on your number of kids. But having kids be involved with the shopping process, especially choosing something new that they're motivated to give it a little taste can be a really fun way to get them involved and keep them motivated.

WHO'S DRIVING THE PLANE?

Now, I will say one caution with this, and that is to not let the kids drive the plane. Okay? I am not saying that kids should have choices of what they eat, when they eat, all the time. Jennifer Calari is a great connected parenting expert and therapist. And she says if you got on a plane and the pilot came over the loudspeaker and said, well, guys, how high do you think we should fly today? What speed should we fly? You would be like, let me off this plane. That is his job or her job. That is not my job. Right?

And kids kind of feel the same way. When we give them a little bit of choice that's a good thing.

Choice within boundaries. When we say, what do you want for dinner? Or when we short order cook and we let them have mac and cheese or chicken nuggets every night because that's the only thing they'll eat, we are letting them drive the plane. And parents, let me tell you, that is very much your job. Your kids will feel safer, just like people sitting on a plane will feel safer when the pilot tells them what he or she is going to do instead of asking them what he or she should do.

So you can let your kids be involved to an extent, right? A little bit. They could choose a bit of produce at the farmers market or the grocery store to try. They can help you look up a new recipe or help you with the meal plan, but ultimately make sure that they understand that you are still the one making the decisions because you are the adult and you know what's good for them. It's not mac and cheese and chicken nuggets every night. Okay? Makes sense. Do not let them drive the plane.

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WHAT ROUTINE DOES

Now, when this works, when this works well, when kids have a little bit of agency and a lot of connection with the parents and a little bit of confidence in the skills that they've built in their cooking toolbox. Remember those kids I told you about who made pizza every other week? It was so awesome. When they started making that pizza, they would build in a side vegetable, like a cooked veggie with pizza. Like, who does that? People might do pizza and a salad, but most of the time you don't have a cooked veggie.

And I thought it was just so sweet that they did that. And that was because our family had that routine. We had that culture that you do always have a salad, you always have some raw veg, you always have a side veggie. And that is like a real demonstration to me. Of the family culture that we were able to build. Because although I'm not a good routinized person, we had some routines, and those routines really worked.

ROUTINE FOR TEACHING A SKILL

Now, when you teach your kids, I want you to use a particular routine as well. I'm just going to quickly show you our Kids Cook Real Food three step process. This is for learning a new skill. When you're teaching that new skill, right, cracking an egg, putting something into the oven, cooking rice, tiny little pieces. I want you to demonstrate, guide and coach to independence.

STEP ONE: DEMONSTRATE

The first step is demonstrate. This is one that is sometimes missed. Sometimes we just start doing things with our kids. But it's best if they can see you as the adult, do it first. They shouldn't have anything in their hands. They shouldn't be distracted. And you just tell them, I'm going to do this. You watch and then you'll get a turn.

STEP TWO: GUIDE

The second step is what we call guide at Kids Cook Real Food. And this is more often missed in our culture because it's not something that maybe we've been taught to do. You can see my daughter's hands. There are over top of mine. This is our hand over-hand technique. It's used for things where you can see what the person's hands are doing, but you can't always see how much pressure they use. Like cracking eggs, like stirring, like flipping, like using a sharp knife, right?

You can't always tell how hard someone's pushing guys. That's why when kids are stirring, maybe it's like oatmeal for granola bars. They're popping and they're flipping the oats out of the bowl because they don't know how much pressure to use and exactly in what direction. So you allow them to put their hand over yours, and eventually you switch so that your hand is over theirs. That way they can really feel and see exactly what they're supposed to do.

STEP THREE: INDEPENDENCE

Once you've done the demonstrate and the guide, now you can coach to independence. I encourage you, of course, with knives and fire, but even with other more safe, less dangerous skills in the kitchen, I want you to stay close. I want you to be that coach with your words. That's why we build that common vocabulary of how we talk about our skills. And coaches always give their teams practice, right? Which is exactly why

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I want you to have those routines of a kid's cooking night, of a sous chef each weekday evening, or whatever it is. We need ways for our kids to stay involved in the kitchen so that they can practice and actually master those skills.

ORGANIZING YOUR KITCHEN

Now, how do we get organized with food stuff? How do we get organized with food stuff? Okay, I want to talk really quickly about organizing your kitchen so that kids can stay more involved.

THE LOW DOWN

Tip number one is to put kids' stuff down low, their own plates and bowls, things that they're allowed to use. This is again for kind of little or kids. Big kids can reach everything. Things that they use often, like breakfast foods and snack foods, can also be down low. My daughter, who loves to organize, organized all of our meat sticks and granola bars and trail mix items into two little rolling shelves so that kids can serve themselves an afternoon snack with permission. I'm driving the plane. But they can be the stewardess. What do they call flight attendants nowadays? Sorry. Old school. They can be the flight attendants while you're driving the plane. So it's pretty awesome to organize your kitchen with stuff down low. That also, by the way, enables kids to unload big pieces of the dishwasher.

SNACK BOUNDARIES

If there are some plates and dishes and stuff down low, you definitely want to have some snack boundaries, particularly in the summer, but also for after school. It's really important to have times of day when there is eating, times of day when there is not eating. You are driving the plane. You tell the kids what's appropriate and when it's appropriate.

In our house in the summer, it's 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. is a snack window. 3:00 to 4:00 p.m. is a snack window. If it's outside of those snack windows, it is too close to a meal, and I know that that's going to cause them to then not be hungry for the meal. So those are strict snack windows at the Kimball house. In any other time, the kitchen is closed now.

AFTER MEAL CHORES

We also then have some after meal chores that the kids all have to do. One of them has to wash the surfaces. One does the dishes, one puts the food away. And the poor little guy, he's always stuck with sweeping, although he's about to graduate into the rotation a little bit. He's too small for the dishes, but he can definitely start wiping surfaces. I tell you, that baby with a family just gets left behind sometimes. Poor kid number four. Poor little Gabe.

It is so, so worth it to organize your space and organize your time to give kids that independence and that confidence in the kitchen. All right, so to recap, this really is important. This is important for your kids. It's important for your family to run smoothly. Let me tell you what Amy L said. This is a picture of her little four year old. He's doing such a good job with his short paring knife and his cucumber. That is a sharp knife. Amy says, cooking with my kids stressed me out, and I'd shoo my kids out of the kitchen. Watching the kids cook on the videos gave me the courage to get my kids in the kitchen. And what happened? The four year old became my best little sous chef. He loves helping me prep for dinner by cutting up fruits and veggies with a real knife. And I love having help in the kitchen.

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It's so important. But remember to break everything down into manageable skills, right? Small chunks. When you have multiple kids, it can be a beautiful thing, by the way, when the big ones learn some skills and then they can teach the little ones. In general, I do want to continue to remind you and encourage you to teach new skills away from dinner time and yet plan those routines into the dinnertime routine for practice week in and week out.

A HEAD START ON ADULTHOOD

In the long run, this is going to save you time. This is going to improve your relationship with your kids because you have that connection time in the kitchen. It really gives them a head start on a calmer, more independent adulthood. I mean, what a deal is that? Let me show you my son, Paul. And what we have learned is that when you trust your ten year old with chef's knives and teach them to respect that dangerous situation, it is far easier to trust them at 16 driving a minivan down a freeway. Guys, it's still terrifying.

It's still terrifying, but it is much, much easier to be able to shift them when they've been doing some real kind of dangerous, authentic, independent tasks for many, many years. It's so much easier when they're teenagers than to think about conversations like cell phones and conversations like car keys. Those are big deals. So give them medium sized little deals, right? Medium sized deals that they can learn in the kitchen.

WRAPPING UP

I'm so, so glad that I get to give you our free ten minute Knife skills and Safety class so you can learn those common phrases. You can build that common vocabulary with your kids. You can give them a little independence, give them that sense of confidence that they can do authentic tasks that adults can do. That's my challenge for you guys, is to be able to get those kids in the kitchen.

Say, yes, take that nice skills video for a spin, and I hope to be part of you teaching your kids to cook. But you know what? Even if not, I'm happy I've done my job here, because it really is one of my goals to get every kid in the US, every kid in the world, to feel confident in the kitchen, that they have a toolbox full of skills that they can use both in their families now as kids and as they move into adulthood.

For me, that's how I got organized. That's how I organized my time in my kitchen routines, and that's how I got food onto the table for many, many years. And now I will still be reaping those benefits, as will my kids. I'm Katie Kimball from Kids Cook Real Food. So thrilled to connect with you today as you connect with your kids and your families around healthy food.

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Chaos to Calm: Uncovering the Roots of Clutter and Creating a Peaceful Home

KATY WELLS • TRANSCRIPT

Hey everyone, my name is Katy Wells, I'm a declutter expert and today's training here for the amazing Get Organized HQ Summit is how to get to the roots of your clutter and create a peaceful home once and for all.

TWO STUDIES

Before we dive into some really practical, helpful tips today, I have two important things to share with you. And they're actually two studies. So the first one is that in 2016 a UCLA study showed that clutter is directly tied to stress levels, especially in women. So in other words, the more items that you have in your home, the higher your stress levels, the more you get rid of, right?

And it's probably not a huge surprise, you're like oh yeah, I have noticed that when I declutter and get rid of a few things, I do feel a little bit lighter, a little bit less stressed. But it wasn't until the last decade really that a lot of data and research came out about how clutter really impacts us, whether it's our mental health, our physical health, our stress levels and so much more.

And the second one, a Harvard study showed that eliminating clutter in the home would reduce housework by up to 40%. And so I did some quick math. Y'all, for a lot of people that equates to over an hour a day, 7 hours a week, 30 hours a month, you get the idea. Extrapolate that to years.

And so what I want to share by sharing these studies and what I want you to understand is that clutter is probably impacting you a lot more than you realize. Whether it's your time, your energy, your mental health, your stress levels and that it's worth it.

EXCUSES

A lot of people say, well Katy, decluttering takes time, I don't have time, I'm busy, I want to do other things, I have hobbies, I have kids or grandkids. But decluttering is unique in the sense that it pays massive dividends in the long run and it is an investment in your time, meaning that you gain back so much from letting just a few things go, not even decluttering your whole home, your time, your energy, your happiness, your joy, your peace, all these things.

WHO IS KATY?

So if you are struggling with 24/7 mess and clutter and need realistic, long lasting solutions, today's training, you are in for such a treat. As I said, I'm Katy Wells. I'm a declutter expert, podcast host. Through my programs and podcast and YouTube channel, I've helped 20,000 families with my resources and I'm so excited to be here with you today.

Here's a little picture of me and my sons and my husband here. And I've been nominated many years in a row by the People's Choice Awards for Best Podcaster. And best Podcast. So what an honor now with over 3 million downloads. So if you're a

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podcast listener, check me out there. Or if you're on YouTube, find me under my name.

CAN YOU RELATE?

So can you relate to any of these? No judgment. I've been here too. Are you overwhelmed by mess and just don't know where to start? Maybe you've tried organizing your things, but the clutter always seems to come back.

Maybe you feel like your home is more stressful than restful. You'd love to spend more time in your house, but maybe you find any chance you can to get out of the house just so you don't have to deal with the clutter and the mess or the chores even, that come along with the clutter and mess.

Do you struggle to let go of sentimental things, or do you hang on to things just in case, even if one of these really resonated more than the others? We're going to be talking about, again the roots of your clutter, why you have it to begin with. And we're going to talk about some really practical ways to overcome some things that maybe you've been struggling with for a long, long time.

END RESULT

And by the end of this class, you're going to feel empowered. A lot of people say they even feel excited to go tackle their clutter, which is what makes me so happy. Of course I want you to simplify and let things go. You're going to understand exactly why you have clutter. A lot of people don't talk about this in the declutter space.

Yes, we can declutter, yes, we can organize, but we need to look at why it's there to begin with. If we don't tackle the roots, it's always going to be an uphill battle.

Okay. And you're going to have clarity to further your progress, to simplify your home and maybe feel spurred on to simplify other areas in your life with an end result, to creating a peaceful, calmer home that you just love to spend time in.

EASY TO TIDY, NOT ALWAYS TIDY

I always share that my home is a sanctuary. Even with a husband and two young kids, my home is not always tidy. It's not always clean. So I've dropped that perfection out of my reality because it's not reality. And instead, I strive for a home that's easy to tidy, not always tidy. And so a small nuance and language can make a really big difference.

And even if you think, well, I have a messy partner or I'm messy by nature, you can still create a home that feels like a sanctuary. It doesn't mean it has to be clean or tidy 24/7

ROOT CAUSE #1: PROCRASTINATION

Okay, so let's talk about some common reasons for clutter. These are in no particular order, but number one, procrastination, I will say, is probably one of the biggest reasons why a lot of us struggle with clutter. So studies actually find that procrastination is a predictive factor for clutter accumulation and vice versa.

SNOWBALL EFFECT

So in other words, the more you procrastinate, the more clutter you tend to accumulate. And then that kind of creates this big snowball effect, right? It

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gets larger and larger and larger. You start to procrastinate about decluttering more and more and more because you get more overwhelmed. A lot of us have experienced this and not only does procrastination and this indecision inhibit getting rid of things and decluttering, but it's also connected with lower psychological home and wellbeing. Kind of dovetailing with what I just talked about.

A lot of people just don't like being in their homes. They don't like their homes. They feel unwell or stressed or anxious or frustrated or like they can't relax in their home. Well, a big part of that is because of this study, what this study found, right. Procrastination. The more you procrastinate, the more clutter you're probably going to tend to have.

WHY PROCRASTINATE?

And so how do we address this? What do we do? How do we solve this? So ask yourself, why do I keep procrastinating? And what's interesting is this tends to be a topic I tend to research off pretty regularly. And some new research found something that I found to be quite startling and surprising. Researchers define procrastination as something you do when you are avoiding stress.

And so sometimes when we are procrastinating about decluttering, we think, well, I'm procrastinating about it and I say I'm going to do it tomorrow because I just don't like decluttering or I just don't like organizing. But it usually has nothing to do with the thing you are procrastinating about. It's just that you don't want to feel stressed.

TOO MUCH BRAIN POWER

And so I think when we kind of depersonalize it and make it not about decluttering at all, it helps us put it into perspective. And simply put, whether it's you, me, anyone else, any human, we tend to blow off things that take brain power, decluttering and organizing, no matter which one it is.

And just to be clear, organizing isn't letting go of things. It's grouping like things together. It's making things tidy. It makes your life more efficient. Effective, organized. Decluttering is the act of actually letting go of the clutter in your house. The excess, the unused, the unwanted, the unneeded. Two very different things.

Both have their place, all right? But both of those take brain power. And if your brain is tired and overwhelmed and stressed, it doesn't want to feel more stressed. So you're more likely to put it off so your brain can feel better in this moment. So if you're a professional procrastinator or identify as such, drop that identity and understand. It's just your brain wanting a little bit of a break. Okay?

IDENTIFY REAL CAUSE

So solutions to overcoming that procrastination identify what you're really avoiding. Maybe you're stressed out about something at work or you have a family member who's very ill and it's very stressful, whatever the reason is or whatever the main stressor is, that you just don't want to aggravate or feel by doing these other things like decluttering, that could make you feel more stressed out and reframe those thoughts.

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CONSIDER FUTURE SELF

Maybe you ask yourself, what would the future me want to do right now? The future you would want to wake up to a clean kitchen instead of dishes everywhere from the dinner before. The future you would want to come downstairs to a coffee bar that had been decluttered and didn't have all the coffee, the mess, 100 coffee cups, whatever that is. So the future you could wake up to a brighter, more efficient and less cluttered morning. You get the idea.

FIVE SECOND RULE

And so one really effective science-backed... it's called a starting ritual to help you overcome procrastination. Whether it's decluttering, organizing, it doesn't matter what, Is to do the five second rule, it's really as simple as it sounds. All you do is out loud, you say 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, and then you begin the task that takes brain power that in the past, the past you has been procrastinating about. But today you, and future you, you're like, no, I'm going to do the five second rule to help me move past procrastination and get started.

And realize when it comes to decluttering, a lot of us procrastinate because we think we have to do it all right now. We have to completely finish the junk drawer or the kitchen or whatever space. That's not the truth. So sometimes you also need to rewrite different, create different, benchmarks of success. You don't have to spend 5 hours decluttering your kitchen or not do it at all. Five minutes is enough. Some days 20 minutes is enough. It's better than nothing.

All right, so for all you perfectionists out there, we'll talk about that a little bit later. That's so important and just getting started, that's the hardest part, isn't it? So 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, get your trash bag, start your engines, let's go.

ROOT CAUSE #2: HOW WE PERCEIVE VALUE

Okay, common root cause for clutter number two, how we perceive value. And what I've come to create... the term over the last few years is... I call this your value lens. So just like different prescription lenses impact our vision, right? If you've ever been to the eye doctor or ophthalmologist, I think it's the same person, right? And they're flipping through those different prescription lenses and it's fuzzy, fuzzy, fuzzy. And it starts to get a little bit clearer and then we're like, oh, okay, now I can see great, whatever this is, this is my prescription.

Well, we all see things differently. Have you ever looked at something in your home and thought this is trash or this is clutter and maybe your child, your partner, or even your grandkid is like, no, I love that. That is not clutter, that is not trash. You both are looking at the exact same thing, yet you have completely different perspectives on what it is. You value it differently because you have a different value lens.

So I'm going to cover a few different common value lenses. And with these it's not to... ultimately when you identify which ones or which ones you have... a lot of us have two or three main ones. It's not that you can switch a light switch and then completely change that. However, just with some... and we'll talk more about some solutions to overcome some of these. It does take time, but I think awareness is often the first step. Right. Here's why I have a hard time letting go of some things.

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FREQUENCY OF USE

So number one frequency of use and how it adds to your life. This is for someone, if you tend to value and keep things that make your life simpler, easier, and happier, it could be your favorite coffee machine to your favorite sneakers that might be 20 years old that everyone says you need to get rid of those and replace those. And you're like, no, these are my favorite shoes. Right?

You really value simple things that have a purpose, function, and make your life easier. So over the years I have come to... really this is my main one now and when this is your main way that you value things, it makes the rest of it when it doesn't fall in this category, it makes it easier to just objectively let things go that don't add to your life.

And so I think for a lot of us this should be like a good goal to have in mind to switch our value lens to. But I used to very much be monetary. We'll talk about that in just a second.

UNIQUENESS

Number two. Okay, so uniqueness and difficult to replace. You might have this as one of your main value lenses if you hold and keep and cling to things that you feel are important because they have some type of unique aspect to them or they're difficult to replace.

So maybe inherited items from a loved one, diaries, journals, things that are really personalized, artwork from your kids, your grandkids, all tend to feel hard for you to let go of. Even if you recognize there's too much. You're not going to do anything with it. You understand that you don't really want all of it, maybe. And for this one it's less about emotional attachment and it's more about uniqueness and this kind of fear of letting it go.

SENTIMENTALITY

The third one is sentimentality and emotional so you tend to hold on important things, or hold importance to things rather, that make you feel nostalgic, reminds you of past seasons in life, memories or loved ones.

And whether you use the item or not, the thought of letting it go can maybe for you just feel unbearable, from family heirlooms to a scarf your best friend gave you a decade ago or anything in between. It doesn't have to be fancy, expensive, it could just be like you have a memory and because you have a memory associated with that object, you struggle to let go of it.

MONETARY

Now we have monetary, another really common value lens. So if an item cost, quote unquote, a lot of money, that could be $20, that could be ten, it could be 40, it could be 100, it could be 1000. Right. We all have different versions of what that is, but sometimes a lot of people tend to keep things even if they know they're clutter because the money was spent.

And they feel like if they donate said item that cost money, it's a waste of money. And so they just think, I'll hang on to this. Right.

POTENTIAL USEFULNESS

And then, of course, you have another value lens, which is potential usefulness. I think everyone has experienced this. It's a really hard one. So you tend to consider things that have potential usefulness as

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having value. So when you go to maybe declutter a junk drawer or a kitchen cabinet or whatever, and you pick an item up and you're like, well, I haven't used this in 20 years, ten years, six months, two weeks, whatever, and I don't really see myself using it necessarily.

I don't have a plan to use it soon, but I don't really want to get rid of it because what if I need it, right? What if this could come in handy? This has potential usefulness. That's why I purchased it to begin with. So if that's like, you're raising your hand, you're like, yes, Katy, this is me. Then that's probably one of your main value lenses.

CHANGING YOUR VALUE MINDSET

Okay, so identify out of that list, read out your top one, two, three. Most people have again, three. Maybe you have a little bit of all of them. That's okay. The idea is awareness. And then we can slowly begin to adjust our value lens. Just like when we're adjusting the prescription in front of us at the ophthalmologist, right? We slowly click through and adjust our perspective on things.

And I can't stress this enough. One really great way to shift our value lens, if there were ever such a thing as a hack or some quick method, which I'm not really a fan of those terms, but it can really help us to reference our core values . . .What is actually important to you? What are your core values as a person?

TAKE THE HIGH VIEW

For me, one of my top five core values is simplicity. How can I simplify my life, my relationships, my business, my home, everything? And that question impacts thousands of decisions I make on a daily and a weekly and a monthly basis. And those all add up.

So if one of your core values is family or relationships, that's really impacted, in other words, by your relationship with stuff. And sometimes when we take a step back and take a 30,000 foot view at our lives, we realize, holy cow, I haven't even been making decisions or making choices or taking actions that align with my core values.

And that's exactly how we end up in a place in life where we don't want to be. And for a lot of us, that's a home filled with clutter and filled with stress.

ROOT CAUSE #3: SCARCITY MINDSET

Okay, next one. Scarcity mindset. Scarcity mindset says things like, I don't have enough. We live in a culture here in the US, and a lot of other cultures in the world outside of the US, I don't have enough. And when we believe that, then our actions stem from a place of lack, right?

This fear, this anxiety and doubt. So not only does it cause us to accumulate things on the front end, it's really hard to let go on the back end. When we live in scarcity, when we're afraid, what if I need that again? Oh, but what if I don't have the money to replace this again, right? Oh, I've felt that fear. I felt that anxiety, so many years ago. I felt that. So if that's you, I feel you.

On the flip side, abundance mindset when that is your belief. That belief says, I have enough. And your actions stem from a place of abundance. So the result is confidence, security, gratitude, and faith, all helping you to shift your shopping behavior. I don't need

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that. Buy one, get one. I don't need that. Whatever sale, I have enough. And on the back end helps you declutter, right? Helps you make further your progress beyond.

So if you are stuck in scarcity, it's going to impact how you're bringing clutter in and your inability to let it go. So here's some ideas or some examples if you're like, well, I'm not sure if I'm stuck in scarcity.

SIGNS OF THE MINDSET

So purchasing items that I said earlier, that just to get them because you want a good deal. If you are one of those people that's like, I live for a good deal, I get it. I used to be that too. Doesn't always mean you have scarcity mindset, but I do think they definitely go hand in hand a lot. If you go to Target or go to Walmart, go to a store with your shopping list and come home with double that shopping list, then you might be in scarcity, right? You are just like, I have to get the sale because what if it's not there next time?

Holding on to items that are unused just in case you ever need it again. Keeping items you don't like or love because it feels easier than getting rid of them. Keeping items because of their potential use, we talked about that with the value lenses and kind of this fear of letting go. What if I need this again?

These are all indicative that you are stuck in some type of scarcity. Scarcity. I could do a whole presentation on going from scarcity to abundance, but really, right. I have 20 minutes with you, 20-25 minutes with you. So we're going to keep this nice, short, and sweet. Just like switching our value lenses over time. Going from scarcity to abundance also takes time, but I promise you, it's worth it just to start to do these little things that are going to impact that and change your trajectory.

FROM SCARCITY TO GRATITUDE

So, simple things. Write out affirmations, positive statements to help combat some of those fears or scarcity based thoughts that are keeping you stuck in a home filled with clutter or disorganization. Put those positive statements where you can see them. Read them out loud. It could be something as simple as I have enough, or I feel peace knowing that if I get rid of something, the universe or I will be able to get it in the future.

Maybe you borrow it from a friend. Maybe you ask a loved one. Sometimes we need to think outside the box. But you want to pick a positive statement that combats a negative thought you have that maybe tends to come up when you declutter or that's scarcity based. If you read that positive statement before you begin decluttering, oh my gosh. It can really just add kind of rocket fuel to your fire and really help you make more progress.

And I can't stress this enough, take action. The more you declutter, the more confidence you gain, the more you realize, I do feel so much better with less stuff, less piles on my desk, a less chaotic kitchen or wherever you're spending your time, a more cozy bedroom, a more simplified wardrobe. And I'm going to lean into those benefits, and I'm going to step into abundance every single time that I continue to let go of these things that aren't serving me anymore.

ROOT CAUSE #4 IDENTITY

Identity. Identity is such a big piece of our lives. And sometimes it's hard to let go of stuff that represents who you want to be,

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think you should be, who you once were, who you want to be. All these different micro identities. We all have different identities. I'm a mom, I'm a wife, all these different things. And it's very nuanced, right?

But the thing is, many of these things that are in our homes right now do not represent who you actually are, who you actually are in this moment. And I often say that through decluttering, we often step into a more authentic, genuine, happy version of ourselves.

PAST IDENTITIES

And that's only if we are able to let go of these things we've been clinging to or hanging onto that were related to these past identities.

And so here are some examples, some identities you had in the past. Maybe you were a devoted high school athlete in high school. So you have all the trophies. You have all your college textbooks. Maybe you were a straight A student or you're valedictorian. And that's still part of your identity 20, 30, 40 years later. And so if you are clinging to that identity, then you are probably clinging to the trophies, the textbooks, the certificates, all the things that, again, there's nothing wrong with hanging on to some of these things.

But can we keep a few instead of many, right? Can we display a few if it's still important to you? Or maybe you just decide, listen, I can still keep that identity. It's still a part of my story, but it doesn't mean I have to keep all the stuff that's collecting dust in a box somewhere in my garage.

Anyway, we have career identities, relationship identities, married, single, divorce, widowed, mom, sister. So start taking a look around your home. Are you keeping things out of fear of maybe if I let these go, then that means I don't have that identity anymore?

UNREACHED IDENTITIES

The reality is, you are you with or without your stuff. And if all your stuff were gone tomorrow, you would still be an amazing you. All right, maybe it's an identity you never reach. Maybe you never got that college degree. Life threw a wrench in your plans when you were in that time. Maybe you got married instead and didn't do the college route, and you always have this little regret about it. And so you hang on to different things from that time for that reason. That's just one example.

FUTURE IDENTITIES

Maybe you maybe it's an identity you hope to have in the future, something you're striving for. A lot of us, I mean, I think it's human nature to always want to strive for something. I want to be a person who reads books, camps, knits, goes out with my friends, who's a great wife, great mother, great husband, who runs 5Ks. So sometimes we cling to things that are in our homes or we purchase things that we think that identity would have. If I decide tomorrow I want to become a mountaineer, guess what? One of the first things I'm going to do, because identity drives behavior, if I decide I'm going to be a mountaineer tomorrow, I'm probably going to go do a lot of research on mountaineering and start buying things that mountaineers would own. Because now I'm deciding I'm a mountaineer.

Now. Let's say that changes in the future.

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Maybe I decide I'm not going to become a mountaineer, and my dreams aren't going to happen anymore. A lot of people, what do they do in this scenario? They keep all of the mountaineering stuff. Maybe for you it's camping, right? We don't have to go extreme mountaineering here. We don't have to climb Mount Everest. Maybe for you it was knitting or camping. You always envisioned camping with your family, but it never happened. You were too busy. You didn't really like camping anyway, and so you have all this camping stuff cluttering up your garage in your life.

It's hard to let go of that sometimes because we think, oh, if I let go of it, that means my dream of being a camper or being this identity is gone. But I can't stress that enough. That's not true. You need to rewrite some of these stories in your head. Move past that and maybe let go of the identity or just honor the identity you want to keep and not keep all the stuff so objectively, without judgment or shame.

Ask yourself, why am I so attached to these ideas and this idea of myself? Why do I struggle letting go of this particular category of things? So likely, you have some stories you need to put to rest, and once you do, you're going to be able to let go, move on. It's a magical thing. Not always the easiest, but I promise it's worth it.

ROOT CAUSE #5: MORE IS BETTER

All right. More is better mindset. We talked about culture earlier. Mainstream culture teaches us that in order to be happy, we need to consume. We need the latest, greatest skin care. We need to hide our gray hair. We need to look like we are in our 20s or whatever.

We have subconsciously adopted a lot of these ideas we are constantly being sold through marketing, mainstream advertising, social media, influencers, books, newspapers, it really doesn't matter. All being bombarded. I'm tired of it. I don't know about you, anyone else? And if we ultimately begin to believe that buying stuff makes us happy, we're going to be more likely to impulse shop.

What does this mean? You're going to be decluttering, hopefully decluttering, after this presentation. But if you, in your heart of hearts, believe that you're going to be happier when you go get that pair of shoes or that new scarf or that new camping gear, then you will always declutter just to reclutter.

Maybe it's someone you idolize. If we idolize certain people, maybe it's an author, a friend, someone on TV, someone that you just... is a coach or a mentor of yours. When we idolize people, and that's not necessarily a bad thing, we tend to do and consume what they would consume. Right. Because we want to be like them. And so always buying the latest, greatest trend, all these different things can really put a big roadblock in the middle of our simplification journey.

SHOP MORE INTENTIONALLY

So some solutions if you tend to be like, I'm a shopper, I definitely don't want to shop as much as I do. I want to save my money. I want to simplify my life. Focus on shopping more intentionally. It's kind of like being in a canoe with a hole in it and only focusing on getting a bucket to get the water out. Now that's exhausting. After about 30 minutes of just putting your bucket in your canoe and dumping the water out, it's annoying, right? And it's exhausting.

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Here's what you should do. You should focus on, how do I clog the leak? Wow. Right? Now, apply that analogy towards your home and the stuff coming into your home. It's great to declutter. It's better to not spend the money in the first place. Now, I still make shopping mistakes. I still buy things, and I end up donating them. We learn from them. Okay.

OTHER DOPAMINE HITS

Get your dopamine hits from things other than stuff. Donating. Did you know, donating directly to another person, whether you know them or not. But handing your things over to someone else who is so excited to be blessed, and to use these things that have been cluttering your home, that is one of the greatest ways to get dopamine hits. It really is. So lean into that.

Maybe you get your dopamine hit from exercise or taking a walk or that next time you feel an urge to hop on your favorite shopping app, you call or text your best friend. How can you get your dopamine hits other than shopping? So many other ways.

EMBRACE LETTING GO

And embrace the lighter feeling and freedom of letting go. Purging, decluttering. Insert adjective here, right? Letting go. All right.

ROOT CAUSE #6: PERFECTIONISM

Perfectionism. I promise we talk about this because this is a common root cause for clutter. So the trouble with perfectionists... and I am a recovering perfectionist, by the way.

In fact, a lot of the things we're talking about today, I struggled with them all. So don't think I'm an anomaly. Don't think, oh, it must be easy for Katy. No, I've had to go through my own journey to make more progress. And I'm telling you what, like I said earlier, it's worth it.

So the trouble is that for perfectionists, performance is intertwined with their sense of self. And when perfectionists don't succeed, they don't just feel disappointment about how they did. They feel shame about who they are. And here's a classic example. You spend maybe an hour or two or maybe an entire weekend decluttering and organizing. Maybe, let's say, your kitchen. You're so proud of it. Your family comes home after a long day, you're so proud. Look at the clean counters. Look at everything has a spot. I've simplified.

ALL OR NOTHING ATTITUDE

And then what happens within sometimes 3 hours, sometimes less. An hour, 3 hours, a week, a month. For a lot of people, the mess is right back to where it was. And it's not just like, oh, darn. It's like, I stink. I am the worst person. How could I do this? How come the mess is back? Or maybe we point fingers at our family, right? So you might struggle with perfectionism if you have that all or nothing attitude I mentioned earlier, I have to do it all right now or I'm not going to do it at all.

Five minutes of decluttering is better than zero. Two minutes is better than zero. You have to create different benchmarks for success. Because for a lot of us, we're all busy. We all have different responsibilities. A lot of us have a million spinning plates in the air, and we're trying to balance our lives and make sure none of the spinning plates come crashing down. You might not ever

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find that elusive 2,3,4,5 hour window in your day.

And I promise you, if, oh, you had a big cancellation in your day or your window, and you're like, oh, I have from twelve to four today, I promise you, you're not going to declutter anyway. You're going to be like, I need to do something for myself. I need to go take a walk or do something else. Hopefully not shop, right? But you get the idea.

DEFENSE TACTICE

Ironically, perfectionism for a lot of us can be a defense tactic, which I didn't really realize years ago, to keep shame at bay. Because if you're perfect, you never fail. And if you never fail, there's no shame. And so it keeps us in this cycle, right? Well, I don't want to start decluttering. I'm not ready. And then the procrastination kicks in. Procrastination and perfectionism are like best friends.

And perfectionism, excuse me, can actually cause us to be bigger consumers. If you're always striving for perfection, then you're probably going to be striving to buy the latest, greatest thing because you want to appear perfect, right?

Perfectionism hinders declutter results for a lot of the reasons we've talked about. I'll start when I feel ready. If I can't do it perfectly, there's no point. I have to get it all done. If the mess comes back, what's the point? I'm here to tell you today, as I mentioned, right when we got started, your home should get messy. And a lot of people kind of look at me like I have three heads when I say that we are living, breathing human beings. We put things where they don't belong. We make messes, okay? There are solutions for that, and decluttering is a big one of them to help you simplify, to create a home that's easy to tidy.

EMOTIONALLY DEPENDENT ON OUTCOME

So perfectionists are emotionally dependent on the outcome. Any imperfect outcome can trigger emotions of shame, guilt, anxiety, or worthlessness. It's not a fun place to be. And this is where I talked about procrastination kicking in. None of us want to feel these things. As perfectionists, or someone with a perfectionist tendency, if that resonates more with you . . .

So procrastination comes swoops in and goes, don't worry, friends, I got this. Let's declutter another time. Let's clean up the dirty dishes another time. Tomorrow. And then tomorrow the same story, right? So again, it's not an overnight switch to go from perfectionistic tendencies to not.

NOT OPTIMAL DOESN'T MEAN NOT BENEFICIAL

But some practical solutions. Remember that just because it's not optimal doesn't mean it's not beneficial. This took me a long time to get my head around, but I promise you, as someone on the back end who uses this as a life motto, it makes the biggest difference whether it's exercise, whether it's eating well or better, whether it's decluttering. This motto has changed my life. Decluttering for five minutes a day is better than decluttering not at all. Right?

EMBRACE THE MESSY MIDDLE

Learn to embrace the during, the messy middle. Sometimes when we're decluttering or organizing, the mess gets a little bit worse before it gets better, right? Am I right

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or am I right? We've all experienced that. A lot of us want to avoid the messy middle. We just want the perfect after photo.

We want the perfectly organized drawer at home and perfectly clutter free kids' area or living room. But the reality is we gain so much of the skills that get us to the after in the messy middle. That's where we grow. That's where our declutter muscle grows and we tap into our core values and all these different things. And that's what gives us sustainable results, right?

HABITS MAKE LONG TERM SUCCESS

Habit forming habits equate to long term success. We can all do flash in the pan methods, declutter strategies. We can all tackle surface area clutter and superficial clutter that's easy to let go of, but we have to dig deeper. All right?

Remember, the time you invest in decluttering now pays dividends in the long run. More time, more energy, less stress, and a happier you. And you enjoy your home. So many wins in that equation. And I know you deserve a home that you love to spend time in.

DECLUTTER SUPPORT

So if you would love some more declutter support, you can grab one of my most popular documents. It's a PDF, so I'll send it straight over to your inbox. Just go to katyjoywells.com/getdecluttered and it's how to quickly declutter your home without being sabotaged by guilt, anxiety or stress.

You need this as a continuance after this training. I know a lot of you will feel inspired, but if you want some more support, you'll have this document for in your back pocket. That ace in your back pocket, as they say, for when you need it. You can pull it out, download it, print it off at home. I promise you, this PDF has helped literally tens of thousands of people. So get it. It's completely free.

And then, of course, you can follow me on YouTube, Katy Wells podcast which is called The Maximized Minimalist, and also Instagram as well, if you were on there. I had such a blast hanging out with you today here on the Get Organized Summit. And I will see you next time. Take good care.

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Organization to Optimize Your Kitchen Workflow

KAY PATTERSON • TRANSCRIPT

Hey there and welcome. My name is Kay Patterson. I'm a professional home organizer, and I'm also the host of the YouTube channel The Organized Soprano, where I help people get organized. And I also give you great organizing ideas so that you can live your most efficient life at home and just be more relaxed because your home is organized.

THE HUB OF THE HOME

One of my favorite things to do when I go to other people's homes, and actually in my own home, is to organize the hub of the home, which is the kitchen. The kitchen is not only where you prepare your food or grab a snack in the middle of the night, it's where a lot of the family and people that live in your house usually gather.

When you have parties, people come over, they hang out in your kitchen. You're making drinks. You are pouring them a glass of water. You're doing all kinds of things to welcome them into your home. And it's an area that I see a lot when I go to clients houses.

Because it's such a dynamic space, not only do you have people in and out of the fridge all the time, you've got people in and out of the pantry, you've got people putting dishes in different places, and the dishwasher is always full. It's such a dynamic and incredibly exciting space in your home that it can be the first to fall apart as far as home organization.

OPTIMIZATION OF WORKFLOW

And I want to go a little deeper than home organization in this session. I want to talk a lot about optimization of workflow. Now, what I mean about that is how fast you can get things done in your kitchen. You want to set up your kitchen to where you can be bing, bang, boom, get things done and get out of there and enjoy your life.

Or, if you're like me and you like to sort of hang out in the kitchen and you like to cook and you like to experiment and do all kinds of things, that you can do it in a way that is more efficient. And so you're not hunting around for all of these different things in different areas of your kitchen, no matter what size kitchen you have. Now, I've lived in some really, really small kitchens. You can be organized and optimize your workflow, no matter the size or the shape or type of kitchen you have. So let's get into it.

Now, why should you even care about kitchen workflow and not just organization? Well, let's talk about a few things. So I've lived in some really small kitchens, as I said before, and I found that even though things weren't very far away from one another in this kitchen, that at one point I had set it up in a way that was not very smartly optimized. And I was taking a lot more time looking for items, turning around, going to different areas in this little small space. That I was not setting up an ideal situation for myself, even though it was a really small space with not a lot in it.

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LET YOUR KITCHEN BE A KITCHEN

The kitchen also may be doing a double duty and sometimes people have a little desk set up in their kitchen for a work from home. A lot of us have been working from home since the pandemic and we've needed spaces that we haven't designated for anything else before. And sometimes that's in the kitchen and sometimes our children work, do their schoolwork, in the kitchen. So the kitchen is doing a lot of double duty. So we want to make sure it's set up optimally so that it can do the best job it can.

In my personal experience, if you can, I always recommend that clients use their kitchen only for a kitchen and for nothing else. If you have no other choices, if you have to set up your workspace there, you got to do what you got to do. But in a perfect world and I always recommend clients, if you can have your workspace in another space, or if your children have their homework space in the kitchen and if you really want to have them move out, I would say please just let your kitchen be a kitchen.

It can be a temporary workspace, but having a workspace set up there all the time can really take away from some of the usability of your space. So I say if you can, let your kitchen just be a kitchen and nothing else.

LOOKING AHEAD

Okay, so today we'll be talking about a few different things. First we'll be talking about the kitchen zones and why they actually matter and why you should care. Then we'll talk about how to set up and organize these zones. We'll talk a little bit about freezer and refrigerator organization and why you should care about it. We'll talk about how to add extra storage to your space, if you're really running short on storage space. We'll talk a little bit about how weekly prep can save your life. And it is not an exaggeration, it actually can. And lastly, we'll talk about how to organize some really tricky spaces in your kitchen.

WORK ZONES

So what are kitchen work zones? The kitchen work zones are the areas in your kitchen or around your kitchen where you find yourself doing mostly just one activity. They can definitely overlap and a lot of areas, the work zones in my kitchen definitely overlap, so don't be too specific about it. But these are just general work zones that you should keep in mind when you're setting up your kitchen. We're going to talk about the four most common work zones in your kitchen that I find in most homes.

COOKING ZONE

So number one, of course, is the cooking zone. This is the area around your oven, around your stove. Maybe if you have another cooking vessel or implement in your kitchen, you're doing cooking there. This is the area where you're just cooking your food, preparing your food. It's plain and simple. And it may be the areas slightly around that space. So like the little counter area to the left and right of your oven, if you have that much space. So it's just the area where you're cooking your food.

CLEANING ZONE

Next is going to be your cleaning zone. This is the area around your dishwasher, your sink, and it includes your trash can. Possibly even a compost, if you are a composting kind of person. It's the area where you're

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doing all the cleanup after or during, if you are very efficient, your cooking process.

FOOD PREP ZONE

The next area is your food prep zone. So this is the area where you are doing a lot of your chopping, a lot of your slicing, a lot of your julienne, whatever you're doing with your food to prepare it for the cooking zone.

STORAGE ZONE

Now last is the storage zone. Now, storage zone is kind of a misnomer because it's storage zones because it's going to be distributed throughout your kitchen and includes your refrigerator, your freezer, any kind of drawers, cabinets, anywhere where you're storing things that are or aren't food. So they're going to be a storage zone. And that's kind of why I say these zones are going to overlap. So you want to think about how you are using the space and that's how you're going to set up your storage zones.

FIRST STEP - DECLUTTER

The first step in maximizing workflow in your home - and you probably know I was going to say this - is only to keep the things on hand that you are using and that bring you joy in your kitchen. I know it is really hard to declutter, especially in your kitchen. And we all have things that we use less frequently. Now I happen to have one of those beautiful stand-up mixers for making batters and stuff. I only use that maybe once or twice a year. I have chosen, as attractive as it is, to take this off of my counter to provide more workspace for me so that I can get around a little bit more efficiently in my kitchen.

So only the things that you use on a daily basis or things you love amazingly a lot should live on the counter. Space in your kitchen is very valuable real estate. I remember in my little bachelorette kitchen where I lived in this really small apartment, it was only like 420 square feet, I only had one single square of counter space that was by the stove. I had another little square of counter space that was by the sink, but it was perpendicular and way to the other side. Not really usable for cooking or anything like that. It was just a place for my dry dishes to go since I didn't have a dishwasher. So anything that was on that little square of counter was something either I had to use every day or was very valuable to me.

So the counter space. Your workspace needs to be clear of things that you don't use every single day. That waffle maker that you use once a week, find another home for him because he doesn't deserve real estate on your everyday counter.

NEXT STEP - OBSERVE

The next step you want to take when you're thinking about maximizing your kitchen workflow is to actually just sit back and observe your habits over a couple of weeks when you work in your kitchen. I know that I tend to do my food prep in one particular area of the kitchen. I have a really large kitchen now, and I have a lot of counter space, but I know that when I prep food, I kind of center myself to one area of the counter that I like to prep my food just because it feels good.

So observe your own behavior over the next week or so. Notice where you're doing activities. Are you cutting food on one area of the kitchen but doing, like, mixing on the other? Do you happen to reach for one cabinet more than the other? Is one easier to grab after you clean out the dishwasher?

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Just notice things about your own behavior before you start to set up your kitchen.

Also notice if you can find your items quickly or if it takes you a little bit to grab something. Whether you have to move items out of the way to grab other items, just observe your own behavior and observe any problems you may come across when you're in the kitchen. Like, let's say it's really annoying for me to get to the olive oil, but it's something I use all the time. That's a problem I need to solve.

You can write those things down in a little journal or make a mental note and keep that in mind when you're doing your either refresh of your kitchen or you're setting it up initially. Let's say you just moved and you just put everything away in your kitchen. Just notice what's working and what's not working.

WHERE DO YOU USE THINGS?

When I was living in that little, tiny galley kitchen, I noticed that I was definitely short on workspace. So I added a little extra workspace to solve that problem, and I moved everything that was in my pantry. Because I was, again, a person who loved to cook, I moved it a little bit into my living room space. This was not totally ideal, but it was close to my kitchen and allowed me to store everything I needed to store in a neat and tidy way so that I could work optimally in my little tiny kitchen. And I had a great time.

So you have to think a little bit outside the box when it comes to correcting some stuff that may be going wrong. So the best advice I have for you when you're thinking about setting up your kitchen zones or just acknowledge where they are, is to store items where you use them. And that is why I am asking you to observe your own behavior. That is something I'm going to bring up a thousand times because it is really going to help you be more efficient and help you find things easier - to just store things where you use them.

I would be absolutely lying if I didn't say that this was the general rule for organizing your home. In general. It sounds simple. It is simple, but it's not easy. That's the thing that I keep saying to people is that these concepts are very simple, but not easy. So I'm going to say it one more time. Repeat with me, store things where you use them. Okay?

ORGANIZING STORAGE

All right, let's move on. Okay, so now we're thinking about zones. Let's talk about how to organize within zones. And I'm going to start with the storage zone because it's a little more complicated and because it's going to be spread out throughout your kitchen. So the first zone I think about is that cooking zone where your oven is and around it when you're storing things.

I like to store things I like to cook with frequently. So we're talking about maybe a little vessel for your cooking utensils and maybe your extra utensils, maybe in a little drawer next to your oven. You don't want to store those far away from your oven so that you have to walk all the way across your kitchen and grab those. That is not a good idea.

STORING SPICES

The next thing I think about when I think about the storage zone close to your cooking zone is spices and things like that. Spices can be very tricky to store because they come in these tiny little packages

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if you don't buy them in bulk. And often the size of the bottles and shape are not consistent and you can't find the one you were looking for right away. So the best way of storing spices that I recommend to every client is if you have the drawer real estate, put them in a drawer. Take them off the shelf, put them in a drawer. You can stand them up or have them angled in the drawer. And this allows you to see every bottle clearly. And that way you're not trying to fumble and grab things that are in front of others. Figure out which one is which. The spice drawer is the way to go if you have the drawer real estate.

ALPHABETICAL ORDER

If you want to be absolutely extra, and this requires a lot of effort, but I do recommend it because it has changed my life, is to decant your spices into the same shape and size container and label them all a consistent label and store them - this is very extra, but it's changed my life - alphabetically. I've actually done this even when the bottle sizes and shapes were not consistent, to store them alphabetically.

This is a lot of effort going in, right? Because you have all these spice bottles. But if you store them alphabetically, like first is all spice and last is Za'atar, you can definitely easily find the one you're looking for. If I'm looking in a drawer or looking on a shelf and my spices are alphabetized and I'm looking for cumin, I know exactly my eye knows exactly where to go and I can easily grab that bottle off the shelf or out of the drawer without any problem and not grab close to the red pepper. Or again, the Za'atar, which is the last thing in my drawer. So you don't have to be exactly perfect with your alphabet, like you're storing them alphabetically. But if you're semi alphabetized, it is a life changer. Just take an afternoon, lay them all out and sing the alphabet song a few times while you do it, because I still need to do that.

TURN, TURN, TURN

Some other strategies I have for organizing spices are using a Lazy Susan or a turntable. This is so great if you are finding that you can't find things because they're in the back. Because that way you're creating a turntable where things don't end up in the back permanently. You can just turn the turntable and things become the front that were in the back. The only issue with this is that the spices in the middle can get lost if there are spices in the middle, if you don't get one of those specific spice organizing turntables, but it can help.

Also I find even in the turntable, if you alphabetize within the turntable with a system that works for you. For me, I have the spices on the top that are the earlier letters and then the stuff on the bottom, the later letters in the alphabet. That helps me find things as well.

CABINET SPACE

If you don't have shelf space or drawer space, the inside of your cabinet doors are really, really helpful. They're there just hanging out anyway and being a storage space that you can utilize. It's really helpful. Those little magnetic organizing tins are fantastic for this. And plus it keeps your spices away from light, which is going to help them last longer. And again, if you have to keep your spices on a shelf, I definitely recommend getting one of those step shelves. That's going to help you a lot when you're trying to see labels. That way you don't have the phenomenon of one tall bottle in front of another tall bottle and you don't know what the one behind it is.

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Because I know I am an out of sight, out of mind person and whatever's in the back does not exist. So we don't want that. We want you to be able to see all of your labels. So I recommend step system, either doing the back of the door, back of the cabinet door, spice drawer, or Lazy Susan.

Or if you're really fancy and have one of those special pull out spice cabinets in your kitchen, utilize that. Again, alphabetized there and you'll never lose a single spice ever again. Guaranteed.

POTS AND PANS

Next, you're going to want to consider storage of your pots and pans to maximize your workflow. Of course, you want to store these near your cooking zone because where else are you using them? And repeat after me, store things where you use them. My biggest piece of advice I have for you when thinking about storing pots and pans is that you want to store pots and pans in a way where you can grab them individually without disturbing any other pot or pan around it.

This is one of those concepts that a lot of people know in their head, but they don't implement. Like we're nesting little pans and pots inside of one another. And that seems like a great way to save on space. But what actually happens is we have this pile of pots and pans and if you need the one on the bottom, you have to lift up the entire pile, get the one on the bottom, and it adds to your aggravation as well as seconds when in your kitchen.

And we're talking about saving seconds as well as minutes when we talk about optimizing kitchen flow. So even those little seconds saved can save not only seconds time, but save on aggravation as well. So there are a lot of great solutions to help you achieve this sort of singly available pot and pan organization system.

KEEP THEM ACCESSABLE

The best one I can recommend if you own your home or if you are allowed to install things in the base of your cabinets, is pull out solutions like a pull out shelf with pot and pan storage. These are the most helpful, they are the most durable, and they will provide the most customizing solution for you. And this is what we currently have in our kitchen. I absolutely adore them.

If you cannot install anything in your cabinets or you live in a rental, or you just are living somewhere temporarily, there are so many temporary solutions or non-permanent solutions, non-install solutions. It is so, so good and so optimizes that little second, you have to just reach for the handle of a pot and not have to worry about disturbing every single pot around it.

I even have this beautiful set of ceramic pans that have they came with their own organizer, which they're beautiful enough to be stored on the countertop if you have the space. But I have mine in a cabinet and it's a brilliant storage system where I can just grab the handle of one of them and pull them out and not have to worry about the others or unstacking the others. So I definitely will keep this in mind when setting up your pot and pan storage system.

FOOD CONTAINERS

Another category of storage that tends to not be thought about very much when we're talking about kitchen organization and kitchen workflow is food storage. What is food storage? We're not talking about

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pantry. We're not talking about your food, actual food pantry storage, but I'm talking about food storage for leftovers. In other words, I'm talking about Tupperware. But Tupperware is a brand name, so we're talking about food storage. So this is any container that you would put leftovers into, or if you cut an onion, you put half the onion back into the container. These are very important things in your kitchen.

I think that over the past 30 years, first we were very much into Tupperware, and then I noticed a period in time when we were really into our Gladware and that sort of flimsy plastic container thing that we were really into. I think that it is in your best interest to invest in either glass or silicone food storage at this stage in the game because it's going to last longer. It's going to not hold odors from food, particularly onions or stains from things like tomato or curry or anything like that. And it's going to be better for the environment. So that is a win win for everyone.

Now, food storage in particular is kind of tricky because a lot of people don't allocate space in their kitchen for it and they don't think about where it's going to be stored, which is going to be optimal. I have my food storage containers somewhere halfway between the stove and the refrigerator, so I can kind of bring my food over to the food storage container and then finish doing what I'm doing and then load that into the fridge pretty easily.

THE PROBLEM OF LIDS

My path is very straight and it's worked really well for our household. Now I want to steer you away from those kinds of organizers that separate the lids of containers from the actual bottom of the containers. This looks really neat and it looks very organized when it's in photos and videos and stuff. However, I find that this adds extra time to my kitchen workflow as I reach for the bottom of a container. And then I have to think about which lid this one actually belongs to. So if all of your containers are the same size and shape, this probably is not a problem for you.

But I have a lot of different sized, different shaped containers and I find that keeping the lid with - not necessarily on - but keeping the lid with the container is a lot more efficient. You can keep it on the bottom like I keep my lid on the bottom of the container so that I can just grab both of them and do what I need to do superfast. So that's what I recommend.

It might not look as neat as if all of the containers are over here and all the lids are over here being stored in the perfect row, but you will move a lot faster if you don't have to find the lid for the container that you're trying to work with.

DISHWARE

So next, let's talk about dishware. I love plates and bowls, and ideally, I want to set these up to be stored where I can put them away pretty easily after I've washed them. Whether it's by the sink or by the dishwasher or as close as I can get. I feel like that is the best strategy.

Now, when I go into other people's houses a lot, I see stacks of plates and bowls on top of one another, very intimately acquainted. And I want to encourage you that if you feel like you need to use a lot of one little part of cabinet space to implement something called a cabinet shelf, to lift up the top stack from the bottom stack, so that you don't have to lift up the stack of bowls to get to the plate where they're beneath them.

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So that is a strategy that I have used to save a lot of people's workflow. I am surprised how many people do not use cabinet shelves to use that extra little bit of vertical space that they can. I know that your cabinets have shelves, but I often find that the builder doesn't provide enough of them. So we can add a little extra cabinet shelf to help out a little bit more. They make such beautiful cabinet shelves or simple ones to go for anybody's aesthetic or with their design preferences or their budget. So grab yourself a cabinet shelf to save yourself a lot of aggravation when you're trying to grab a plate that's below that stack of bowls that you have in there. It's just not worth it.

FOOD PREP STORAGE

Okay, now let's talk about food preparation. And this is tricky because a lot of us have different things that are considered food preparation. But I'm talking about things like knives for cutting, slicing, doing all the things. Things for slicing. Maybe you have a mandolin, maybe you have a spiralizer, things that are for measuring. Maybe you have several measuring cups. Maybe you need a colander for cleaning produce before you handle it.

Maybe you have measuring spoons for measuring different items. Maybe you have mortar and pestle. Those kinds of items are food preparation items. Anything you use to prepare your food before you put it onto a serving plate, that is food preparation. And I also include prep bowls in that I include your salad spinner, anything that you need to prep food.

Now, I personally like to keep these in one area, and it's the area where I'm prepping food because - store things where you use them. You would be surprised about how many kitchens I have been in where the cutting boards were on one side of the kitchen and knives were on the other side of the kitchen in a knife block because they looked pretty over there.

Do not do that to yourself. You're just creating more work. Unless you want to get your steps in, that's totally fine. But I prefer to get my steps outside in the fresh air and not in my kitchen. I just want to get things done in the kitchen. So store items where you use them, so that means the cutting boards and the knives should be stored as close as you can get them together.

DRAWERS FOR THE WIN

My favorite way of storing food prep items is to use drawer space. I think that it is the most efficient way and easy way to grab items. If you do not have the drawer real estate, but you have cabinet real estate, a great thing you can do is to actually just add drawers to cabinets. I have done this for years, and it has been so helpful because I don't always want to store things on a shelf. It can get really messy unless I can pull the shelf out.

But a drawer is just a shelf. You can pull out a container that you can pull out. Alpha drawer units from the Container Store have been my lifesaver. They are metal, they are high quality, they last forever. And when you're done with them, you can move them to another space. You don't have to install them into the space, and you can customize them to work for your space. And I have used these alpha drawer units in so many kitchens, I cannot tell you. And they have been a lifesaver. They've been in my kitchens forever. And yes, they have been a storage zone for food prep items. So I encourage you to seek out a drawer system in your kitchen cabinets if you don't have

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the drawer real estate. It has saved so many of my clients because builders don't build enough drawers. I've been in apartments up here in Boston where I live, and the kitchen had like one or two drawers, and I was like, how are you going to live?

But we've come up with creative solutions to add extra drawer space to the kitchen, and I implore you to do the same thing. You can get, if you are not in the budget to get Alpha drawer units, there are a number of really affordable plastic solutions or even metal solutions from other manufacturers that work equally as well and are equally as attractive. Since most kitchen cabinets are 18 to 25 inches in depth, you definitely want to not have things stuck in the back of the cabinet that are out of your reach. So anytime you can pull out something, you are absolutely winning.

REFRIGERATOR ORGANIZATION

Okay, so let's talk a little bit about refrigerator organization. I have been on TikTok for the last couple of years, and I have been seeing some outrageously, beautifully arranged fridges on TikTok. And I love those restock videos with people putting berries into fridges and things like that. And they refill all the eggs and it looks great, but it's not great for your food.

So in order to talk about fridge organization, I'm going to talk to you a little bit about food science. So the refrigerator is a great tool that we all have in our kitchens or most of us have in our kitchens. And the temperature throughout this appliance is not the same. So the warmest parts of your fridge well, no part of your fridge is really warm, but let's just say the warmest parts of your fridge are going to be in the door and the coldest parts of your fridge are going to be towards the bottom of the fridge and towards the rear of your refrigerator.

TEMPERATURE VARIATION

So the things that are the most perishable you're going to want to store towards the back of the fridge, to the bottom of the fridge. And the things that can handle the most temperature fluctuation are the things that you're going to want to store on the doors of your fridge.

So what can handle the most temperature variation? Things like condiments, things like beverages that aren't perishable, so saving like fresh juices and dairy products. You can store your iced coffee, iced tea in the door and it'll be just fine. A lot of older fridges have come with compartments for eggs in the door. Do not be tempted to store them there unless you eat eggs very, very fast. If you eat eggs very fast, then it's probably not an issue for you. But if you're a little bit like us and you can kind of go through eggs but not in a fast kind of way, you want to make sure that you store them in the coldest parts of your fridge so that you don't have an issue with eggs spoiling because that is the warmest part of your fridge. So when you're opening and closing the refrigerator door, it can get well above the recommended 38 to 42 degrees in the fridge.

EGG ENGINEERING

So you want to keep your eggs somewhere where they're nice and cold. If you live in the United States . . . if you live in Europe or other countries where they don't treat their eggs, this probably doesn't apply to you. But here in the United States, we treat our eggs and they don't have that protective coating on the outside. So the other thing with eggs is that you want to make sure that you put

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them in a container. If you put them in a container separate from their carton, which you got them in from the store, which you don't have to, but I think it looks nice, you want to make sure that you put them in there pointy side down. Pointy side down is going to have them last a little longer. It's a long explanation about the air bubble in the egg and where the yolk is and all that stuff. And if you look at the egg, there is a fat side and a skinny side. You want to make sure the skinny side, skinny pointy side is actually down in the container.

So if you store your eggs in a separate container other than the carton, that they came in, make sure you put them in pointy side down. That'll help them last longer.

FRIDGE ZONES

And the next thing I recommend in your fridge when you think about organizing it is to divide it into zones just like every other area in your home. I feel like a lot of these concepts are very similar around your home, but the fridge has zones as well that you want to keep in mind. And keep in mind a place where you want to keep leftovers. And make sure you have a dedicated zone for that so that you're not looking everywhere in your fridge for that leftover sandwich you had yesterday, you know exactly where it is in your fridge.

So the refrigerator doors should be used for beverages and condiments things that can handle temperature fluctuation. And that's like things with like vinegar or high salt content. Those are things that can take the temperature variation.

MYSTERY OF THE CRISPER DRAWERS

The crisper drawers are another thing that trip a lot of people up when they're organizing their fridge. So we'll talk a little bit about how plants work when we're talking about the crisper drawers. Most homes come with two crisper drawers. One is like the high humidity drawer and you don't know what that's for. And then there's one with like an open you can open the thing and it says fruit and you don't know why. One says fruit and one says vegetables. You have no idea. So some plants produce plant hormone as a gas called ethylene gas. This gas tells other plants, it tells itself and other plants around it to ripen. It is the reason you cannot have or you shouldn't put bananas next to apples. Apples are one of the biggest offenders of producing this ethylene. It ripens everything around it. It will overripen your avocado, your bananas, your cucumber, whatever. And some plants are really sensitive to this hormone. Things like cucumber, cabbage, kale, green beans are really sensitive to this ethylene.

Putting your apple next to your kale or your cucumbers can cause your cucumbers or your kale to rot or go all kinds of mushy. So what you want to do is you want to make sure that your leafy greens and things that are sensitive to ethylene are kept in what is probably your vegetable crisper drawer. Or you want to keep the vent closed on it because those plants, those vegetables and fruits need more humidity than the ones that are producing the ethylene. There are some plants that don't care about the ethylene around it, like things like citrus fruits, things like peppers. Some other things just don't care. But for the most part, you want to keep the ethylene producing things and ethylene sensitive things separated. You got to keep them separated.

You can actually reduce the amount of ethylene that's floating around in your

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fridge by adding things like blue apple or other products that absorb ethylene gas and help keep your fridge a kind of neutral environment for the rest of your vegetables. So keep that in mind when you're organizing your fridge. Ethylene sensitive and ethylene producing. And for your pleasure, I have produced an \ethylene sensitive and ethylene producing chart that you can post next to your fridge or wherever to help you decide which crisper drawer you're going to use when you unpack your groceries.

LIFESAVING FOOD PREP

Next, let's talk about how food prep can actually save your life when it comes to organizing and optimizing your kitchen flow. Now, we're talking about weekly ingredient prep, not just prepping meals. You can totally prep meals if you want, but knowing what you're going to eat for at least a week or even as little as four or five days can really cut down on the amount of time you are going around your kitchen looking like you don't know what's going on, because you don't.

This is the hardest thing to implement as far as kitchen organization and kitchen optimization because it requires some work from you. But I'm going to promise you that you're going to be so grateful that once you get in for that 12:00 lunch, if you work from home, you can just grab your salad, grab your sandwich, eat and have some extra time to do some extra things after your lunch - and not be preparing this big meal and having that take 30 minutes and then having ten minutes to eat and then, like, five minutes to use the bathroom.

INGREDIENTS ARE THE KEY

So optimizing preparing ingredients over preparing full meals and dishes is going to be your best friend when doing this, and it's going to be less intimidating as well. A really helpful book that I found is by Lisa Bryan. It is one of the best resources for just prepping ingredients with the mindset of using them for meals and not having to worry too much about thinking about what you're going to make. So pre washing vegetables, prewashing some fruits if they can tolerate it, and prepping some ingredients is going to help. Also, meal planning, like for dinners and stuff does really help as well.

An app that I love to use is called mealime. It is so good, it uses an algorithm so that you're not buying too many different ingredients if you're prepping more than one meal. So you can ask it to like, hey, I have all these beans. Can we use beans for two of these meals instead of just once so I can use up my pantry? It's really, really great, and a lot of those boxes that you can get, those meal boxes are great too. But I find that prepping ingredients, especially for lunches, where it tends to be a little bit more ambiguous, is going to help you save a lot of time in the kitchen.

ORGANIZING THE CLEANING ZONE

All right, lastly, we're going to talk about that cleaning zone. This means the dishwasher, the sink, and the recycling, the trash, and in some areas of the compost. The main advice I have for the cleaning zone is to control that under sink area. That is going to help you move a lot faster. Everything else really doesn't matter.

But that under sink area is where a lot of time is wasted looking for items. I'm going to encourage you to keep your cleaning products down to a really low number.

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You would be surprised at the amount of cleaning you can do with just a generalized cleaner. You don't need a special glass cleaner. You don't need a special ceramic cleaner, a counter cleaner, granite cleaner. You just need a general, very mild cleaner.

I find a few specialty products are very helpful like Barkeeper's Friend or, of course, your dishwashing liquid or your dishwashing tabs if you have them. But keeping your cleaning products down to a minimum is going to help you so much. Organizing that space below your sink where you're keeping a lot of your cleaning products.

SAVE THE AGGRAVATION

Again, you're going to be optimized by anything that pulls out and prevents things from being in the back. You're going to be so much happier if you're looking for that Bon Ami or that Windex and it's in the back and you can pull that drawer out and find it within 5 seconds rather than pulling everything out first and then finding it five minutes later.

That five minutes may seem like a blip of time, but it actually is a lot of time in the grand scheme of things when you're looking for something. And again, that's going to save you a lot of aggravation. Saving aggravation is my main motivation for having an organized and optimized workflow kitchen, because I am a person where that aggravation adds up over throughout your day. And that is my main motivation for having an organized house to begin with, is that those little tiny battles that you have with yourself, like maybe you're looking for one particular pair of socks or you've lost your keys or whatever, that adds up.

Those little stresses add up and affect you throughout your lifetime. So I want to reduce as many of those bad interactions with my home as I can. And these are little tiny steps you can take to make a big impact on your life.

TRICKY CORNER CABINETS

Okay, let's talk about how to organize some tricky kitchen spaces. There are a lot of really tricky kitchen spaces. The first one I'm going to talk about is you probably guessed it, corner cabinets. I hate corner cabinets. I do find that a lot of builders are not building a lot of corner cabinets anymore. But I do find that corner cabinets are particularly problematic because you have this big cavernous space in your kitchen, which seems great, right? It's a corner cabinet. You're like, oh my gosh, it's so much space. I can put so many things here and then they do put so many things in here. It's a space where I find people just filling it up with items.

So the other really very firm concept I have, other than keep things where you use them, is keep things in your space relative to the size of the space. So if you have this big cavernous space, if you have a large food processor or a pillow or something large that will never get lost in that space, that will fill up most of the space, that's totally fine. But I find that people are filling the space up with small bowls and little tiny food processors and the extra utensil that they didn't know what to do with, or the waffle maker that ends up in the back and then you can't see it because in front of it is a larger food processor. So it becomes really problematic.

The main way to make sense of these corner cabinets is turntables or again, lazy Susans. If you live in a space where you own your home, you can definitely have these custom

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made. I have seen so many beautiful lazy Susans. It still creates a large space which you have to organize, but it takes a little bit of the chaos away from things being in the back or being in the bottom. The other way I find is to have pullout solutions for the corner cabinet. It can be a little bit awkward because it is a corner. But again, I do recommend, if you can't do either of those things, if you can't have a lazy Susan . . . which I can recommend that you do, even if it's just at the bottom, have a lazy Susan. It is so helpful.

If you can't implement that system in your corner cabinet, I recommend only keeping the largest things that will fill up a lot of the volume of the cabinet so that you don't lose smaller items in there. It's just going to have to be, if you're going to have a large cavernous space, keep the largest, most bulky items that you can find in your kitchen in that space. That way you won't have an issue when you're going to try to look for something.

TRICKY COOKWARE STORAGE

Storing cookware can be really tricky as well. I know we talked about the solutions to keep pots and pans from interfering with one another when you took them out. I find that another great solution if you really don't have the cabinet space but you have wall space, is to incorporate the help of a pot rack on the wall. I have used several of these in clients' houses and in my own house when I didn't have the cabinet real estate, and they work really well.

They also look really beautiful and they can be mounted right near your oven or stove. So you can grab that, put it right on the stove and save the aggravation of having to store items in a place where either they shouldn't be stored or where you just don't have the room. So when you're running out of space, always look up, think vertically use the walls. They're there. They're chilling. Put something on there.

CAVERNOUS PANTRIES

Next, let's talk about pantries. Another thing I have, another beef I have with builders is that they build pantries to be very deep and cavernous, just like those corner cabinets. Now, it seems great to have a lot of that depth to use. You're like, oh my gosh, I can fit so many really great things in. Well, if you've got a really big bag of rice that you're going to store just by putting it on there, or if you've got a large container or something, they're great. It's great.

But most of us don't have containers that large in our pantries. We've got cans, we've got boxes of cereal, we've got things that are at the most like twelve inches in depth. And if you turn them around, then they're like three inches in depth. So I encourage you, again to think about things being in the back when you're organizing your pantry.

So if you can install pull out shelves in your pantry, that is a win for you. I have a lot of clients who actually have pull out drawers that really, really helps them find things. Pull out drawers in pantries are really great as well because you can see things from the top as well as from the side. And it can help you to have labels on the top of items. So that reduces the amount of time you're looking for different items if you are just looking at the top. So keep that in mind when you're labeling your containers as well. And you don't need to go and buy fancy labels for containers. I definitely think that just labeling something really simply is going to just do the job and help you find things.

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TO DECANT OR NOT

Now, while we're talking about pantries, I want to talk a little bit about decanting. Decanting is something I get asked about all the time. Like if I have this bag of flour, do I really want to put it into another container in the bag of flour it came with? It's perfectly fine. My answer is yes. If you're asking me if decanting is worth it, I think it's 100% worth it. It took me a little bit to get on this train, but keeping all of my dry goods in airtight containers that are consistent in size and shape has contributed to both my mental health and my ability to find things in my kitchen and the ability to keep little critters out of my food.

So again, with the labeling, you don't have to be sophisticated. You don't have to buy a Cricut or anything. You can just use some water based chalk marker on the front of the container. If it's glass, that's going to be really easy to get off, even if it's plastic. Still really easy to get off if you need to change the contents of the container. Super easy.

I definitely think that decanting is 100% worth it. You can see things in the container, so you can see how much is left, and it keeps little critters out of the containers. The main question and the main hesitation I have when I talk about decanting with people is how do I know when the product inside expires and how do I know how to cook it? Like, if you fill the container up with rice, I all of a sudden don't know if it is a two to one. Is it three to one? I don't know. So my solution for you is there's a little sticker that you can put either at the bottom or the back of your container that can stay on there with if you put the container in a dishwasher, it stays on. It just has to cure for about 24 to 48 hours, and you can write on it. So when you put your bag of flour in, you can look on the packaging and put the date of the expiration and also how to use it if it's something like quinoa or something where it requires a certain ratio of water to product. That way, you know, and you don't have to worry about saving the packaging. You don't need to save the original container, and you don't need to suffer the pain of having bugs or little creatures in your flour or your sugar. You don't need that in your life.

All right, that brings us to the end of our session. I hope that I helped you today with thinking about kitchen optimization. Not only organization, but optimization. Whether I need to go 3ft to grab a knife and then 4ft to grab a cutting board. I hope that this has made you think about those things when setting up your kitchen. I've had so much fun with you today, and I hope that you enjoy the rest of your session. Thanks for watching. Bye.

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Meal Planning Hacks to Save You Time + Money!

KAYSE PRATT • TRANSCRIPT

Hello, friends. Hello. I am so excited to chat with you today. We are going to talk all about meal planning hacks that are pretty much guaranteed to save you time and money, both of which I feel like are super important right now. So are you ready? Let's dive in.

THIS IS KAYSE

My name is Kayse. Hello. If we haven't met before, here are just a few things about me. I run Anchored Women, where my mission is really to help you plan your days around what matters most. Everything we create over there is designed to help you focus on your priorities and really help your day, like your schedule, align with what you value. So that's what we do over there.

On a personal note, I homeschool my two very favorite kiddos. I have a twelve year old and a nine year old, and I am a sucker for any cheesy fiction novel, any Hallmark movie, any piece of media that makes you happy at the end. I'm all about it. And I love meal planning with my whole heart. This is one of my very favorite things to do. It's one of my favorite things to teach.

And so today we're going to just get into a few of my favorite hacks that I know are really going to help you out, because they have helped us out. I want you to know, especially right now, where everything is a little more expensive and it feels a little more challenging to get food on the table in an affordable way, you can still save money in the kitchen.

TODAY'S STRATEGIES

And we're going to talk about each of these strategies today. We're going to talk about how to plan strategically, how to, as we say at Anchored Women, eat whatcha got, how to create easy theme days and rotations, and also how to make it once but eat all week. That's one of my favorites. How to plan within your season and how to use your leftovers well. So here's what we're going for. Just to give you, like, that big overview. We're going to dive into each one of these individually.

I also have some free meal planning cheat sheets for you that go along with today's presentation. If you want to download those, they're completely free and ready for you. You can find the link right there. anchored-women.com/mealhacks. There's a welcome page there just for you guys, and you can download these for free on that page. We'll talk about how I use each one as well coming up here.

HACK #1: PLAN STRATEGICALLY

All right, so hack number one is to plan strategically. This is what I think a lot of us sometimes skip, and it really hurts our pocketbook and our planning strategy for the month. So what I want you to do when it comes to meal planning is actually start with your calendar. Do not skip this step.

Because what you need to do is be able to look at what days am I home and I

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absolutely need to eat something that I have made at home. What days am I not going to be home? So I don't need to meal plan or grocery shop for those specific days. I want you to look at that calendar and mark off the days that you're not going to be home to eat your regular monthly dinner plan, because these are days that you don't have to plan for and days you don't have to purchase food for.

All right, so mark those days off, and then I want you to jot down the number of days that you have left. These are the days that you actually do have to plan for. So as we go into meal planning strategies, that first step is really take a look at what days you actually have to create a meal plan for and eliminate the ones that you don't.

HACK #2: EAT WHATCHA GOT

All right, hack number two. This is my favorite. I love this one. This is pretty much how I meal plan on a regular basis. And it is what we call our eat whatcha got method. All right, so how we do this one is we take stock of everything that we have in our fridge, our freezer, and our pantry.

We're going to put everything into a list designated by space. So where is it? So I have a freezer list, I have a fridge list, and I have a pantry list. Then I look at everything on those lists and I consider them possible ingredients. Okay. And I see what can I pull from what can I put together to create a meal out of what I already have. So I'll jot down some easy recipes from the things that I have.

PUT IT TOGETHER

For example, say I've got bread and cheese in my fridge, and I have tomato soup in my pantry, which I almost always do. I can very easily make tomato soup and grilled cheese for dinner. So I'm pulling things from fridge, from pantry and putting them together. Maybe I have maybe I have a few chicken breasts in my freezer, and I have a marinade that's going to expire pretty soon in my pantry, I can put those things together and dump those chicken breasts in the crock pot with a good marinade.

That's an easy meal where I'm taking two things or more that I already have and I'm putting them together to create a meal based on what I already have. The reason why this works when you put it all out on paper is because sometimes it's hard to look in your pantry and just meal plan based on what's in there, right? You probably aren't keeping meat in your pantry. You're probably not keeping things that need to be cold. And so a lot of times it actually is a little bit difficult to go into one space and also be able to remember what you have in the other spaces.

WHAT RECIPES?

So listing everything out onto a page where you can see it all at the same time is really helpful. And I'll show you exactly the sheet that I use for this. It's in those free meal planning cheat sheets for you. So this is my eat whatcha got worksheet. I list out what's in my fridge, my freezer, and my pantry, and then I look at it all together and ask myself, what recipes can I make with these supplies?

So here's where I am able to quickly jot down. Okay? I can make grilled cheese and tomato soup. I can make shredded chicken in the crock pot. I can make ground beef tacos. I can make whatever I'm pulling from the fridge, the freezer, and the pantry lists at the top of the page and creating recipes out of that towards the bottom.

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If you are like, if you have, like, a grocery store in your own home and you've got lots of things, you may need more than one page to do this. Pull out a poster board, pull out one of those giant Post It notes, and you can recreate this page on whatever size paper that you need in order to get it all written out. But I highly encourage you to do this because I think you'll easily see how many recipes you can make based on what you already have in your possession.

READY-MADE GROCERY LIST

And then the last step that I do is I just write down what ingredients do I need to complete those recipes. So maybe I've got everything I need to make tacos, but I don't have Pico de Gallo, which we really like to put on our tacos. Right. So I need to grab that at the store.

And then I've got that grocery list at the bottom for the things that I still need, which is going to be way more minimal than if I started meal planning than if I started meal planning based on what I wanted to make instead of what we already had on hand. So that's my second hack for you, eat whatcha got.

HACK #3: THEME DAYS & ROTATIONS

My third hack. This holds equal, like, love in my heart, and it is meal planning according to theme days and rotations. I do this regularly. We come back to this. We either do theme days, basically, or we eat whatcha got. We kind of alternate between the two.

But theme days hold a special place in my heart because it's so organized, and I love anything organized. If you guys are here, you probably do too. So what I do is I choose a theme for each day of the week to simplify the meal planning process. For example, maybe Mondays are pasta, maybe Tuesdays are tacos, Wednesdays are breakfast for dinner, whatever it might be.

SAME INGREDIENTS SAVE MONEY

I'll show you mine on the next slide, what we use. And then what I do is I go down that list and I have every Monday for the month is pasta. So I'm coming up with four ideas for pastas. Maybe I'm doing spaghetti, maybe I'm doing baked ziti. Maybe I'm doing a lasagna. Maybe I'm doing like a chicken Alfredo, right? So really quickly, off the top of my head, four days are planned and they all are a pasta base, so they have a lot in common with each other, which helps you streamline that grocery list and make sure that you're not buying 17 different ingredients that you can't use. Again, you're going to use these ingredients every week so that helps you save some money.

PLAN, THEN REPEAT

Then you can rotate weeks. I wrote here you can plan just two weeks and then repeat. But I actually like to plan a whole month and then repeat the month.

So I'll show you what that looks like. This is the Pratt family dinner plan for the summer, basically. So you can see my themes up at the top. Mondays are easy. Like, easy is my theme. Tuesdays are taco nights. Wednesdays are breakfast for dinner. We always do breakfast for dinner one night a week. Thursdays are just meat and veggies usually on the grill. My husband's home Thursdays and Friday nights for sure, so he does the grill stuff. We have burgers and broth on Fridays.

On Saturday we go out and you can see

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I even filled in the places that we can go out to eat because I know they are cheaper than, say, going out to a sit down restaurant or something else like that, but they still feel really fun. But here I'm still keeping an eye on how much money we're spending and what everything's going to cost me. And then Sundays we have soup or sometimes Sundays we have what we call yoyo nights. I actually learned that term from Lisa at This Pilgrim Life, yoyo stands for you're on your own. And everybody kind of loves that, too, because they just get to come up with whatever they want.

THE PLAN IN ACTION

So I label those theme days at the top, right? And then I'm going straight down and meal planning. So what are four easy meals? I can make baked chicken, barbecue chicken, sausage, bake and pot roast. For me, these are either like one pan meals or they're crock pot meals where I can just easily throw them in and forget about it. Not a lot of prep, not a lot of thought. They're just really easy. Tuesdays are taco nights, and I just alternate the kind of tacos we have. We have ground beef tacos twice because they're my kids' favorites and they're cheap and easy. Chicken tacos once and carne asada tacos because those are my favorite. breakfast.

For dinner, we alternate four different kinds of breakfast. We have waffles one week, bacon one, or pancakes one week. We have bacon a lot of weeks. French toast and then veggie omelets. Thursdays, meat and veggies. And I just go through different kinds of meat. Baked chicken. I have baked chicken here, and I have baked chicken on Mondays because it's easy. It's really easy and cheap, ready to throw into the oven. We do carne asada a couple of times, so I have that alternated here as well.

And then grilled chicken or steak with dilly ranch potatoes, which just happens to be also from This Pilgrim Life. I really love her cookbook. If you have not gotten it yet, it's awesome. It's all about instant pot meals. Very easy, very delicious. Okay, Friday we have burgers and brats, so we just alternate. I mean, there's not a lot you can do with burgers and brats, but everybody loves them, so we do that every Friday. And then Sunday, I have four different kinds of soup.

So you can see, like, I planned the themes, and then I brain dumped four different ideas for each theme. And now I have my entire monthly meal plan that's affordable, that uses, like, ingredients. So my grocery list is smaller, and that is meals that my whole family loves.

A BIG TIME-SAVER

So over here I write like, what week it is and then the dates right here, just in case you're wondering, because I do have one of these for you as well that you can download in that meal planning cheat sheet list. So this one page, it goes on my fridge. Actually, it's on the door of my pantry, and we just rotate through it every now and then. I will say this, we take something out of order and we'll just cross off the nights as we do them. So maybe we wanted like this week we wanted pancakes instead of waffles, so I'll just cross off the pancakes and leave this one open, kind of like bingo. You can pick and choose where things go.

But the idea is you have the list already made, and it's so much easier throughout your week. I mean, this saves you so much time. It takes you maybe like 20 minutes tops to get it out on paper, and then you're done for the month. This is one of my favorites. So, again, that worksheet is there

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for you in the free download.

HACK #4: MAKE IT ONCE, EAT ALL WEEK

All right, hack number four, make it once, eat all week. This is a great one, too, especially for breakfast and lunch. I do this every week for lunches for myself. So what I suggest doing here is finding a few recipes that you can prepare ahead, something that you love for breakfast and that you love for lunch, and collect them into a list.

It's really a good idea to have a list of all of these so that you can very easily just take a look at the list and decide, what do I want to have for breakfast this week? What do I want to make for lunches this week? Instead of coming up with the idea from ground zero, right?

CHOOSE CAREFULLY

So each week you're going to choose one thing to make at the beginning of the week. But like I said in there for example, scrambled eggs don't work for this, right? Like, you can't make scrambled eggs for the whole week. They're not going to taste great by the end of the week. But you can make breakfast burritos with scrambled eggs in them and wrap them up and freeze them. So you're going to prepare your one breakfast recipe and your one lunch recipe at the beginning of the week and then store it in daily containers for you to eat all week long.

LUNCH BOWLS

So some of my favorite things to do here are like, bowls for lunch. I love taco bowls for lunch or Mediterranean bowls or even like a sausage baked bowl. So I have kind of a base that's like brown rice and then I throw a bunch of veggies on it and then some meat on top. And really you just mix up your seasonings depending on if you want it to be Mediterranean bowl or a taco bowl or whatever it might be. I love those for lunches because in those little individual containers, it's so easy to pop that into the microwave or pop it or take it out of the container and heat it up on the stove in a skillet. And then you have a hot lunch where A, you didn't have to go out to eat, and B, you saved a whole bunch of money, and C, it saves you time because it's already ready for you. So I love to do that.

WHAT'S FOR BREAKFAST?

Breakfast. You can make a breakfast casserole. You can do breakfast burritos. You can do overnight oats. There's all kinds. If you search Pinterest for like bulk breakfast or bulk lunches, this is a great way to get the ingredients maybe in bulk a little bit, create it for yourself and your family for the week and then have them on hand and you're ready to go.

Oh, look, I have ideas here that I totally forgot to share, but yes, this is basically what I just talked about. Breakfast burritos, overnight oats, fruit salad, breakfast casserole for lunches. Oh, I do love a good couscous salad. It's just like couscous with cucumbers, tomatoes, feta, and you can add any meat to it. So good you can make salads ahead of time in Mason jars. And then, of course, soup. How could I have forgotten soup? So one thing that I like to use for this is this meal prep page on that left side at the top, I kind of brain dump. What are the meals that I can prepare ahead of time this week and then what are the snacks that I can prepare ahead of time?

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PREP AHEAD

I often do breakfast and lunch and snacks ahead of time, and then I just create my little checklist as a plan for prep for that week. And then I have just one day a week, usually Saturdays, maybe Sunday afternoons, where I go through and just make whatever I'm going to have my family and myself eat for the week. But this one page serves as my guide to what exactly I need to do.

Do I need to chop cucumbers? Do I need to chop tomatoes? Do I need to cook the couscous? Do I need to throw everything together in the soup? What do I need to do? So I break it down into easy bite size steps so that it's super organized and just like a no brainer to get it done.

HACK #5: PLAN WITHIN YOUR SEASON

Hack number five is planning within your season. I love to create kind of like that monthly meal plan, but not according to themes. I love to create a seasonal meal plan that really capitalizes on the food that I like to make during that season.

IN-SEASON PRODUCE

So during the fall, you might think about fall produce, pumpkin, squash. Like, what do you want to eat as the weather gets colder? For winter, we're right in this smack dab in the middle of the cold weather, right? So soups, stews, crock pot, meals, things like that. For spring, we're ready for salads and some more fresh food. And then summer, you've got fresh fruit, you're ready for grilling, those kinds of things. So creating a plan just specific to that season is one of the things that I do every quarter.

I'll show you. This is one that I just made. At the time of recording for this, I was planning for summer meals. And so in this one, I did something a little bit different than I normally do, but I organized it by type of cooking.

WHERE YOU COOK

So you can see, like, I have a list of things we can make on the Blackstone, a list of things that go in the oven, a list of things that go on the grill, in the crock pot, and then different salads. And this is really helpful for me because in the summer, sometimes we try to keep the heat outside, right? So if I'm going to have dinner, like, if I'm concerned about I don't really want to turn the stove on or the oven on right now, I can pick something from the Blackstone, from the grill. We can do something in the crock pot or make a salad. Right?

So I wanted to organize it according to kind of where we cooked. Just made sense in my head for this season. So you can really organize your seasonal meal plan any way you want, but I often will print off one of these and just brain dump into it.

FAMILY FAVORITES AND NEW IDEAS

So what do I want for breakfast? Lunches, snacks, and treats, and then a whole giant list of dinner ideas. And I keep this tucked into my planner so that every time I go to meal plan, I can just pull this out and really have that master list of meals that I know I want to make during that season.

I always start with our family favorites, the things that I know are easy to make, that my family loves. The next I go into what seasonally do I really want to make during this season? And then if I still have space,

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that's when I'm adding in the new recipes or something that my friend told me about that I think I want to make during this season.

So keeping these on hand as seasonal meal plan ideas. The best part of this is often you can use them year after year after year. So create them once, use them forever. It's a really handy tool in your meal planning toolbox. Again, these are in your free download, too.

HACK #6: USE LEFTOVERS WELL

All right, my last hack is to use leftovers well. Three strategies for this, all right? The first strategy is doubling up on purpose. So you're making leftovers on purpose. Maybe you're making spaghetti sauce and spaghetti, or you're making like a baked ziti. Instead of just making it for one night, make it for two.

Freeze one and serve one. Or maybe you're making it for a friend. Put one for yourself and one for a friend and be able to take it to a friend. Double it up on purpose. It saves money, it saves you time, and it gives you an easy, ready to go meal for the future, especially if it's in your freezer.

Number two on using leftovers well is use your meat. I do this a lot where I plan my week around the meat, maybe the meat that's on sale at the grocery store. And I make a lot. For example, I can make a lot of ground beef, a few pounds of ground beef. And then throughout that week, I can make tacos, I can make chili, I can make cheeseburger pasta. I can make baked ziti, all with ground beef that I have prepared at the beginning of the week. But that is like one step preparation and then using it in meals all week long.

The last tip here is just to repurpose everything. I highly recommend getting your family hooked on soups and casseroles because lots of things can be repurposed into these. You can dump leftover veggies into a soup, leftover meat into a soup. You can be creative and create any kind of casserole with like, rice, meat, veggies, cheese all thrown together. We want to try and repurpose in a way that uses up the food that we have spent our hard earned money on and also hopefully tastes good, right? So repurpose everything.

A QUICK REVIEW

All right, friends, you can do this, especially with these hacks with these tips in your back pocket to review. We talked about planning, strategically getting that monthly calendar out, and making sure that you are only planning for those days that you actually are going to be home to cook.

We talked about eating what you got, which really is formed around, like, having a good inventory of what you have in your fridge, your freezer and pantry, and being able to combine those ingredients to create recipes. Number three was talking about those easy theme days and rotations, choosing a theme for each day of the week, and planning out a whole month at a time.

Our fourth tip was make it once, eat all week. Fifth was planning within your season, creating that seasonal meal plan that you can then use over and over again every year. And then last but not least was using your leftovers.

FREE DOWNLOAD

Well, as a reminder, just to give you a little bit of extra support in this area, we have those free meal planning cheat sheets for

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you so you can download exactly what I showed you today. That eat what you got, worksheet the meal prep, worksheet the dinner plan kind of matrix with the theme days that you get to select on there. And then those seasonal meal plan idea lists for every season of the year.

So I hope this was really helpful for you. If you have any questions, you can find me at anchored-women.com, on Instagram at anchoredwomen or feel free to ask any questions in the group and I'd love to pop in there and help you out with any meal planning troubles that you might have. Troubleshooting meal planning stuff is kind of one of my favorite things to do.

So thank you so much for hanging out with me today. It was really fun to be with you and to just share these with you. I hope that this has been very helpful and I hope you enjoy the rest of the conference. Talk to you soon, friends. Bye.

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Shifting Away from the Scarcity Mindset

KELLY ANNE SMITH • TRANSCRIPT

TASHA: Well, please join me in welcoming Kelly from Freedom in a Budget. Today we are going to be discussing how you can shift away from the scarcity mindset when it comes to finances and budgeting. So thank you so much for joining us and giving us your time today, Kelly.

KELLY: Thanks for having me. I'm excited.

WHAT IS SCARCITY MINDSET?

TASHA: Yeah, absolutely. So as we dive into this topic, could you just start by kind of defining what you mean by scarcity mindset so we can all be on the same page and know where we're headed in this conversation?

KELLY: Yeah, the way that I define scarcity mindset, in the way that I have seen a lot of my viewers fall into that category as well, of just having that belief that there's not enough. Having that belief that not only is there not enough, but not enough for you. Like, there may be enough for other people, but those other people, they're rich, they're famous, they're successful.

I'll never be at that point. I'll always live in this paycheck to paycheck mentality or I'll always live below my means, or I'll always be in debt and just having that mentality of there's not enough, or I'll never be able to achieve that.

BENEFITS TO BUDGETING

TASHA: Yeah, absolutely. So as you start thinking about this, do you still see benefits to budgeting whenever dealing with this, even as you're trying to shift away from that mindset?

KELLY: Oh, for sure, yeah. I will be budgeting with my entire life. Like, we have a very nice net worth now. I was deep in debt seven years ago when I started my YouTube channel. And now over the course of the years, I've totally shifted from that scarcity mindset that I had myself and now to, just not necessarily like a woo woo abundance mindset, but just hey, if they can do it, I can do it type of thing.

And like I said, I will always be budgeting. I think that budgeting has so many benefits of accountability. It's a built in accountability partner. It's a built in way of helping you make sure that you're aligned in your goals. There's been times where we haven't budgeted over the past five or so years, and I've definitely noticed for those months we're not hitting our goals as quickly. We're not achieving them because we just kind of get complacent or we have money left over at the end of the month and it's just sitting there doing nothing in our checking account.

Whereas if we were budgeting, we'd be like, let's put that towards investment, let's put that towards this savings, or whatever it may be. So a budget helps you to accomplish those goals faster.

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BUDGETING A BETTER MINDSET

TASHA: Yes. What I'm hearing from you is that actually, while it may seem like at first glance a budget is something that's really restrictive and increasing your scarcity, it's actually the tool that helped you shift away from thinking that there's always not enough.

KELLY: Yeah. And even I remember when I was first paying off my debt. I was paying off my student loans and after church, every single week, friends would go out to lunch. It was the ritual that we would all do. And I couldn't do it. I couldn't go because I'm paying off my debt and every extra penny needs to go to debt, right.

I had these goals and I was like, I could have hit them in this and that, but I was also living in that scarcity mindset of I live paycheck to paycheck and I can barely make ends meet and my friends make more money than you. So I have to pretend like I don't live paycheck to paycheck and have my car repossessed and all this stuff.

AN AHA MOMENT

And I had an AHA moment one day of just let's put money in the category of eating out. So figure out, I think it was like at that time, $75 a month. So I put that $75 a month in there and then I had the freedom to do it. I had the freedom to say, yeah, I can go to Chipotle. Yeah, I can go to whatever it is and still hit my goals because it was preassigned and it gave me that freedom to go and spend the money while still able to hit my goals.

And at the beginning of the month when I was setting up my budget, I could say, okay, this is my expected income. Even with the $75 here for eating out, I'm still going to be able to put this amount towards debt. I'm still going to be able to hit my goals with it. And it really just freed up that mindset of I can spend some money, I can spend some personal money or some eating out and not live in that constriction.

NO MORE TO CUT?

TASHA: Yes. So sometimes whenever you're working with a budget, I think a lot of times we think about making cuts, right. So we spending $150 eating out and now we're going to spend $75. Or maybe you even take it down to zero and there are situations where you're looking at how much you're spending and it's like, wow, I really can't cut more. So what next steps would you suggest for someone who finds themselves in that position where they feel like they've made all the cuts that they can?
INCREASE YOUR INCOME

KELLY: Yeah, it's so funny when I work with some of my coaching clients or even some of my friends and they're like, I've cut everything I can. And I'm like, let me look at your budget. Let me look. I bet you I can find some cuts. But then there's sometimes where I look and I'm like, holy crap, we are cut. We can't do anything else. And then at that point, the only other option is to increase your income.

So breaking that mindset and that cycle of, okay, I can't cut anything else. I'm just going to live here now. It's going to take me 30 years to pay off my student loans or all this time, I'll always be in credit card debt. And I'm like, you're paying 20% interest on that? No, and the next thing is to increase your income. And so, so many times we can't take on more hours at work or we can't take on overtime. So let's start a side hustle.

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SIDE HUSTLES

TASHA: Yeah, what side hustles have you found have been either the most successful to start or maybe the easiest to get into because there's all sorts of side hustles, but most of us probably can't open a bakery or something extravagant.

KELLY: Yeah, I like to define side hustles as two different categories. So you have the category of going out, starting a bakery, or even like, leaving the house. So Door Dash, Uber Eats, starting a second job of waitressing, bartending, retail store, something like that. The outside of the home side hustle.

Then we have the inside of the home side hustle, which are my favorite because all you need for those is an Internet connection. And you can become a virtual assistant. You can start a blog, you can start a YouTube channel, you can be a copywriter. There's so many different things that you can do at home, online. We are in such an amazing time to make extra money. And the things and the resources that we have available to us in this day and age and the way that we can make money is incredible.

TASHA: Is that one of the big things that helped you was finding this additional income to bring in?

KELLY'S STORY

KELLY: Yeah, I started seven years ago. I was living paycheck to paycheck. My car had been repossessed, my power turned off, my student loans were in default, and I started finding these budgeting videos on YouTube.

And I become obsessed with them, absolutely obsessed. And I stopped watching any type of TV. It was only these YouTube videos. And my boyfriend at the time was like, okay, you got to stop talking about these. And he's like, that's great, I'm glad you're motivated, but stop talking about 24/7 type of thing.

And so I was like, okay, you know what? If they could start a YouTube channel, I can start a YouTube channel. So I very awkwardly on my back patio, with a drying rack like clothes drying rack. I had like my college textbooks, my iPhone propped up, front facing iPhone, not even the good camera and reflection in the back of my [?]. It was so embarrassing.

But I showed YouTube channel, I was like, if they can do it, I can do it. And I wanted to have the accountability. And as I was learning, I wanted to talk about it. I just learned about cash loans. I just learned about this. Let me make a video about it. And over the seven years, I paid off all my debt, all that stuff. But I've also brought in new revenue streams. Now I have ten online revenue streams.

BUILDING CONFIDENCE

I'm doing this full time now and it's really helped me not only financially with all the money and everything, but also it's really changed my mindset as a person. I have so much more confidence as a person now and just my self-worth. And I think a lot of that is when you're starting these online side hustles, a lot of times they're helping other people and so it takes a focus off of you and you can then serve other people, which is so cool.

SPEED OF CHANGE

TASHA: Yeah, that is a really cool benefit of that. So how long would you say it took you to kind of make that transition from the

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scarcity mindset to feeling a little bit more freedom?

KELLY: I think honestly, when I got really intentional about it, I think probably a year or two is really when I started to see that mindset shift and it doesn't happen overnight or anything. It's more of that thing of you look back and you're like, I don't think like that anymore. Or you hear something and you're like, I used to think like that, but that didn't even faze me anymore. That didn't even cross my mind anymore, and that would have been a game changer for me. Or stop, like hard stop, can't do this.

And so it's cool how over time, when you look back, you're like, yeah, we've made some awesome progress.

TASHA: Yeah, it's amazing how many situations in life there are where if you just compare yesterday and today, you won't see it. But if you can look back to a year or two and you can see that progress over time.

TRACKING GOALS

KELLY: I think that's such a good reason to write down your goals. And not only your goals so that you're working towards them, but so you can look back and say, you know what, we achieved it. This was a goal five years ago Kelly wanted to achieve, and now she did it because so often it's so gradual over time, but when you're writing them down and reflecting on them, then it happens.

Like, whoa, I have a notebook that I write down all of. I have three sections of it. I have my achievements, I have my goals and I have my AHA moments and I love looking back on it. And over the years it progresses and it's so fun to be able to look at the goal section go through and be like, we can move that to the achievement and then I write it down, the achievement. So it's cool that you can see the date change of this was a goal and now it's achievement.

TASHA: Yeah, that's super motivating. And also really helpful because I think sometimes whenever we accomplish goals, it's hard to recognize it if we didn't have it written down, because by the time you accomplish it, it's been in progress and happening for a while. And so it no longer even seems like as big of a deal because it's been coming for so long.

So can you give some examples just of some good financial goals that people could set?

REDEFINING GOALS

KELLY: Yeah, well, before that, I think it's really important to redefine the way that we set goals. So often we set goals in I want to pay off $10,000, I want to do this or I want to stop living paycheck to paycheck.

Or we set these goals of I want to lose weight, or whatever it is, but oftentimes they're not even achievable or not within our control. And so I've really shifted from setting those types of goals to goals that I can actually control. So for instance, with my business, my goal is to grow this YouTube channel. And currently I have 50,000 subscribers. So if I say I want 100,000 subscribers, that's an awesome goal, but I can't control that. I can't control whether people subscribe or unsubscribe.

MAKE IT ACTIONABLE

So I need to then change the process of, okay, I'm going to continually put out new videos, I'm going to improve my content,

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I'm going to reach out and do collaboration. I'm going to do these things to grow and work on the progress and the steps that we're going to take.

So the same thing with our money, okay? If we're wanting to pay off debt, rather than saying, I want to be debt free, okay, well, I want to pay off $5,000 this year. Okay? So let's break that down and what are we going to do to pay that off? Okay, that means I need to increase my income this much by side hustle, or I need to cut this much from whatever category it is.

But creating those actionable goals, those actionable things that you can do and really work on the process and use the process as an achievement or not. Because if we're focused on only the goal, then if we don't hit it, then we feel like a failure, where if we're like, you know what? I took the action steps that it was to get there.

Just like weight loss. If I want to lose ten pounds and I don't hit my ten pound mark, well, you know what? I was eating a lot more vegetables than I was before. I was getting a lot more steps, I was sweating a lot more, I was doing these things, I was getting a lot more sleep, and I was doing the things that get me . . . like, I may not have lost the ten pounds, but I am so much healthier than I was before.

WORK THE PROCESS

And so when we fall in love with the process and we work the process versus working the goal, we're going to achieve it so much better. And honestly, most of the times when I do that, I far exceed the goal of what I had originally.

TASHA: I absolutely love that and I think it works all the ways. Like you mentioned, you end up doing more if you'd set the goal to lose ten pounds or to pay off $5,000. And you really focused on that. Once you hit that, you might be like, okay, set the goal, we're done.

But if you say, I'm going to really focus on this good thing, then you've done good whether you hit the goal or whether you exceed the goal. So I really love that.

And so much of this seems like it is really a mindset shift. A mindset shift from focusing on the end result to focusing on the process. A mindset shift from I don't have enough to, okay, what can I do with what I do have?

INTERNAL NARRATIVES

So what are some of the narratives that people can be listening for in their own mind?

So often, we probably don't even always say it out loud, but what are some of the things that we can be looking to kind of just shift even in our own self talk?

KELLY: I think a lot of it is just the mindset and the internal narratives of I'll always be this way. I'll always live paycheck to paycheck, or I grew up poor, so I'll always be poor, or I'll never make that type of money, or that is normal, or these things like just break free of that.

Not to be all Gary Vee, but get out of that mindset. Stop thinking about that. If you are always in that mindset, you're going to stay there and so really just shift and then also figure out, what are those roadblocks for you?

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WHAT'S HOLDING YOU BACK?

I've recently had a big kind of AHA moment with which is funny. This is the Get Organized of, like, clutter. And I've never thought that clutter bothers me. I'm like, yeah, it's fine. If there's clothes on the islands that need to be put away, it is what it is. It's fine. It doesn't bother me.

But then when I walk out and it's like pristine kitchen, I'm like, I'm in such a better mindset. My work is more productive, and I'm like, okay, maybe it does affect me more than it is. So finding those things of what is something that is holding you back? Is it the weight, your space? Is it you're not getting enough exercise? Is it you're not drinking enough water? Is it like, what's holding you back?

And a lot of those times, it's just practical stuff of like, you know what? Okay, maybe I am dehydrated, and if I chug some water, I'll have a little bit more mental clarity. And then it's like, oh, crap, that worked. So kind of figuring out, all right, what's holding me back here?

FIRST STEPS

TASHA: Yeah. So do you have any first steps that you would typically see that would be helpful? Someone who's like, okay, I want to make these mindset shifts? What is just some of the nitty gritty, practical first thing that you can do to start making progress here?

CORE VALUE

KELLY: Yeah, the first thing that I would recommend is figure out your core value, like, your life core value. And this is something that I learned from my business coach, Corey Wilkes, and he really had us define, okay, what is our core value?

So my personal core value is freedom. I want freedom to be able to work anywhere in the world. I want freedom to be able to play with my daughter when it's playtime. I want freedom to be able to do X, Y, and Z, whatever it is.

ALIGN YOUR CHOICES

And so then when I am deciding things, does it align with my core value? Is it going to help me get to my ultimate goal of core value? Yes or no?

And I look at that with side hustles. So for instance, is your dire need right now for a side hustle to make money? Like, we got to make money now to pay my bills? Or is it ultimately I want to retire five years early? Or you know what, I would love to go on an extra vacation, or I would love to instead of just going to Disney World every year for vacation, I want to go on a cruise or I want to go to Europe or whatever it is, I want to go on a better vacation.

Okay, that's the ultimate goal. So then you can really figure out what do I need to get there? Or even what type of side hustle do I need? If I need immediate money right now, I would recommend like a virtual assistant if it's long term, maybe YouTube or blogging or podcasting where it's a little bit more later money, but there's no ceiling and it can ultimately become more passive. So I do that with my business.

I say, okay, does this help me get to my core value of freedom, yes or no? I could have someone come to me that is a well-paying client, but it's going to suck up all this time, and then I'm not going to be able to spend time with my daughter. I'm not going to be able to spend time with my husband. I'm

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not going to be able to do these things, and it's going to take away my business, which can ultimately get me to freedom. Then it's not a good choice.

KEEPING IT REAL

TASHA: Yeah. So it sounds like there's kind of a difference between the wishful thinking goals, this would be great, but maybe I can't get there and then the focus on what I can do. So what are some indicators that maybe a goal is more on the wishful thinking side and how can we take those and shift them into a little bit more like, okay, I have control of this?

KELLY: Yeah, that's when it comes down to the processes of like, okay, this is the goal. What action steps can I take to do it? Think like a scientist and saying, okay, what do I need to get there? Practically, if I was to explain this to someone else and saying, okay, I'm going to help you do it.

So often when we're trying to help ourselves or figure out something for our self, it's so much harder. But if someone asks you for advice, I can give advice all day long to people, but for myself, it can be so much harder. So saying, okay, if my friend were to call me up and say, hey, I want to do this, how would you go about doing it?

And then think of that process and write it down and think of the different steps that you can take and those are the actionable things that you're going to be doing, and then you can evaluate them. Like, okay, is this even doable? How much time would this take? What resources would I need to do this? And then you can really evaluate if it's something that you should be doing or not doing or maybe doing in five years and just being like, all right, we have this more under control now.

KEEPING THE END IN SIGHT

TASHA: Yeah. And as we kind of start to wrap up here, I just wanted to ask for people who are maybe either starting this journey or like right in the middle, it can be hard, it can be making tough choices, and it feels like it will never end.

So can you just speak a little bit to what the other side of the hard decisions and the sticking to a budget when you really would rather just not do that and forget that you even have a budget? What is the end goal that we're working towards here?

WORTH THE SACRIFICE

KELLY: I think that's different for everyone, whatever that end goal is, but it's so cool of just being able to have that freedom. And when I help people with budgeting, and especially in the beginning, I'm not the type of person that's like, cut out Starbucks and you'll be debt free or cut out all these things. But at the end of the day, I am all about let's sacrifice for a little bit of time, work our butt off, work really hard so that we can have a life of freedom, so that we can have this just abundance and be able to do really fun things with our money and just not have that weight on our shoulders.

Like, I busted my butt for two years. I worked a ridiculous amount, too many hours on the weekends that I want to admit to. And I really sacrificed a lot. Like, I ate butter pasta every night for dinner for two years because it was cheap and delicious, to be honest. And I really sacrificed. But when that time paid off debt and now the things that we're able to do with our money is so amazing. I'm all about just cutting costs on the things that don't matter to you, like maybe groceries or eating out or whatever it is. And then so that way you can spend

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extravagantly on the things that you do love.

TASHA: Yeah, absolutely. It's keeping that end goal in mind because it's not budgeting for the sake of budgeting. It's budgeting for the sake of getting to whatever those end financial goals and even goals for your life are.

So are there any last thoughts or anything you'd like to leave us with today?

FREE GUIDE

KELLY: I have a free guide that will help walk you through what side hustle would be best for you so you can evaluate your skills and you can say, okay, these are the skills that I have, these are the hopes that I have, the desires. And then how can I translate that into a side hustle?

So it's a free guide that's going to walk you through the whole process. It's called The Ultimate Online Side Hustle Guide. So we have that for you guys.

TASHA: Yeah the links are for that are down below. Also links where they can find your YouTube channel. More about what you share online. So thank you so much for joining us today Kelly.

KELLY: Thanks for having me.

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8 Weeks to Intentionally Prepare for a Move (Even If You're Not Moving!)

KIMBERLY HAIRSTON-NEAL • TRANSCRIPT

Hello there. I'm Kimberly of the Modern Steward and I'm here to help you get moving. In just eight weeks, I have a plan that's going to help you reach your goal. Whether you're moving locally, relocating, or you simply want to invite more order into your life and home.

SIMPLYFYING THINGS

Listen up, because I'm simplifying things. Before we dive in, we're going to do some mindset work. I know you may be wondering, Kim, what does mindset have to do with getting organized? Well, friend, it's the key to staying organized. It may surprise you that we start every client project with this practice. It helps us to get clear on our clients' intentions.

Simply put, mindset can affect our ability to make decisions and it can also affect the quality of the decisions we make. So let's get started.

ASK YOURSELF

Fill in the blank: if my _____ could be more organized right now, it would make me so happy. If you were moving into your dream home today, what is one thing you would let go of? Hold yourself accountable. Question of the Day: does your space actually reflect the life you want to live? Reflect on your daily routines.

MINDSET SHIFTS

Mindset shifts that invite more order into your life and home. I will organize my time to make room for what matters to me family, work and rest. I will focus on creating happiness in my life and home. No matter the address, I will embrace a clutter free environment physically, mentally and emotionally. I am inspired to let go of the themes that no longer serve me or bring value to my life.

DELEGATE

Now that we've done the most important work, let's discuss delegating in our eight week checklist. Start delegating early. Even before you have a set move date or start date for your organization project, think of tasks that can be delegated or outsourced. This mindset will lessen the amount you personally have to do for your upcoming move. The following list will help you shift your mindset and ease your load as you effectively delegate.

MOVING COMPANY QUOTES

Get quotes from moving companies. Here at the Modern Steward, we are firm believers in hiring professional movers if your budget allows. Before you rule it out, compare the cost. You'll be surprised how quickly a DIY move can add up. Contact several different moving companies to get quotes for your move.

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Pro tip: your moving survey will be based on volume and or weight, so decluttering significantly prior to will give you the best bang for your buck.

BULK DISCARDS AND DONATIONS

Schedule bulk, discard and donate. Based on your local municipality's regulations, you may need to schedule an additional pickup for bulky items, recyclables and hazardous waste at an additional cost. Starting the process early as possible will reduce the stress on moving day, as most van line services have a policy on items they simply will not transport.

Pro tip: most communities schedule a free or low cost, hard to recycle event several times throughout the year. This is especially true in the spring and summer.

UTILITY CHANGEOVER

Manage utility changeover. We understand that each household makeup is unique. If your household has more than one adult member, assign a person to manage utility changeover from the current location to your new location. The difficulty of this task is going to be determined by whether or not your service provider can simply transfer your service to your new location or if you have to select a new service provider.

Pro tip: some utility providers require a deposit in addition a meter, reading and inspection. Can your real estate agent or landlord assist with this?

Sort individual belongings. The burden of decluttering a whole house can be overwhelming, so don't try to do it all on your own. Each member of the household can be responsible for sorting through the items in their personal space, while the whole household can work together to tackle larger common areas like a garage or attic. And here's where you can use the help from those who offer to assist.

Pro tip: Walk around the house with Post It notes and label the items you want to sell, donate or discard.

EIGHT WEEK CHECKLIST

Now that we've discussed delegating, let's create our eight week checklist. Create a moving file or folder on Google Drive to store quotes, receipts and records related to your move. You're not going to be able to remember all of the details, so throw them in a doc for easy reference.

Schedule in home estimates with an insured moving company, make sure you hire someone you feel you can trust. Asking your friends and family for referrals is a great idea.

Finalize a realistic budget for moving expenses. It is crucial to determine how much you're going to spend to move everything. Keep in mind that even if you receive a corporate benefit, more than likely there will be out of pocket expenses that will arise.

Inspect and schedule any necessary repairs or maintenance items that need to be completed in your current resident prior to moving out. Waiting to address these issues can result in loss of your deposit or delay the walkthrough on closing day.

Request time off from work for moving day. If possible, create a buffer in your schedule to allow some flexibility for any unexpected obstacles.

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Apply our proven method of the four Ds. Delegate what you can, declutter each area of your home, discard broken and worn items, and donate responsibly.

Plan how to move fragile or unusual items such as guns, pianos, fine art, pool tables or safes. Some items may require third party crating. Do not assume that the movers will be qualified to move these items. There are also rules as to what can be moved across state lines. Be sure to get the moving company's policy in writing.

Confirm that your moving company is licensed and insured by verifying their Department of Transportation number. This is also known as a DOT number. Purchase additional insurance to cover your valuable items.

SPACE PLANNING

Whether you're moving or organizing a space, size matters and here's why. Space planning: it's important to take into account whether you'll be downsizing, gaining square footage, or transitioning to relatively the same amount of space. Even if your new home is relatively the same size, it's unlikely that your layout will remain the same.

BEST USE OF EACH ROOM

First, consider the design and the layout of each room. Space planning is key to the functionality of your new home. Determine the best use of each room. How do you use each room at your current space? As soon as you label a room and give it purpose, you start to define your home and how it works for you. We suggest starting with living spaces. What's working? What's not working?

Pro tip: you may receive a floor plan that already has designated rooms. However, not everyone uses their home the same, so prioritize your family. For example, your floor plan may have an area named guest room, but would your family benefit from this room being used as a hobby room or office?

MEASURE MULTIPLE TIMES

Measure and measure again, and not just square footage. We want all of the details, including locations of closets, doorways, and windows. You can pre plan the layout of your furniture before you move in. That way, when the movers bring furniture, you'll be able to tell them exactly where to put it, and you won't have to do the heavy lifting once they're gone.

Pro tip: what if you're relocating out of state or out of the country? Most online listings and property management companies have a detailed floor plan and photos available online.

CONFIRM FURNITURE SIZE

Confirm the size of your furniture. The size of your furniture will largely determine the room layout. This will help you decide what furniture you will keep in each room and if you will need to purchase new pieces. Sell, donate, or store furniture pieces that are not right for you in your new space.

Pro tip: have a list of all of your furniture along with their accurate measurements to make the process easier. You can categorize your furniture room by room.

DESIGN FOR LOVE AND LIVING

Design a space that's loved and lived in. The goal is to create a space that looks

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good but functions even better. Visualize what you want your new space to look like. Which of your peaches are there? Surely it's not a cluttered home. If you have unwanted furniture, now is the time to dispose of it. However, if you need new furniture, decide on a theme and style before purchasing. That way, all of your decor will go together seamlessly.

Pro tip: walk around the house with Post It notes and label items that you want to sell, donate, or discard.

START DECLUTTERING EARLY

If there's one step you can't skimp on, it's decluttering. Let's get started. Start decluttering early. This tends to be the most overwhelming step in the process. I encourage you to shift your mindset to focus on what you will decide to keep, rather than what you're letting go of. This shift will allow you to appreciate what you have and the possibilities that lie in a beautiful new beginning.

DISCARD AND DONATE IN BULK

Bulk discard and donate. Address the four P's: photos, papers, perishables. and prescriptions. These tend to be the most tedious to sort through because you need to review each one. We all accumulate things over time, and typically the longer we've lived in our home, the more things you have that you may no longer be using. Decide what you want to take with you and what you want to sell, donate or discard.

Pro tip: remove bulky or broken items that need to be discarded first. This will not only give you momentum, but it will also give you space and clarity as you work room by room.

DOWNSIZE

Sell or donate items. The more you downsize, the less you will have to pack. You can make money by selling some of your items that are in good condition, or if you decide to donate them, you can claim the value on your tax returns. Understanding the role depreciation plays can help you decide how much of your time and resources to dedicate to selling items. Determine how long you will list each item leading up to your moving day. Consider consignment for high volume items.

TAKE INVENTORY & PHOTOS

Take inventory and photos. As you create your inventory list, label each box, room and content. Be sure to take photos of your high value items in case you need to file an insurance claim. This inventory list is also helpful if the temptation to impulse buy for your new space comes up.

Pro tip: Whether you are hiring professional movers or doing it yourself, there are various coverage types available to protect your belongings. Look into your options.

BE RESPONSIBLE

Donation and discard responsibly. If your items are in good condition, donate them. In season items are normally more accepted, and it is recommended to call ahead to make sure local centers are accepting donation. As for damaged items, discard responsibly. That means recycling when possible and researching material that may need to be discarded in a specific manner.

Pro tip: Now is the time to start developing sustainable shopping habits. As you purchase items for your new home, avoid

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mindlessly shopping and focus on quality over quantity.

TIPS FOR DONATIONS

The next three slides will include samples of our donate, sell and discard sheets.

Items to Donate. Keep in mind that donation centers are not dumping grounds. Tips to donate properly: donate items while they still have life value, no matter what you initially invested. This will allow others to experience the joy of receiving well maintained items. Consider direct donation when possible. Local nonprofits generally keep a list of what they are in dire need of. Take the time to make sure your items go to the right person or the right organization.

Be creative with finding organizations that can make the best use of your stuff. For example, some centers specialize in furniture, old textiles, or in bulks. Make sure you're bringing items to the correct nonprofit. Once you find a location, call ahead to make sure they can accept your donation.

SELLING ITEMS

Items to Sell. You've often heard the phrase know your worth. Well, I'm encouraging you to be realistic about your items' worth. In addition, how much is your time worth? Keeping these two key factors in mind will help you decide how long to post an item for sale.

KNOW HOW TO DISCARD

Hi, guys. Surprise. It's Larry.

I lead the discard portion of the business here's a couple of things to know about discarding. Not everything can be discarded at the same place. For instance, electronics have to be taken to an e-waste center. Also, large cooling appliances have to be discharged professionally before they are discarded. Things such as refrigerators and air conditioners. We all have to do our part for the environment.

Pro tip: local scrappers may take these items off your hands for free, as they will add them to their payload.

DIY PACKING

Wow. Can you believe you're halfway there? As we'd like to say, the proof is in the progress. Give yourself a pat on the back. The next portion of our discussion is going to be dedicated to those of you who have opted to DIY your packing. Let's get started.

Start packing. There are plenty of items around the house that can be packed ahead of time, like clothing you won't need for the next couple of months, picture frames, and et cetera. Packing always takes longer than you can imagine, so the more you get done ahead of time, the less stressful it will be as the move gets closer.

SUPPLIES NEEDED

Packing supply checklist: boxes and wardrobes, packing tape, tape dispenser, box cutter, permanent marker, bubble wrap, packing paper, mattress covers.

PACKING TIPS

Stock up on boxes. Facebook Marketplace is a great place to check for people giving away boxes instead of having to purchase all new ones.

Clearly label boxes. Label boxes with the room you want the box to be placed in your

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new home, as well as a general list of the items the box contains to make it easier to find specific items when you move in.

Save on wrapping paper. Start packing fragile items by wrapping items in towels, sheets and blankets to save on bubble wrap and packing paper.

Make boxes stackable. Make sure your boxes are packed in a way that they can be nicely stacked so that they are flat on top and not bulging to maximize the space of the moving truck.

BOX INVENTORY

Creating a box inventory may seem like a tedious or unnecessary task at first, but trust me, you'll thank me later. Imagine unpacking all of your possessions only to find that that one cherished item didn't make the trip. Or perhaps you're storing items at U-Haul or in a pod and you realize there's something you need in your current space. The box inventory will prove to be priceless.

A SMOOTH MOVE

So, I've shared a large portion of what it takes for the physical move to run smoothly. How about I show you behind the scenes of what we take care of with our concierge move. Take note of what would be useful for you and your household.

Start making arrangements.

ADDRESS AND DATE SET

Once you have your new address and move date, request time off work and set up childcare and pet care for your move date. Submit a change of address form with the post office. This can be done online. Contact insurance companies to transfer policies based on your new address. Book movers and or reserve a moving truck. Request to book the moving freight elevator and reserve parking for the truck. Request transcripts from your child's current school to be sent to the new school one month before your move.

ONE MONTH TO GO

Arrange for the cutoff of your utilities and services at your current home. Arrange for the activation of your utilities and services at your new home. Check with your renters and mortgage insurance to see if they cover the move. Notify everyone of your new address from the change of address checklist, send out change of address cards to friends and family. Continue packing everything you don't plan on using before the move. Schedule time to see friends and family before your move date.

Our change of address checklist is meant to give you an overview of categories to consider notifying of your new address. Utilities and services, financial institutions, government agencies, insurance, and community.

Hey friend. Moving is anything but fun. The same can go for getting organized, but this is when we're going to fall back on the mindset work that we've done earlier. Remember the space that you visualize and the work that you're willing to do to get there.

Let's keep going. Start final preparations.

TWO WEEKS BEFORE YOUR MOVE

Plan meals to use up the remaining food from the fridge, freezer and pantry.

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Complete any remaining home repairs. Deep clean as much as possible or schedule a post move cleaning. Make sure your pets have ID tags and are current on their vaccinations as it can take some time to get in with a new veterinarian. Transfer or cancel gym club or any other memberships. Gather together important documents that you don't want to pack in case you need access to them during the moving process.

ONE WEEK BEFORE YOUR MOVE

Pack everything that's left. Leave only the necessities at this point, think TP. Drain equipment like lawn mowers and edgers, as well as water hoses. Dispose of any hazardous inflammable items. Return any rented equipment or borrowed items. Call a locksmith to set up an appointment for your new home. Fill prescriptions and pet medications.

WHEN TO MOVE?

It is moving week, but before we get there, we thought we'd have some fun. Recently we polled our supporters and friends on social media and we asked them what did they think was the most popular moving day of the week? Drumroll please. The answer is Friday according to one US poll. However, here at the Modern Steward we have a contrary opinion. We encourage our clients and you to schedule a midweek move if at all possible. Think Tuesday or Wednesday and here are two factors why.

Number one, supply and demand. While it may be tempting to book your move on either a Friday or Saturday, considering you have the weekend off, you have to think about the fact that you're going to pay the highest rate. You're going to deal with the most competition. And these are factors that can be eliminated by scheduling your move midweek.

Second if you've opted to hire a moving company, even if you're relocating and you're using a van line service, quite often, from our experience, these moves can end up getting bumped if they're scheduled towards the end of the week. So cost, supply and demand, and more control over scheduling.

But without further ado, let's get into it. It's Move Week and Move Day coming up.

TWO DAYS TO GO

Moving day is almost here, two days before your move. If you are taking your refrigerator with you, clear out any remaining items so that you can defrost it at least 24 hours before your move. Remember to place towels. Double check all cabinets and closets to make sure none of your belongings are left inside. Don't forget to check inside appliances as well. Pack all remaining loose items.

MOVING DAY

Cover your floors if they need to be protected. Contain pets in a safe area where they will be less stressed. Make sure your moving day essentials (see the checklist) are gathered together. Leave owner manual for appliances and et cetera that stay with the house.

FINAL CHECKLIST

Before leaving the house, make sure all windows and doors are shut properly and locked, lights are turned off, the thermostat is off, or at an appropriate level. Water to the house is shut off, trash is taken out, house is clean, or a cleaning service is scheduled. Do a final walk through. Make

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sure that no items are left behind.

MOVING DAY ESSENTIAL CHECKLIST

General items: phone chargers, computer chargers, important documents, medication, first aid kit, clothing, toiletries, towels, sheets and blankets. Kids: toys and games, books, bedtime essentials, favorite bottle or sippy cup, diaper bag. Pets: food and water bowls, food, and medication, miscellaneous, leash, litter boxes, et cetera.

Food and beverage: bottled water, coffee or drinks, snacks, disposable dishes, cups and utensils. Kitchen and bath: hand soap, dish soap, toilet paper, towels, trash bags, cleaning supplies and rags. Moving necessities: scissors or a box cutter, tool set and drill, step stool, doorstopper, tape measure, light bulb.

SPECIAL OFFER

Well, there you have it. In just eight weeks, we can intentionally prepare to move. And even if you're not moving, we hope you feel just a bit more organized. We'd like to thank you so much for spending this time for us. And as a special way to say thank you, we're offering 10% off of our virtual and in person sessions. Just mention Get Organized HQ 2023 and if you're not quite ready to have us in your home, we welcome you to be part of the Good Steward community over at Instagram @themodernsteward. And last but not least, we'd like to say a special thank you to the ladies at Get Organized HQ for organizing this amazing summit.

If you would like a personal copy of the eight week moving guide that was shared during our presentation, head over to themoderansteward.com under services, free resources, and download your free copy of the guide today.

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Let's Make Our Go-To Meals Exciting Again

KIMMY HUGHES • TRANSCRIPT

Are you bored with your meals? You're bored of making the same thing all the time? It doesn't matter what stage of life we're in. Married, not married. Kids, no kids, retired. Empty nesters. We all get tired of cooking the same dang thing every night. So I'm gonna be sharing with you some ways that we can make our go-to meals exciting again.

SHE'S IN HER APRON

Hi, I'm Kimmy Hughes from the YouTube channel She's in Her Apron. And I'm a mom of four and sadly, two out of the house already. And I love sharing how to grow your pantry, how to shop your shelves, make make-ahead meals, and help find faster, easier solutions to get meals on the table.

DO WE REALLY NEED NEW?

I think we're always online and on Pinterest and just looking for new, new, new. But take what you already love and see how you can make it different. We don't have to stress out when it comes to our meals and think that we have to bring something new to the family or gourmet.

But what if I were to tell you that with just a few steps that you could take your ordinary go-to meal and make it a completely different dish? It's amazing how a different technique or a different spice or a substitution can completely change your meals.

Now we all have those recipes that we absolutely love and can eat them at any time. Think of your go-to meals now. How often are you having them? Are you noticing that you're having them too often? This could be the problem of where we're getting bored, why we don't feel like cooking.

ROTATE YOUR MEALS

May I suggest that you take your recipes and maybe put them in semesters? The beginning of the year you're having more of those hearty meals, and in the spring and summer you're having more of the light dishes. And then during the holidays, you're again having those comfort foods and hearty meals. So maybe break them up so that way when you have them again, it's new and it's exciting.

For example, we have a sweet and sour chicken recipe that is to die for. It is better than going out and getting takeout. It's a meal that we just absolutely love, but we make it exciting and special when we only put it into our rotation once in a very blue moon. So maybe you're having your go to meals just a little too often.

If you meal plan and you take out your calendar, take those meals and spread them out throughout the year, or if you're focusing on one semester, do it that way.

SPICE IT UP

One way to make your go-to meals exciting

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is get in your spice cabinet and see what you got going on in there. My cabinet is filled with spices. I might have a problem. Like every time I go to Sam's Club on Costco, I come home with a new spice to try. I can't help it. But when you try a new spice, a new seasoning to a dish, it can totally change it.

Years ago, I started falling in love with Old Bay Seasoning. love it on my corn, on the cob. I actually like adding it to potato salad. It's not only just for fish. Mess around, experiment with different seasonings and see what you can come up with.

Try taking a pinch of paprika or cayenne pepper to your favorite pasta dish. Chances are you might have something like smoked paprika in your spice cabinet and it's sitting there. Maybe you bought it for the one recipe that called for it. It works great in soups stews. Add it into your favorite chili recipe, sprinkle it over your baked potato and over your roasted vegetables for this little twist.

GET SAUCY

And then from there you can experiment with, like, sauces and dressings. I make this really yummy, creamy cilantro jalapeno sauce. It was inspired from a restaurant out here in Utah, Cafe Rio. So I made it one time for a specific recipe, a Cafe Rio sweet pulled pork salad. But then I noticed that I loved the dressing over shrimp, like grilled shrimp or sautéed shrimp. So we started having shrimp tacos. What else can we put this on? Well, if we grilled chicken out on the grill, and then that's the dressing that we could put on top of it. Just kick it up a notch.

Then you can add things to that same sauce to make that sauce completely different and new. Like avocado. Throw some avocado in that. Oh, my gosh. Add some lime in there. You could put that over a salad as well, over fish. I'm getting hungry.

I absolutely love a honey mustard sauce. It's a sweet and tangy dressing that pairs really well with salads, roasted chicken, grilled vegetables

Make a teriyaki glaze. Combine soy sauce, brown sugar, minced garlic, ginger, maybe some rice vinegar. Let it simmer, thicken, and you have this gorgeous yummy glaze. You could brush that over salmon, chicken, or on your roasted vegetables.

PUNCHY INGREDIENTS

So here are some ingredients that really pack a punch to your recipes. Curry paste, chili paste, sundried tomatoes, honey, capers, citrus, horseradish, mustards, toasted sesame oil, bacon and pancetta, soy sauce, fish sauce, vinegars, and even pesto.

Here are some ingredient combinations that will have your taste buds exploding: tomato, basil and mozzarella cheese; spicy sausage, sweet potato and greens; lemon, olive oil and any herb; artichokes, spinach, garlic, parmesan cheese and cream. Yum. Butternut squash, spinach and bacon. Beef, garlic and ginger; steak, potatoes and horseradish. Brussels sprouts, bacon, and onion or garlic. Chicken, potatoes, Dijon mustard and thyme; chickpeas, cumin and cilantro; chicken, potatoes, garlic, and rosemary; eggplant, mozzarella cheese and basil. One of my favorites: bacon, leeks and cream; pork, onions, garlic; and ginger peas, bacon and cream. Zucchini, tomato, basil and garlic.

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SUBSTITUTIONS

Let's do some swaps. One thing that we like to do is switch out rice with cauliflower rice. It works well in stir fries, stuffed peppers, and a fried rice. And great substitution for any grain bowl that you make.

If you want to cut pasta out for one night, you can make some zucchini noodles. Use a spiralizer to transform that zucchini into long, noodle strands. Zoodles are a great substitute for pasta in dishes like spaghetti, lasagna, or even pad Thai.

Portobello mushroom caps instead of burgers. I've done this. It's so good. Or I've even heard, I haven't done it. But you can replace your bun with the Portobello mushroom cap.

FRIES AND DOUGH

Okay, let's talk French fries. Maybe you guys love making French fries. Switch it up by using a sweet potato or even carrots. Last year I made French fries from carrots, and let me tell you, they were delicious, and the kids liked them.

Spaghetti squash. Instead of pasta, we make a spaghetti squash bake. It is one of our favorite, favorite meals. Now, this meal, we have more during the fall and winter. It's so easy to make. You could switch it up by using beef or sausage. You can add vegetables to it. Oh, it's one of our favorites.

Whether you buy your pizza dough at the store or make it homemade, you could definitely switch things up. When it comes to your pizza dough, you can use bagels, the big ones or the minis. They make great freezer meals, especially during the summer or back to school time, and the kids come home and they're just hunkering. You can pop those out of the freezer, put them on a baking sheet, throw them in the oven. So it's always yummy to make a pizza on a bagel.

I grew up making them on an English muffin. you can make them on a loaf of French bread. And one fast way I did it for the kids after school was I made them on a flour tortilla. They come out really crunchy, and I love a good thing crunchy cheesy pizza.

You could do lettuce wraps instead of tortillas.

LEAVING BREADCRUMBS

So let's say you have a recipe that you use breadcrumbs in. Maybe you coat chicken or fish with it. There are some other substitutes that you could use for breadcrumbs: panko, crushed cracker crumbs, crushed croutons, crushed cornflakes, and even crushed potato chips.

BREWING STEW

Okay, let me tell you about our beef stew. I learned how to make beef stew from my mother in law's recipe. Good recipe. Really good. One day, I decided, let's add some beer in it. It tenderizes the meat more. Instead of browning up the beef tips and then having it cook for about an hour on a simmer with broth or water, let's do this with a bottle of beer and some beef broth or water.

Oh, my goodness. This changed the beef stew completely for us. We're not drinkers, so now I have beer stocked in my pantry just for our beef stew. So I use a dark lager beer, and it just completely changes the beef stew. Not that the beef stew that we made before was bland, but it just added

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this incredible flavor that only that beer can do to the stew. So now we can't make it without it. It's just not the same. We don't even bother. So that's how we just took a normal beef stew and kicked it up a notch.

SCOPE OUT YOUR FAVORITE RESTAURANT

One way that you could see how you can spice up your meals the next time you're at a restaurant, and it's a restaurant that you really like, take a picture of their menu or see if you could snag the menu online. You already have a great way to see how you can change one of your meals. Restaurant menus are a great place to get inspiration from. They go into such detail what they put in that meal that it'll get the wheels turning for you.

THEME. NIGHTS

Now, you've probably heard this a lot. As a tip when it comes to meal planning is have theme nights.

GET ALLITERATIVE

You could do Meatless Monday, figure out how to take your go-to recipe and make it meatless. Like, we love cooking chili, but it's always fun to just make it meatless with beans and different spices. You could do Mexican Monday, so you could do things like burritos and enchiladas, Spanish rices, stuffed peppers.

For Tuesdays, of course, Taco Tuesday, Takeout Tuesday. So what are your favorite foods that you like to get for takeout that you can make at home? I'm telling you, my sweet and sour chicken is better than takeout.

You could do Waffle Wednesday. What's some fun things that you can add on top of Waffle Wrap Wednesday? What salads or proteins? Like your fish, your chicken, that you can make that you could just wrap it. You could wrap it in lettuce. You could wrap it in a flour tortilla.

You could do a Throwback Thursday and try something completely new. I love sharing recipes from the past, especially from the Great Depression. And when I started experimenting with Great Depression recipes, I realized that a lot of my family's go-to recipes growing up were based from the Great Depression.

You could do Fish Friday. You could steam fish, grill fish, smoke fish, bake fish. You can have it on top of a salad, put it in pasta, put it in a soup, stew, a wrap, a stir fry. This is really making me hungry. You could have a fondue night. What are your favorite things that you could dip in? Cheese or a broth?

Gosh, stir fries. You can add any of your favorite protein in and make a stir fry. You could do Sandwich Saturdays, sheet pan Saturdays, soup Sundays, spaghetti, sundaes, seafood, sundaes, salad Sundays.

FOOD NANNY

Other ideas a Charcuterie dinner night. Love having charcuterie boards for dinner. Of course, breakfast for dinner is always good. This can give you a way of making a certain meal ten different ways. I learned about having theme nights from the Food Nanny. I have The Food Nanny Rescues Dinner. This is such a good book. It's sectioned out into which I see as a theme.

So the food nanny breaks her theme nights up. Mondays are comfort food. Tuesdays, you could do Italian night. Wednesdays,

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breakfast for dinner. Thursdays is Mexican night. Friday is pizza night. Saturday is grill night. Sunday, family traditions. You could have a salad night.

TALKING TACOS

Let's talk about Taco Tuesday. That seems to be like the big one everyone goes to. Okay, yes, you could do your traditional tacos, but for some reason, when we don't put it in a taco shell, like a hard taco shell, and put it on a tostada, it's completely different and exciting to us. How is it any different than putting it in a taco shell? I don't know, but it just is. And the kids look forward to it, and it's so good.

We like to also fry up scones and make Navajo tacos. And something about that yummy dough with the beans and the ground beef and the toppings and the ranch dressing. It's just so good.

We like making fish tacos, shrimp tacos. We like making taco soup, taco stuffed shells, and that's with pasta. That is a really good one. That one is so good and so filling.

Taco salad. We love having this Dorito taco salad. It is so good. All you need is your ground beef, taco seasoning, a can of black beans, a bag of Doritos, and a bottle of Catalina dressing. And of course, the normal fixings, like your lettuce, tomatoes. We'll do onions. You guys, the salad is so good. We have this one maybe twice a year, and we always look forward to having it.

I found some recipes online to get your mind going. When it comes to tacos, you could do a cheesy taco spaghetti bake. This calls for spaghetti, ground beef, chili, beans, tomato sauce, shredded cheese. You could use Velveeta cheese if you want, and taco seasoning.

You could do a Frito's taco pie. What is that? This ground beef recipe has a crescent dough crust that is filled with all your favorite taco ingredients, including crunchy corn chips, cheese, and sour cream. Top it with fresh chopped lettuce, diced tomatoes, avocados, jalapenos, and anything else you would like. Wowza, that is very interesting. And a different take. I'm hoping you're seeing what you could do with tacos and make it completely different.

TOSSING UP SALADS

Now, if you're salad lovers like we are, there's definitely about a million ways you can make your salads. My parents used to live in Chicago, and there's this yummy restaurant there called Portillo's. They have this chopped salad that is so good. So it inspired me to add more things to salad.

So you could take your lettuce, they add cabbage to theirs as well. Chop it up. You can add little ditalini pasta to your salads. So think of the proteins that you could add to your salad, like eggs, chicken, steak, salamis, bacon, prosciutto. Let me give you some different combinations for salads. Okay?

So if you have an avocado, pair it with some red onion, walnuts, bacon, and then for the dressing, you could do a lemon vinaigrette. If you have bacon, add eggs, red onion, and tomatoes. And from that, you could do a balsamic vinaigrette. If you like blue cheese, you could pair the blue cheese with apples, goat cheese, egg, and a creamy horseradish dill sauce.

If you love chicken on your salad, then you can pair blue cheese with it, with some mushrooms, onions, and have a rosemary thyme vinaigrette. Let's say you like eggs. We can add almonds, salmon, scallions, and

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a Dijon vinaigrette. Salmon, you can add some asparagus, tomatoes, carrots, and you could do a sesame ginger dressing.

Okay. Shrimp. That goes well with, like, avocado, bacon, red onion, and a cilantro lime vinaigrette. Steak. Oh, we love steak salads. With that, you could pair it with some peppers, red onion, mushrooms, a red wine vinaigrette, turkey with walnuts and dried cranberries mushrooms. And you can make a honey garlic vinaigrette.

So those are just some things to get things turning. To make your salads jump up a notch, you can have a do it your own night and create some different type of bars.

DIYO BARS

Last year for Memorial Day, we had a graduation party for my son, so I did a hot dog bar. You guys, the combinations that you can make are so good. Put all these things out that they can add to their hot dog. Now, I'm pretty basic when it comes to a hot dog. Give me onions, give me relish, mustard, and ketchup. That's about it. And I went online and searched up, like, how different you can make a hot dog. It blew my mind.

The favorite combination from that party for me was the Hawaiian dog. So it was so fun because I put the menu out on the table so they could see all the different combinations they can make, or they could just get creative and make their own. So there was the TexMex dog. That was good. That was barbecue sauce with the fried onions and shredded cheese. Of course, you could do a good old chili dog, the Chicago dog, which is yellow mustard, diced onions, sweet pickle, relish, dill pickle spears, tomato wedges, pepperoncini slices, and celery seed.

You could do the slaw dog. That's a good one. So it's coleslaw, red onion, and spicy brown mustard. And we usually, during the summer months, always have coleslaw or baked beans as a side dish and putting it on a dog. Oh, yeah, so good. The Reuben dog. This one surprised me. This was sauerkraut, Thousand Island dressing and shredded cheese. Never thought I would eat sauerkraut, but that combination was so good.

Make your own sandwiches. So that could be another bar that you could do with all the different types of meats toppings, dressings.

A potato bar night. We love potato bar. I mean, you could bring in a lot of veggies for that. So if you have picky eaters, having things, like, set out that they could build and try, for some reason they do and they end up liking it.

YOU SAY CHARCUTERIE, I SAY GRAZING

I'm always promoting do a charcuterie board, a grazing board, and add new things to it so that way they'll try it. Every holiday season I do these big charcuterie boards and the kids will try different dipping sauces, different vegetables, different pickled vegetables, and I'll add new things in to see what they think and they actually try it.

I don't understand what it is about that grazing board versus something just put on their plate. I think when they get to see it, pick it out and then trying it, usually my kids end up liking it.

Having like a bar, setting something up where they could add and put things on, like a baked potato bar. You can have your

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kids try all different vegetables and see if they enjoy it on top of their baked potato. And of course everything is good with ranch dressing drizzles all over it.

You can also do these combinations with the hot dog bar for your burgers. Sometimes we just get in a rut with our burgers. This is the same concept.

PIZZA, PIZZA!

You could have a pizza bar so you have different toppings that they could try, different proteins that they could put on their pizza. You could do a taco pizza, buy some store bought meatballs, slice them in half, put them on the pizza. Yum! Philly cheesesteak pizza. Make a white sauce or open a jar of Alfredo sauce and put it on the crust. Thai curry chicken, easy. Margarita pizza. I love Margarita pizza with the basil and the mozzarella. Oh my gosh, it's so good.

Go online and look at your pizza takeout places near you and see what combinations that they have and then you can make it home instead of the good old plain pepperoni pizza or cheese pizza, but get the kids involved, get the family involved and have them pick new things to try. They might be surprised what they like, but it's something about everyone getting in and helping or making their own that makes it exciting. It's just fun to see the reactions of what they created. It's so fun.

Take your grilled cheese and bump it up a notch. You can add different types of cheese you've never tried before. You can add pesto, cranberry sauce, and put some turkey in there all hot and melty.

A MILLION WAYS FOR PASTA

Pasta Night you could take pasta and make it a million ways. So if you were to take penne pasta, you can either have a red sauce, a white sauce, a meat sauce, a sausage sauce with it, or in yummy buttery garlicky sauce to put on top of it. Then you can add a protein to it, like chicken, and then you can add more veggies to it. Like, I love asparagus with pasta. I love broccoli with pasta and of course a fresh garden tomato with pasta. And then if you have leftover pasta, you can turn those into bakes with cottage cheese and ricotta cheese and mozzarella cheese, and make a ziti bake, a spaghetti bake, a calzone bake, with the spaghetti inside of it.

Casserole nights instead of making cheeseburgers, one time I made a cheeseburger casserole and I made a cheeseburger soup. So good.

IN SEASON PRODUCE

And add things into your meals that are in season at that time. So during the summer months, we're having lots of different corn recipes, squash recipes, fruit recipes.

I'm trying different types of salsas. We try different types of gourds and squashes during the fall. So take what's in season and add it into your meal rotation to make things a little different.

USE THOSE LEFTOVERS!

And take those leftovers and create something new. If you have leftover rice, you can always put it in the freezer. It freezes really well. You can make a rice cereal, it's so good. Add milk or cream to it with some cinnamon. Add some fruit. You could do a rice pudding with your

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leftover rice. You could do stir fries. You could do stuffed peppers. You can add the rice to burritos. You can make fried rice. So sometimes I will make our chicken noodle soup, I can use rice instead of pasta.

And if you have leftover baked potatoes from doing a baked potato bar, you could do twice-baked baked potatoes. Those are good and they actually freeze up very well. And you could have later for a whole nother meal.

If you love to cook up a roast, I like cooking mine with a combination of zesty, Italian dressing, buttermilk ranch dressing, and brown gravy. Pack it with a half cup of water. Guys, that roast is so good. I also like doing a Mississippi roast. But you can also, if you have leftovers the next day, make some sliders with it, add it on a hoagie, add it to a bun, and then add your cheeses. It's so good. Any leftover roast could be turned into a slider.

So if you have leftovers and you want to use them up, try some of these toppings. You could take your leftover and crisp it up. You can add it to the frying pan or the air fryer. Add different seasonings to it to make it different and exciting. Or you can add moisture to your leftover, things like salsa, sour cream, salad dressings, barbecue sauces, mayonnaise, pasta sauce, teriyaki, soy sauce, butter, heavy creams, and milks. And the toppings can be things like croutons and chips and crackers and cheese. Anything topped with cheese, right?

SWITCH COOKING METHODS

If one of your favorite meals that you're noticing you're having too often, how can you take those ingredients and switch it up and make it into another dish? And when I say let's turn it into something else, I'm not saying like completely reinvent the wheel. Small tweaks like seasonings or adding different sauces or a different way of cooking it, like grilling or sautéing it will change the recipe completely.

For example, we have a meal that we absolutely love pesto Ranch Chicken. Now, when I found this recipe, we made it in the slow cooker, and we loved it in the slow cooker. We had it that way all the time, but after a while, we weren't feeling it anymore. But we loved the combination of the ranch dressing with the pesto. So one day I took that meal, which I have made into freezer meals all the time. So I took that freezer meal, and then instead of putting it in my slow cooker like we always do, I ended up putting it in a casserole pan and baking it in the oven. You guys, it came out different, it tasted different, the texture was different.

And my husband and I looked at each other like, oh, my gosh. Okay, let's start making it in the oven for now on. So now instead of being like, we're having Pesto Ranch Chicken for dinner, it's we're having Pesto Ranch Chicken for dinner! Just cooking it up differently has changed the experience for us.

Our family loves meatloaf, but we don't have the patience to wait for it. It takes like, an hour or more to cook. So when we want dinner on the table faster, we'll fill up a muffin tin with some meatloaf, and we'll put the glaze on top and bake it. It bakes for like, 25 minutes compared to 60 or more minutes, but when it comes out this way, all the edges are nice and crispy and then nice and moist in the middle. It really is a fun take on the meal.

We love making homemade pizza. Well, we usually just bake it in the good old oven. My

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husband has a smoker, so we decided let's smoke it. I was really nervous about it, but oh, my gosh, it is so good.

Instead of slaving over your stove or skillet for your breakfast, you could bake it in the oven on a sheet pan. Have your fried eggs cooked in the oven. You'll heat up your sheet pan for about five minutes in the oven. When you take it out, let butter melt down on it, or add some olive oil. Then pour in your eggs. They'll spread out all over your sheet pan. Bake at 350 degrees if you want over easy eggs, depending on your oven, between five to eight minutes, ten or more if you want it cooked a little longer, and they turn out great. You can also do this with scrambled eggs or make an omelet the same way on your sheet pan.

Take your pancake mix, any pancake mix. Pour it onto your sheet pan on parchment paper or not. I've done it both ways. Make sure if you don't have parchment paper, it's sprayed really good. Add any toppings and fillers you want, like bananas and strawberries, blueberries, chocolate chips. Bake in a 425 degree oven for 15 minutes, they're going to come out all golden brown and perfect. So easy, so fast. Just another fun take on a basic recipe.

Take one of your favorite recipes and see if you can grill it. Roasting, stir fry, or putting it in your slow cooker or Instapot or even an air fryer that's really big right now and see what the recipe tastes like, cooking it in a different way.

CHANGE YOUR SETTING

So to add a little freshness to our repetitive meals, we can add a nerve, squeeze on some citrus, add a sauce, make a switch, and just get a completely different change of atmosphere. Maybe instead of having your dinner at the dinner table like always, take dinner outside. Sit out on your patio or in the backyard, or maybe have it at a nearby park. It's just a nice, refreshing change.

Even little things like creating a menu board can make dinner time a little more exciting. You can display this week's dinner options on a chalkboard or a whiteboard or even a magnet board and put it on your refrigerator or display it somewhere in your kitchen. You can make it fun and exciting for the family and for the kids, and really even motivating for you.

GET EVERYONE INVOLVED

And involve the family in the menu planning process. Let them choose their favorite meal, maybe for that week, and it's a great way to get them in the kitchen and cook with you. We don't have to carry the weight of dinner time all on our own. I think we feel like we need to be superheroes. We have so many helping hands in our home, let's get them involved.

One thing that we've been doing around the dinner table that's made it fun was we printed up some conversation starter cards where there's some really fun questions in there to ask each other. Some of them are light hearted, some of them are deep. But it is so fun to hear the family's answers. And it always gets a little funny and crazy at our dinner table. It just lightens the atmosphere.

JAZZ IT UP

But I hope this got you excited to jazz up your go-to meals or maybe gave you some ideas for new go-to meals. We could take what we already love and switch a few things to make it brand new again. Okay.

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I hope this put some pep in your step and get you into the kitchen to create something yummy for your family. Now get your apron on, get in the kitchen, and make that go-to meal of yours even more exciting.

I would love for you to visit me over on YouTube and join in on the conversations that we have there to help us get dinner on the table. Thanks for watching. Bye.

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Purposeful Toy Organization

KIRSTEN HORTON • TRANSCRIPT

Hi. My name is Kirsten Horton. I am a playroom designer and former educator with twelve years of experience. Welcome to my session. Today we're going to be talking about purposeful toy organization. So we are going to be diving into what 80% of parents say is the most stressful thing in their home, and that is the toys.

THE PLAY ENVIRONMENT

So I love to tell my clients that purposeful spaces lead to purposeful play. And what I mean by that is that when we have purposefully chosen and selected and just a great collection of toys that's really been cultivated to develop certain skills, it really creates a healthy play balance for your children and it also leads to the desired skills that you want them to be working on.

So for example, you might want your children to be working on empathy or collaboration or using engineering skills. Those are all things that your child can develop through their playroom and the way that their playroom is set up. Not only that, but our environment is always cueing our behavior.

And so any skills that you're seeking for your child to learn your environment can be set up in a way where your child can have those behaviors constantly kind of in their mind and things redirecting them towards those without you always being in the room to remind them.

But today we're just totally going to be focusing in on the organizational aspect of a playroom. And so I love telling clients that using intentional systems and processes to organize your child's toy collection leads to longer, more focused playtime for them and less clutter and money spent by you. Sounds good, right?

A THREE STEP SYSTEM

All right, let's jump in. So I have a three step system for organizing playrooms. This is probably the number one service that my clients cannot wait to get. I have so many parents, especially moms, who are completely overwhelmed by their child's playroom and who really just don't even know where to start.

There's also research that shows us that we as parents attach our child's childhood memories to these toys that they love. And so when we see a toy that they loved when they were three years old, it kind of breaks our heart a little bit to think about giving them that away. And it also breaks our heart a little bit that's not their favorite toy anymore.

Maybe they were really into cars and trucks and now they've moved on and it's Pokémon or something and we miss those cars and trucks days. And so that can make it really hard for parents to let go of certain toys. And so we kind of just continue to collect and hold on to toys because we really want to collect and hold on to those memories.

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BEFORE YOU BEGIN

So what I love to tell my parents before I come in and do a playroom organization for them is number one, take out just a giant box. Go to Target, get yourself the $8 Sterlite 16 gallon box, one for each child, and put in all those toys that really bring back the best memories of them for you. So those are your sentimental toys. Those are things that you might even want to pass down to your grandchildren. So just go ahead and set those things aside.

Nobody wants to crush your spirit or to hurt your feelings or make you feel sad. When we're doing a toy collection or a toy edit, we just simply want to create more space and have your children have rooms in their playrooms, in their lives for the new wonderful things that are always coming in. So first up, I always remind parents, I want you to get that Sterlite bin, put in any toy in there that you would be just crushed if you didn't have it, if it accidentally got given away or thrown away. Those things really deserve a special place in your home because they have a special place in your heart.

Now beyond that, we're just going into the rest of the toy collection. So my three steps are editing, organizing, and maintaining. So when I say editing, that's simply choosing the things that you're going to go ahead and get rid of. When I say organizing, that just means how you're going to store all your things and creating systems and then maintaining. So maintaining is actually following your systems. So we can create all the systems we want to all day long, but that doesn't mean a thing until we, you got it, followed the system.

STEP ONE: EDIT

Okay, so here we go. First up comes my editing process. So this is my process that I use anytime that I go into a client's playroom or home and help them kind of declutter just the toys. You might start to do this and feel like you want to do it in a different order or a different way. So I want you to do whatever works best for you. This is just maybe a guide or an outline of what works for me when I do it.

So I absolutely love getting every toy out of the closets, the cabinets, the storage shelves. I take the bins, dump them all out. I want to see every Lego, every Magna-Tile, every tiny little My Little Pony or Shopkin that is in the playroom or in the space. I want to have my eyes on it. I want to see and be able to put together game pieces so, you know, those tiny little pieces that go with your games. I want to be able to find two or three days later, one of those tiny little pieces and say, oh, I know what game that goes to, and take it over to my game section.

So that can be overwhelming. If that seems crazy to you, that's because it is. But maybe don't do it that way. If you feel like you might pour everything out and then not finish, maybe don't pour everything out. Maybe just go one closet at a time, one drawer at a time, one cabinet at a time. Do it in a way that feels right for you.

GET IT ALL OUT

But I love to have a visual inventory of absolutely everything. And the other reason is because it's not my home most of the time, so I don't necessarily know all the toys that everyone else has. And it helps me to really kind of orient myself quickly with each family's toy collection. And I start to notice

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trends also like, oh, man, they have a lot of Toy Story. Toy Story must be important to this family. There's a lot of Wizard of Oz. Wizard of Oz must be important to this family. Oh, they have eight Magna-Tiles. So maybe Magna-Tiles are not such an important toy for this family. So it really helps me be able to understand the family's values and what they like for their children to play with.

SORT IT

So after that, I sort out the toys. I put all the little people together. I put all the bikes and ride-on toys together, costumes together. I've got music toys together, anything that's for building. So really just sorting into your major categories. Once you've got your major categories chosen, then you're slowly going to go through and maybe separate by the type of toy it is.

For example, within building, you might have Magna-Tiles and Legos. Within little people or small world, you might have Disney princesses. You might have Army men or women. You might have doll house stuff. You might have Barbies. So within each category, you're just going to continue making your categories smaller and smaller and smaller.

CHOOSE WHAT TO KEEP

And then you're going to choose, you know what? My child hasn't played with Barbies in two years, so I'm going to go ahead and let the Barbies go. Or maybe I'm going to hold on to this one because she's my favorite. I'm going to let everything else go. And so really making space for your children's new interests and the new things that they're into and that they want to be doing.

DONATE THE REST

I always recommend donating toys. So we have a really wonderful charity here that is called the Repeat Boutique. All of the funds that are raised or all the money that is earned through this kind of thrift store that we have here in Memphis, go to the Junior League of Memphis.

But you might have a church yard sale. That's a wonderful charity. So yes, why don't you schedule your toy edit right before that and then take all those toys and then you've got something to contribute. Another time that I love doing this is right before a big holiday like Christmas. Christmas for us is probably our biggest influx.

RESEARCH SHOWS

And we'll get into scheduling your things. But first I want to ask you a question. How many toys do you think your child plays with? Okay, so believe it or not, the average American child plays with at the most 20 of their toys. Do you believe that? I bet as you kind of think about it, you're like, oh, yeah, I could name probably on two hands, my child's favorite toys. And that is true of all children. So it's such a cool stat, I think, to have kind of in your mind as you're organizing is, you know what, my child only really needs about 20 toys.

And so this is not made up. This is from a toy company named Premium Joy. And toy companies are always doing all kinds of research on kids and toys and how they interact with toys, how long they play with toys. It helps them know how much to make or to create. And it can help us, as parents know how much to have in our home and how much to buy.

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AN AMAZING AMOUNT

So a 2021 study by Premium Joy found that the average child has 71 toys. And that same study found that 80% of kids, so not all kids, but 80% play with 20 or fewer. And the actual number was really five to ten toys. So if you think about your child, see if you can count right now what are their top five toys? Yes. It's pretty cool, isn't it?

Some more interesting stats when it comes to toy collections. The average family spends $571 on toys each year. And not only that, but that same study found that the average American child receives $6,500 in toys before their teenage years. So that is $6,500 per child by the age of twelve in America. That's pretty wild, right?

So if we want to save ourselves maybe a little bit of money, maybe a little bit of time, and maybe a little bit of space, let's just practice being a bit more intentional and purposeful with our children's toy collections.

STEP TWO: ORGANIZE

So that brings us into purposefully organizing our children's toy collections. So one thing that I definitely recommend is opting for open ended toys versus closed ended toys. So open ended toys are what you see right here. If you are familiar with young Walden Friedman, that is a great company out of Houston, Texas, that puts together these really cool sensory kits. A sensory kit, even though it has a theme, it might be unicorns, it might be beach, it might be trucks - I don't think there's anything that Julie Friedman has not thought of.

OPEN-ENDED TOYS

But those toys can be played within any possible way, and your child can mix the toys together. They come with all these cool pipe cleaners. It's just such a wonderful open ended toy. Other examples of open ended toys are Magna-Tiles, Legos, if you're familiar with the Tegu blocks. Oh, actually just happen to have some right here.

So there are so many different kinds of toys that are open ended that your child can play with in any kind of way. And not only that, but they're great for multiple ages. And for genders. So you're not having a collection of toys for your four year old daughter and then another one for your six year old son and then another one for your baby. You've kind of got these toys that are serving multiple demographics of children within your home.

And then an example of a closed toy. You see the airplane here, there's really only so much that you can do with a closed toy. So examples of closed toys are a Hot Wheels track. You can't really do much else with a Hot Wheels track other than build it in a certain configuration and let your truck go. So those are kind of examples of open ended versus closed ended.

And just a reminder, your open ended toys are going to serve your children longer because they're interesting to all different ages. And whether you have boys or girls, all kids, you don't have to have separate toy collections for each child. Everybody loves open ended toys, including adults by the way.

CREATIVE STORAGE SOLUTIONS

So next up we are going to look at having creative storage solutions in your playroom.

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So we are going to think about using your vertical space. So a lot of us have small playrooms. The playroom in my home is only about 100 square feet. It's teeny tiny. I can't really fit a whole lot of toys in there.

VERTICAL SPACE

And so what we've done is to really utilize the wall space. So we've got magnetic boards, we've got chalkboards, we've got tiny little shelves that can just hold all different kinds of things. I love Ikea. We have tons of the little Sunnersta rails and all kinds of different ways to store different toys in different ways.

WALL STORAGE

Another thing that you can look at is kind of wall storage. So this acrylic wall pocket, is what that's called, and that's from West Elm. Those are one of my new favorite ways to just add a little bit of extra storage into a playroom. I love putting things in there that are neutral. For example wooden blocks or other just really cute little toys that are not going to take up too much visual space.

ZIPPER POUCHES

And then another thing that I love using in playrooms, and I don't think there is a professional organizer out there that doesn't use these, is these little zipper pouches. Those are just from Amazon. They come in all different sizes and they are wonderful for organizing tiny collections of toys or collections of tiny toys. So I'm thinking things like Shopkins puzzles, little game pieces.

Those are great ways to kind of keep all of your toys and small pieces together and to also make sure that your child only gets out one at a time. So what I like to do is to put these up high and have my child ask for maybe a puzzle or a game and to know that I'm giving them that one puzzle or that one game and that they're not going to get out five puzzles and mix up all the puzzle pieces. And then that all has to be organized by somebody which is me, or risk being thrown away by somebody who doesn't want to organize, which is my husband.

PROMOTING GOOD TOY OPTIONS

And then another thing that I love to recommend for families is to create a wish list or kind of a toy guide. And I think it's important to do this in a tactful, mindful way, because of course, your grandparents or your child's grandparents or aunts or uncles or neighbors are being so kind by sending gifts and giving all these great toys. But what they kind of don't really intend to do, but kind of ends up happening, is that now we have all these extra things that we weren't necessarily wanting or expecting coming into our home, and then we have to be the ones to organize them.

And so I love just kind of giving grandparents an idea of what might be a good gift. And I love recommending, like, how about a zoo membership or how about a children's museum membership, things that are not really going to take up any space, but rather give you and your family experiences. And then that creates maybe quality time for the grandparents, too, because they can come to the zoo with you or they can come to the children's museum with you.

Another thing that I like to just have families think of to bring up to their grandparents are maybe just let them know your favorite toy collections. If your

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child is really big into Magna-Tiles or Legos, let them buy more Magna-Tiles or more Legos. Or if your child has a doll house, let them buy a furniture set for the doll house or some extra dolls for the doll house. We don't have to be constantly giving kids new kinds of toys. Sometimes if there is a toy that a child likes, one of their top five, let's just build out that collection so that they have a really robust collection of this one toy that we already know that they enjoy.

And then the last thing that I love for recommending for grandparents is maybe for them to all go in together and get a big outdoor toy. Like maybe you've been wanting a play set or maybe you have a play set and you'd like to replace the monkey bars or the swings. Those are all great things that grandparents can do that don't really take up too much space in your home.

SHARE YOUR REASONING

And then it's also important, I think, when you're having this conversation, to share your reasoning with them, to let them know, hey, I know Christmas is coming up. We were so thankful for the Hot Wheels track that you gave us last year. Our kids have loved playing with that blah, blah, blah. We have such a limited amount of space this year that we would really appreciate maybe being mindful of, I don't know, we would rather have experiences versus things.

Or my child is really into Magna-Tiles this year, and there's this new Arctic set that they would love. Could you maybe think about doing that or the jungle theme to go with this collection they already have? You know your family the best. And maybe finding just tactful ways to have those conversations so that they're not constantly looking for something they think that your child might like and maybe adding too much stress into your life as well.

STEP THREE: MAINTAIN

And then finally, once we've got a really nice organized space, the most important thing is to maintain it, right? So we know that we can go out and buy all the beautiful containers that we want, and we can put all of our things in there and color code them and make it look beautiful. But then a week later, stuff's all over the place again. It doesn't look so pretty anymore.

And so what's really important is to create systems and processes that are going to help you continue to keep your space organized. And so something I love about toys is that they're pretty predictable. You're going to have some influxes around your children's birthdays, if you celebrate birthdays, and around Christmas, if you celebrate Christmas, if you celebrate something different or children bring toys in for a different reason.

KNOW YOUR INFLUXES

Kind of start to pay attention. Okay, when are the times that we're bringing in a lot of toys? Is it during the summer when we're kind of all together and I'm looking for ways to entertain them? Do I kind of buy my child more toys? Or is it around fall maybe? We get a big visit from our grandparents in the fall and they bring a lot of gifts. So kind of just having in your mind, you don't have to actually create a graph, but just kind of having it in your mind, okay, when do most of our toys come into our home?

TOY EDITS

And then give yourself some little checkpoints to do toy organizations and toy edits. And so I recommend doing one

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big toy edit per year. I do mine right before Christmas. And that's when you're going to donate your outgrown or over worn toys, the ones that look a little dingy and maybe your kids don't really want to play with them anymore.
Or if you have something that's in good shape and your child's just outgrown it, maybe put it in a bin and save it for their younger siblings when they get old enough. I also recommend doing just a couple of small toy edits. I like doing the breaks. So like fall break and spring break, those are the time that I definitely love to go through and toss all the party trinkets. I go for broken crayons and replace art supplies because again, children want to use items that are beautiful, and if their art supplies are a little used up and dingy looking, they're not going to be wanting to use those anyway.

So it's always a good practice to just go through, throw away your old art supplies, refresh the dried out markers, refresh your broken crayons, maybe replace any books that have ripped pages if it's a favorite, replace any games that are missing all the pieces and just kind of keep your child's play space really invigorating.

QUICK SWEEPS

And then the other nine months, you're just going to do a little quick sweep. So again, those party trinkets, you want to birthday parties probably every single month. Plus you've got the goodie bags from Christmas or Easter or Halloween or whatever your child is bringing in gifts for. Get rid of the dried up playdoh, the broken crayons, all just that little stuff that slowly adds up over time.

And so, in summary, putting this all together to create a purposeful and organized space, keeping in mind what we talked about earlier. Most children have a collection of about 71 toys and they only play with about five to ten. I was really conservative with this graph. I put 70 in that they would play with 20.
But even then, look at all those extra toys that are taking up space in your home that your child's not really that interested in. Those things can go. Give yourself back that closet space, give yourself back that floor space, and then of course, get creative with your storage and then edit your playroom systematically.

LEARNING MORE

So if you liked this and you'd like to learn a little bit more, I have in addition to the service that I offer, I also just run an Instagram account and I write a blog where I talk about these kinds of things all the time and that's called Organized Charm Playrooms. And my name is Kirstin Horton, and if you would like to learn more or follow along, I would love to have you there.

So thank you so much for your time today and I hope you enjoy the rest of the sessions. Bye.

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25 Tips for Transforming Thrifted Items Into Stylish Home Decor

KRISTEN HOFFMAN • TRANSCRIPT

Hello, everybody. I am so happy that you're here today. Thank you for choosing my video. Today I'm going to be sharing with you guys my tips for transforming thrifted items into stylish home decor. This video has been on my mind for years and I've never made it before, and so I'm so excited to share it with you.

If you guys are not familiar with me, hello. My name is Kristen Hoffman. I am a wife and a mother of three who loves thrifting homemaking and intentional living. So if you guys are here, obviously you care about keeping your home, organizing, cleaning, all of that good stuff.

TIPS FOR THRIFTING A HOSPITABLE HOME

But you guys, we don't just want a clean or an organized home. We want hearts of hospitality. We want a warm and inviting place for our friends and our family members to come home to. So the tips that I'm going to share with you guys are going to help you create that environment of, like, home. You know that feeling that you get when you walk into somebody's house and you're like, oh, I wish I could live here?

This video is going to help you create that cozy and curated look. Kind of look like you have expensive tastes, but actually saving you thousands of dollars. And how do you do this? Using thrifted goods.

1. BUY INTENTIONALLY

So organization is great. Without it, our lives would feel chaotic. And also minimalism is wonderful and can really help clear your mind. William Morris said to have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be beautiful or believe to be useful. Today we're actually going to focus on the things that you do buy and making sure that they're intentional and beautiful.

In order to have that warm feeling in your house, it's necessary to have textures, layers, and quality materials. So hear me out. These things are not that accessible for your average family. Honestly, high quality materials aren't even that easy to come by these days. So many fabrics now are just made out of random plastics and polyester.

But when you thrift, you can find items that were produced in the past when those quality materials were a lot more available. Many of those things are made from real raw materials and are made to last.

Thrifting allows you to find really high quality pieces at such low prices. You can bring in luxury pieces without that strain on your bank account and without those uncomfortable conversations with your partner about how much you spent today. So it may take a little bit longer than just going to the store and buying everything you need, but I promise you guys, it will be worth it.

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2. UTILIZE PINTEREST

So how do you even get started with this? I always recommend that you start with a Pinterest board. Get on there, look through everything you like, pin everything. And then when you go to your home board, look for items that you see repeated, whether it's a texture or a color or a fabric. Do you like a more minimal look or do you like a more layered look? This will give you a great idea of what to look out for at the thrift store.

3. BRING A LIST

Also bring a list. Do not get distracted by buying every single tchotchke that you see because that can be tempting and you will wind up hoarding a ton of items. Trust me, I know from experience.

Only buy items that you actually need or that bring value to your life. Buying these items from the thrift store, it'll help you save money, but it'll also keep you from buying these mass-produced, cheaply made items from the big box stores. You guys, I will tell you, it does take patience, but it will absolutely pay off in the end.

4. CHECK EVERY SECTION

So when you get to the thrift store, make sure you check every section. You never know when you might see a shovel that you needed for that garden project that you're working on. And paying $2.99 for it is absolutely better than paying like, I don't know what, $24.99 for it at Home Depot.

5. REPLACE CHEAP ITEMS WITH QUALITY

So thrifting also presents us the opportunity to be able to replace the cheaply made or plastic items that we got maybe when we were just first getting started after college or just married, and replace them with really great quality items made of good materials that will last a lifetime.

6. ANTIQUES AREN'T JUST FOR GRANNY

And y'all, antiques are not just for your granny anymore. So disclaimer if you guys have not figured it out already. I am a huge proponent of decorating with antique and vintage items. Without a little bit of history, mystery and intrigue, it just starts to make your house feel like it's cold or like it's lacking character.

And also whenever you wind up buying like a bunch of plastic bins and whatnot, it comes off feeling a little bit synthetic. And I'm just going to say it, antiques are better. Not only are they aesthetically pleasing, but they are designed with materials that are made to stand the test of time.

They're great too, because especially like, the older the antique, the more purposeful it was. People in generations before us generally didn't have money to just buy home decor. So everything that they brought into their home needed to be purposeful, useful and beautiful because it would probably be passed down generation after generation. Also, most are lacking all of the toxins and synthetic materials that are harmful to our bodies and the planet.

7. THRIFTING BENEFITS THE COMMUNITY

Also, when you thrift, it benefits your local community. When you buy an item from either like an antique store, a thrift store, or

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even Facebook Marketplace, you know that your money is staying in the community. And if it's not going to an individual person who's selling it, then it's most likely going to some type of charitable organization. All of these are better than supporting global corporations.

8. THRIFTING BENEFITS THE ENVIRONMENT

It also benefits the environment. An obscene percentage of items that you donate to the thrift store don't even make it into the thrift store. Most go immediately to something called, like, Goodwill Bins. They're out for maybe a couple of hours, and then they go immediately into the landfills. When you shop at thrift stores, it makes it so that they have more room to be able to accept donations. That way, perfectly good items are able to be used again or given new life, and less waste goes into our landfills.

I know that you can find some really pretty stuff at, like, Home Goods or Target, but purchasing from these big box stores, it drains our resources. It creates carbon emissions, it uses tons of water and energy, and it also creates chemical waste. So the less that we buy from these companies, the less they'll feel obligated to produce. So I just need to remind you that you make an impact on this.

HOW DO I START?

Okay, so now that I've gotten off of my thrifting soapbox, you're probably wondering, how do I even get started? What do I even look for at the thrift store? It can be so overwhelming. Well, these are the types of questions that I answer over on my channel, Kristen Hoffman. On my channel, you can see me talking about thrifting, homemaking and intentional living.

I have a passion for frugal living, nostalgia, and preserving antique and vintage pieces. I believe that there's so much that we have to learn from the traditions of the past, and I love to incorporate these things into, like, my motherhood and the keeping up my home.

I have a heart for hospitality and I love to laugh. If you guys think you'd like this kind of content, please consider subscribing. We have a great time over on my channel, and I know that you would not regret following along. My channel actually took off when I revealed that my husband and I had been living on the poverty line for years.

During this time, we bought our 123 year old farmhouse and we furnished it with all kinds of lovely vintage antiques. I believe that it doesn't take a whole lot of money in order to create a beautiful and inviting home. So many people, when they go to the thrift store, they feel so overwhelmed. It's just racks and racks of single items.

People are afraid that thrift stores are going to be old and junky and cluttered, but that's actually not the case. A lot of times, I'm going to take away all of the pressure of going through each and every item and just tell you to look out for specific things.

9. LOOK FOR MATERIALS

Let me tell you my secret. I do not feel overwhelmed at the thrift store because I don't look at each individual item. I look for materials, and I work my way forward from there. So what kind of materials do I look for?

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10. DITCH THE PLASTIC

I'm going to tell you the main one that I do not look for, and that is plastic. Okay, it's 2023. Y'all should know by now that you should not be bringing more plastic into your life. We all know the toxic properties of this material, and let's be honest, it always looks cheap. If you're a more traditional person, think about a historic home that you've visited or like, a lodge. If you're a more modern person, think about, like a high end resort or a spa.

Do you see these people using plastic in their design? They don't. And that's an intentional design decision. I'm not saying that we have never used plastic in the past, or even that we don't have any in our house right now, but we are making an intentional decision to try to get rid of it.

11. START WITH NEUTRALS

The first thing to look for with your eyes is neutrals. To give you a better idea, I'm not just talking about, like, gray and beige and white and black. I'm talking about looking for colors that are found in nature. If you look at our home, it's actually not lacking in color at all, but you will not find any bold or bright colors. If you're looking to create that cozy and peaceful look, stick to neutrals.

If you do love bright colors, I would recommend bringing in a bouquet of flowers or picking out a really beautiful, colorful painting or even a couple of, like, fun pillow covers. A little bit of color goes a long way, and too much can be overwhelming. But I myself would recommend sticking with neutral colors for about 95% of your home décor to create that nice, cozy feeling. Okay?

12. CHOOSE NATURAL FABRICS

And when it comes to fabrics, do everything you can to buy natural fabrics. I'm talking like cotton, linen, wool. Not only are these better for your skin, they should last you longer, and they will disintegrate in the earth when their time comes, and you won't find them in a landfill in a thousand years.

And even if you don't care about the environment, even if you don't care about your health, these fabrics just look better. I have a special affinity for linen. You can see I have it in this quilt that I found at the Goodwill Bins, and I also love wearing linen tops. There's all kinds of properties about it that I could get into, but something about the loose weave just gives it that super high end look, whether it's on your body or in your home.

Having natural fabric on your bedding is especially important. Everybody loves coming into 100% cotton or linen sheets, and nobody likes sliding into some microfiber sheets, especially if the comforter is filled with a plastic material. They don't have any weight, and let's be honest, they catch on to every single hang nail you've ever had.

13. SEARCH OUT REAL WOOD

Next is wood. I'm not going to go too deep into this. All I can say is watch out for faux wood. Even a painted wood piece is better than a faux wood piece. Honestly, I try to stay away from anything that was made even before the 1980s. Keep in mind that everything can be stripped, sanded, and restained, but a wood piece is going to last you much longer than a particle board piece.

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14. LOOK FOR AUTHENTIC METALS

All right, when it comes to metals, three words: pick it up. Check the weight of that thing. Many metals that you see in the store today are actually simulations of actual real quality metals. Things like brass, silver, stainless steel, cast iron, or even pewter. Generally, the heavier the pieces, the better quality it is.

Also, keep your eyes out for patina and oxidation things like tarnished, silver or unpolished brass. This might seem counterintuitive, but these things actually bring character into your home.

15. FIND HANDMADE OR ANTIQUE CERAMICS

Even if you have a more modern design, a cozy home requires ceramics. Look for ceramics with cracks, crazing, and staining to give it character. These characteristics prove the item's durability, and they prove that it's actually a really good investment. Plus, it adds to the artistry. Handmade pottery pieces are actually one of the most unique and special items that you can bring into your home. Look for quality pieces that are substantial and heavy, and bonus points if you can find an original stamp or a signature.

16. LOCATE UNIQUE AND COLORED GLASS

When it comes to glass, I have seen people do amazing things, but I myself am not a huge collector. I usually use it to replace items such as, like baby bottles or storage containers. So in our pantry, I actually have all of our dry goods stored in these.

This is an Atlas Mason Jar The glass I do buy is usually vintage with, like, a unique pattern or color. I love to use these Mason jars for storing dry goods and then also to gift people things, whether it's like, soup that we made or flowers from our garden. A favorite of mine is actually amber glass. I use this for all of our spray bottles, our pump bottles, as well as, like, essential oils and all that good stuff.

17. REMEMBER EVERYTHING IS BETTER IN BASKETS

As nice as it is to keep everything in clear label plastic bins, and don't get me wrong, we do have those in our basement with all of our kids' clothes in them. Things just look better in the main level of your house if they're stored in baskets. They give your house, like, that handmade feel, and it doesn't feel like, so cold or utilitarian. I'm not saying that handmade baskets are an essential in every home, but they are definitely a necessity in ours. And I'm not exaggerating when I say we have at least 50 baskets in our house. My goodness, y'all, I'm having such luck. I just found this giant market basket for $10. Absolutely huge and beautiful. Like, literally my dream market basket.

18. IDENTIFY AUTHENTIC LEATHER

Next is leather. Honestly, my belts were the easiest thing to show you guys. But a lot of items these days are made with these faux leathers that crack... whether it's your purses...and you guys, I was able to find both of these belts at this ReStore. And I know that this isn't home decor, but these things will last me a lifetime. They're not going to be cracking. They're made with real brass. This is made with what? I'm guessing,

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I don't know. What do you think that is? Pewter? I'm not sure. Having that real leather will give your ensemble a truly high end look. And if you have something like this, then it just becomes a conversation piece.

19. LOOK FOR FLOOR LIGHTING

It's also important to look for lighting. Lighting completely changes the mood of your home. For all of you guys who have chosen to install that overhead can lighting, I hate to break it to you, but it is not going to be contributing to the coziness of your home. I know, I know. I'm going to get the hate for this.

We may use overhead lighting for, like, a game night or something, but we almost exclusively use floor lighting, meaning, like, table lamps or floor lamps for our lamps. I keep my eye out for lamps made of brass, wood, or stoneware, but I also have an affinity for blue and white lamps just for that, like, pop of color. Okay.

20. OPT FOR BLUE AND WHITE

And from there, I'm going to go into blue and white, and I'll grab this guy right here. Using blue and white pieces is actually one of my favorite ways to incorporate color into a neutral palette. There's all kinds of styles from Japanese to English to French. I actually found this at the thrift store for $5.99. Some of my YouTube viewers told me that it's worth over $3,000.

I have a little Japanese piece here that you can see has that beautiful crazing on it. My favorite ones are the ones that depict, like, European or American landscapes just because it's so nostalgic for me, but I love these. These are English iron stone. I also think that it's really important to have a cute tea set that you love or some handmade coffee mugs. It is my favorite thing to just sit out on our front porch in the rocking chairs and sip on some good coffee with my friends and family.

21. DISCOVER VINTAGE PRINTS AND ORIGINAL ARTWORK

Okay, so art. I know that art is subjective, but if I could recommend anything, I would recommend bringing art pieces in your home that are calming. Using these soft or rich colors can really enhance the feeling of your home. I love a good landscape, but I also don't mind a portrait or a still life. And also, buying your artwork from the thrift store can free up your budget so that you are able to purchase from a local artist if you're ever interested.

22. BUY ALL THE BOOKS

Okay, so I got to admit that Amazon is the best place to buy books, let's be honest. But if you have a more, like, modern look, coffee table books can be really great for a living room. The thrift stores have tons of coffee table books, and usually if you take off the outer plastic or paper cover, the insides will have, like, these linen [spines].

If you are more of a traditional historic look, you can find beautiful antique books either at the thrift store or I find all of mine at the Goodwill bins. There are three for a dollar there. These you can use for decor in themselves. As you guys can see, I've got, like, history of the church and Bible, whatnot over here. Or you can use them in a vignette or in a hutch and stack them to create height for other pieces.

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23. PICK YOUR PLANTS

Plants. They're great. Plants are essential for giving a room that organic feel, like that feeling of life. If you ever feel like a room is just lacking something, throw a plant in there, and it'll give it an instant look of vitality. Although some of our thrift stores in town do sell plants, a lot of them don't. Honestly, I know that you can't generally find plants at thrift stores, so if you can buy your plants off of Facebook Marketplace or look up a local plant rescue in your town.

24. SELECT THOSE CONVERSATION PIECES

And lastly, our unique or one-of-a-kind pieces. You want to create a home that holds stories, and everybody loves the conversation piece. I have these special Indian lamps that I found. I spent a lot of time working with girls rescued out of human trafficking in India when I was in college, and I love that. These remind me of that season of my life.

And also when my husband's grandfather passed, he gave us this antique video recorder, which is special to both of us, because my husband actually went to school for video production, and I make YouTube videos, so it's just very near and dear to our hearts.

So whether it's a large statement piece or just something that's particularly unique, find something that screams "you" that wouldn't be found in anybody else's house. But be sure to look out for high levels of craftsmanship or artistry.

IN CONCLUSION

All right, y'all, this list is not comprehensive, all right? And you don't have to do any of these things to have a home full of warmth and laughter. But these types of pieces are what I feel like makes our house feel like home. We are doing everything we can to reduce our carbon footprint and take care of this land that God has blessed us with.

We also want to watch over our bodies and everything that they come in contact with. And I hope that we can learn from these pieces from the past and not discard them so that we can make, like, beauty from ashes in a sense, and mimic the goodness of our creator by caring for his creation.

So I want to end this with Hebrews 13:2. In it, it says, do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing so, some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it. So I just encourage you all to invite your friends and family into your home. Whether or not you have any of this stuff, have a meal and just show people God's goodness.

All right, everybody. Well, we will see you guys next time over at my channel, Kristen Hoffman. Thanks for being here. Bye.

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Spending Time With God in Busy Seasons

KRYSTAL TITILOPE • TRANSCRIPT

Hi ladies. So I want to share with you ladies different ways that you can spend time with God and during those busy seasons of your life. Many of us, we have children, and some of us are married, and we have demanding jobs or our businesses, they're growing. And so regardless if you're a mom or you're a busy working woman, I like to think that no matter what, God even knew that we would have and endure those busy seasons.

BUSY TIMES

So what can we do during those busy seasons? How can we keep him first and keep him incorporated throughout our life? Well, I'm going to share with you some practical ways and give you guys some tips on how you can keep God during those busy seasons in your life, okay? And I will say this, I am a mother of two energetic little babies, okay? I'm a wife, I'm a student, I'm a life coach, I mentor, I do a lot of different things. I run a business as well and so a lot of things.

But how do I keep God, how do I spend time with God during those busy seasons in my life? Especially running after two little kids, right?

1. LISTEN TO THE BIBLE

And number one I like to do is listen to the Bible audibly okay? I like to listen to it in audio. We can listen to it in our car, we can listen to it with our air pods. We could put it on while we're in a shower and have a praise break in. There a worship session in there. There's numerous of ways that you can listen to the Bible. And soak in God's word audibly.

A lot of times what we do is we think that we just have to go into our secret place all of the time. And sometimes I found myself that my secret place may be in my office, my secret place may be in my car, or my secret place may be in my closet. But during those seasons, I have to kind of pivot where I am. But the heart, it never changes. And so you can listen to it audibly, okay?

2. GET RID OF DISTRACTIONS

Number two, you can also get rid of distractions. So I find myself sometimes as a mom, especially as a mom and just being busy, having to try to figure out how can I spend time with you, God? And I'm busy right now with these babies. And sometimes it takes a little sacrifice y'all. So what we have to do is get up a little early sometimes or stay up a little bit later and just spend time with him, open up a devotional, open up our Bibles and get a little time with him through that way as well.

Another way is, again, I'm going to mention this is the shower. You can turn on your speaker or just turn on your phone up as loud as you can and just listen to the Bible or listen to a sermon or listen to a devotional through the Bible app, and those are really great ways to spend time with him in the shower.

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But not only that, you can also pray in the shower. You don't have to just pray in your closet or in your car even. But you can also pray in the shower, and you don't have to feel ashamed about it. You can pray in the shower.

3. PRAYER JOURNAL

The next thing is getting a prayer journal. If you don't know or haven't followed me over on YouTube, Faith with Krystal, I talk a lot about faith planning, and I use it as a strategic way to help women be able to debunk the distractions and get rid of the distractions and all of those things that may come up. As a mom, one of the things that I find myself kind of battling with is thinking about, oh, I got to get the kids lunch. Oh, I need to take Naomi to the doctor. But what I do is use my faith planner as a way to tell myself what I'm going to do in that time.

PLAN FOR DEVOTION

So what I like to do is get a happy faith planner. And what I like to do in those day to day sections, I like to put devotional prayer and focus on those things instead of just getting into my quiet time and just trying to scramble. And then I start thinking about all the different things, right? I focus on two to three things that I want to do within that time. All right?

And then the next thing is, during this quiet time, while I'm in my prayer journal or my faith planner, I like to journal. Sometimes I write out my prayers, sometimes certain things that I may be struggling with in that season. And it could be keeping God first when it comes to getting up on time, getting up on time, I like to pray out those different things and seek God on those different things. All right?

4. USE YOUR TIME WISELY

And then the next thing is use your time wisely. Sometimes we scroll, scroll, scroll for hours, and we don't realize that we can actually use our very phones as tools to spend time with God during those busy seasons of our life. And one of the things that I like to do is use the Bible app. They have tons of devotionals, tons of different resources on the Bible app on your phone, especially if you have an iPhone. Super easy to access, in my opinion. All you got to do is just go to the app and it's a YouVersion app. And literally they have Bible plans. You can also build a community in there.

There's a lot of great tools. So you can also use your phone as a tool to read your Bible, to even pray in there, to journal in there instead of scrolling and spending a lot of time on social media.

THINGS TO REMEMBER

And so I hope that these tips was helpful to you ladies, and I hope that you find yourself in this season, no matter what season that you're in, whether you're a busy mom, a busy wife, or you're just a busy business owner, no matter what, we can always find time with God. And I do want to say this before I leave my session.

Instead of being hard on yourself about that, the season that you're in, God knew that you were going to be busy. He knows the season that you're in. And so just finding different ways even if you're going for a walk and you're praying, finding different ways to just speak to them, reading your word. Even if you're at the coffee shop or you're grabbing a coffee or before maybe you want to walk into your home, just grabbing your phone instead of scrolling, maybe go to that Bible app and

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open it up and get a scripture in or say a prayer for you or for someone else.

Those are ways, you ladies, that you can keep God into your life, no matter what season that you're in. One of the things that I do want to say is getting that faith planner will definitely hold you accountable. It's fun. You can schedule your time. There's nothing wrong with scheduling your time. I like to actually schedule my time in the morning, and then at night, if I miss my morning, I like to make sure that I put an alarm on my phone to schedule that time to read my Bible at night.

NOT JUST ONE WAY

And so I hope that these were helpful to you ladies. I hope that you're encouraged. But just know that no matter what season that you're in right now, there's numerous and numerous of ways that you can spend time with God. There's just no one correct way or one perfect way. Just find a way that you can do it, even if it's in your car or if it looks like you're doing it on your break at your job, just get that time in, no matter what.

I love you guys and I hope you guys enjoyed my session. And always you can always find me over on YouTube at Faith with Krystal or you can type in my name, Krystal Titilope, and I'll see you ladies soon.

Bye.

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How To Create & Maintain Daily Routines For A Less Stressed Lifestyle

LELA BURRIS • TRANSCRIPT

Hello. I hope you are having the best time at Get Organized HQ. My name is Lela, if you don't know me. And I used to be a professional organizer and I gave all that up and now I'm a full time blogger and content creator and my goal is to help as many people as possible get their homes and lives organized-ish.

NOT PERFECT

Now what that means is basically we are throwing out the entire higher stigma of everything has to be perfect in order to be organized. And we are really just focusing on the systems and the routines and the habits that help us stay organized and keep us from getting stressed out throughout the week.

So today that's exactly what I want to talk with you about. We are going to be talking all about routines. Now, your daily routines are basically what helps you get through the day without feeling like you're about to lose your mind.

WHY ROUTINES ARE HELPFUL

I'm sure you already know what a routine is and you probably already have some that you just don't even realize. But let's go over the reasons why a daily routine is actually helpful for you.

REDUCE STRESS

First of all, daily routines are going to help you reduce your stress throughout the day and make you feel a little bit more on track, which we could all use a little more of, right?

CONTROL AND BALANCE

Routines also give you a sense of control and balance. There are so many things that happen in our day that we cannot control. Like all the things that just hit you while you're at work and then something happens with your kids and your refrigerator goes out and all of a sudden your dinner you were planning on cooking isn't going to work out. So just having those routines in mind help you feel a little more balanced amongst all the chaos that you cannot control.

REINFORCE BOUNDARIES

And last, your daily routines help you reinforce your boundaries. And if you don't have boundaries yet, you will. By the time this is over, a lot of us end up just like trying to please everyone and trying to make sure everyone around us has everything they need before we focus on anything for ourselves. But these daily routines are going to help you learn how to balance all that. So you are still helping everyone around, but you're also having a little bit of time for yourself so you don't completely lose your mind by Wednesday and go off on everyone around you.

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FOUR MAIN TYPES OF ROUTINES

So today we're going to talk about the four main types of routines and how to put those together. Now these are going to vary based on your life and your family and your job and everything that can play into how you spend your week. But these four main types are going to work for everyone and I'm going to teach you how to adapt to them based on what you need.

We have a morning routine, an evening routine, a first of the week routine and a first of the month routine. Now if you watch YouTube, you've probably seen these as weekly resets and monthly resets and it's essentially the same thing except the ones on YouTube are pretty fancy and crazy. And we're not going to get into all that today. We're just going to stick with the easy stuff that makes your day and week a little more manageable.

MORNING ROUTINE

We're going to kick this off with the morning routine because in my opinion, this is the very most important routine. So if all this starts to feel a little overwhelming and you don't want to even try to implement all four of these, the morning routine is where you should start. That morning routine can completely make or break your day.

Like if you don't have a good morning, the rest of your day is just over. You might as well just go back to bed. So having this morning routine allows you to have a little bit of control, little bit of balance, and just kind of know what to expect when you first wake up.

Now you can put all kinds of different things in your morning routine, but there's three main elements that are the most important. Those are you time, planning time, and preparation time. Okay?

YOU TIME

I know you hear you time and you're like, I don't have time for that. I wake up as early as I possibly can. I got to get the kids ready, I got to get ready for work, I got to deal with traffic, I don't have time for myself. But I promise you do and you should. Whether it's just taking a few minutes and having some coffee or some tea out on the porch if the weather's nice, or even if it's just like five minutes of stretching or meditation or gratitude or maybe just taking a few minutes and looking at a magazine or scrolling for a recipe on Pinterest or whatever it is that you think is fun.

Just taking a little bit of time in the morning to relax your brain and just have a little bit of time to yourself, no one else around. Even if you have to hide in the bathroom, there is a way to make it happen, okay?

But you time does not include social media or the news or checking your email because all of these things can throw stuff at you that you were not expecting and that can completely ruin your day. Whether it's bad news or a stressful email or someone needing something right now, but they actually don't need it right now. All those things can ruin your entire day, make you feel stressed before you even get started.

So I highly recommend keeping all of these out of your morning routine. There is a time and place for all of these but the early morning is not it.

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PLANNING TIME

The next part of your morning routine is the planning phase. Now I'm not saying to plan out every single part of your day, hour by hour, in an expensive planner. You can, but you don't have to do that. Planning basically gives you clarity on what you need to focus on for the day and keeps you from getting distracted, you know, that oh, a butterfly syndrome. That is real and this helps you stay focused.

Now, the most important part of the planning phase is to come up with your top three priorities. I know you've heard this before. You probably think that it's just something everyone says, but everyone says it for a reason.

TOP THREE PRIORITIES

Coming up with your top three priorities for the day keeps you focused without being overwhelmed. I'm sure you've made a to do list before that had like 100 things on it and you immediately look at that to do list. You have no idea where to start. You feel stressed out and so you don't do any of it. And then you go to bed feeling like a failure because you did nothing throughout the day, but you actually did.

So when you take time to map out your top three priorities for the day, along with any appointments you have or certain specific times that you need to pick up your kids from school, having all of these priorities laid out is going to keep you from getting distracted and working on things that don't matter or things that can be done later. Plus, it's really easy to just do those three things.

So if you knock out all three things early in the day and you still have time, you can absolutely go back to a list that you have somewhere on your phone of other things that you need to work on. But by only having three priorities for the day, you know you're going to go to bed feeling productive and you're going to have a little more time in the day for you to actually do things that you enjoy.

Now, when it comes to planning your day, you can use a planner or your notes app or even a sticky note and just map out those top three priorities along with anything else that you need to remember for the day. And just having it visually available is going to be really helpful to keep you on track.

LOOKING AHEAD

A few more planning ideas are to check the weather so you'll know what to wear or what kind of activities your kids should do after school or to decide if you're going to make dinner. If you have a fully packed schedule and you were planning on cooking dinner, it's time to be realistic with yourself and realize that you're probably not going to have time for all that or you're probably going to be too tired.

And so you can just go ahead, take that stress out of your head, and just know that today is going to be a takeout night. You can also plan out your after dinner activities whether you're going to play games or go for a walk or if everybody is going to have their own little bit of quiet time away from each other, which is super healthy.

Don't feel like you have to have your kids schedule or your family schedule so packed in of just things nonstop. Sometimes just blocking out an hour of free time for everyone to just do what they want is really, really helpful.

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KEEPING IN TOUCH

Another thing you can do when you're planning your day is to think about if there's a friend or a family member that you haven't talked with in a while. We all get kind of caught up in our busy lives and sometimes we forget to check in with the people we care about. And taking this time to just think, I haven't talked to my brother in two weeks, I should probably call him. When you sit down and you actually have the time to scroll through your phone and see when the last time you called your mom was, that's such a great reminder to put it in your schedule to just give her a call on your lunch break.

You can also take this time to plan out whether your car needs gas and where you'll get that, along with whether any bills are due soon and even what your partner's work schedule is, because sometimes their schedule might shift. And my husband used to work swing shift and so he was working three different schedules and there were times where I didn't look at what his work schedule was and I would plan out dinner and then realize as I was cooking that he wasn't even going to be home for like three more hours.

NO RIGHT OR WRONG

There's no right or wrong way to plan your day. It's really just looking at your priorities and everything you have going on in your personal life and trying to figure out what parts of that that you can expect and plan for and know how to map out your day.

Now, like I said before, I have a whole slide just to remind you, planning is not writing out a giant to do list. This is just going to stress you out. You're going to feel even more lost than you did before you even had this list. So try to stick with those three main priorities and then you can always do more if you need to. But just having that list of three is going to keep you from getting stressed out and help you stay on track.

PREPARATION TIME

The third part of your morning routine is preparation. The preparation phase is basically just helping "future you" out. You know that things are going to be crazy when you get home from work. You know that there's going to be unexpected things that pop up. And basically the more that you can prepare for early, the better.

Even if it's just something simple like taking out some of the shelf stable ingredients that you're going to be using to cook dinner and just putting those on the counter. That way they're there for you.

Or if you know you're going to be running your kids home from school, grabbing everything you need for ballet practice, and then heading back out the door, just having that bag packed and maybe even already in the car is going to save you so much time and stress. Really, you're just trying to anticipate anything that could slow you down in the day, and you're just going ahead and putting it all together early.

STAY LOOSE

Now, I do want to caution you not to get too strategic with this because like I said, things are going to come up, things are going to get forgotten, and you don't want to be like drill sergeant strict with all of these routines or even just your preparation. So you want to keep this kind of loosey goosey, but at the same time, be expecting what you'll need help with later on in the day and just go ahead and do it.

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PUTTING IT TOGETHER

Okay, so I know that's a lot, but let's talk about how to take all of that and put it into a morning routine. So the first thing you're going to do is just grab a piece of paper. You can do that right now. Grab a piece of paper and write down all the things you do in the morning and how long it takes.

So you can write down, it takes me 15 minutes to do my makeup, it takes me ten minutes to constantly tell my kid to get out of bed. It takes me five minutes to get to my car because I go to my car and I forget my keys and I have to come back inside and go back out again. Seriously, you want to be as realistic with this time period as you possibly can.

Then you're going to write down all the things that you would like to do in the mornings and how long those are probably going to take too. These are going to be things like the you time, the planning time, the preparation time. If you're not already doing those already, you're probably not going to be able to fit everything on this, like, to do list in. But just having it all on paper as a list to choose from, you can prioritize which ones are going to be able to fit into your schedule now and which ones you might have to work in later.

ADDING AND CUTTING

So when you have both of these lists, you're going to put them together and essentially create your morning routine. Now, while you're doing this, you may need to cut down on some of the things that you do already, or you may need to get up a little earlier in order to fit it all in.

If your morning is already jam packed, I want to encourage you to take a look at this list and see if anything can be pushed to the night before or maybe if you can outsource and get some help on some of these things.

GIVE IT TWO WEEKS

And my last tip for creating a morning routine is to give it two weeks. I know a lot of times we get in our head like, I'm going to get up at 5:00 a.m., and I'm going to get all these things done and I'm going to be so productive and by 8:00 a.m., I'm going to have all these things done.

And then your alarm goes off at 5:00 a.m. one day and you're like, oh, I don't want to get up. And so the entire routine is just thrown out. It takes two weeks to really get into these habits. You might also find that the you time is starting to feel a little useless in the first few days. And that's normal because we're not used to doing things for ourselves in the morning, especially if we have kids and pets and jobs and everything that we're trying to juggle. But I promise you, after a couple of weeks, you really get into the habit of some things and you start to also realize that other things don't take as long or aren't completely necessary.

So if you just hold out for two weeks on trying your initial routine, you'll know how to adjust it and then eventually, over time, you'll have it down pat exactly how you want it.

EVENING ROUTINE

Okay, you knew it was coming after the morning routine. We're talking about the evening routine because you've gone through your entire day, you're tired, you've got a million other things on your mind, and you just want to go to bed. But that evening routine is what is going to help you wind

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down and really be able to check out and go to sleep.

TIDYING UP

The most important thing that works for me personally is straightening up the house before bedtime. Sometime between dinner and bedtime, I go through the house and just pick up anything that's out of place. I'm not doing like a major deep clean around the house. I am just like folding the blankets that are on the couch, moving things around that are on the coffee table and putting them where they go, picking up any toys in the floor, easy things like that.

It takes like ten minutes max just to run through the house and just pick up a few things. And when you wake up in the morning, you don't feel super stressed about, oh no, the house is a mess, I've still got to clean all this up. You kind of have that feeling of something being taken off your plate.

SELF-CARE

Also, some type of self-care is really, really helpful for your evening routine. And you're already like taking off your makeup or taking a shower or putting lotion on your arms or whatever it is that you do at night.

You really want to take just a few minutes to actually wind down in the day and this self-care process is what helps you do that. So a way to elevate taking off your makeup at night would be maybe to turn on your favorite Spotify playlist while you do it, or if you like to drink a glass of milk before bed, maybe instead of standing in the kitchen and just chugging it, you sit down in your favorite chair and you drink the milk slowly and just kind of reflect on your day.

Whatever self-care means to you. Just having that little tiny bit of downtime and that little special moment where no one else is around is going to help you feel a little less stressed at the end of the day.

WRITE IT DOWN

Another thing you can do to save time tomorrow is to list your top three priorities for the next day. Usually you already have on your mind in the evening what you need to be doing the next day. And a lot of times we go to bed and all we're doing is just thinking about I need to do this, I need to work on this tomorrow, I don't need to forget about this. Oh, I just remembered I have an appointment, I hope I don't forget it.

All those things can be written down at night so you can go to bed with a clear head and wake up knowing that everything is already laid out for you.

MEDIA SHUTDOWN

And the last thing is a media shutdown. Because just like in the morning, you never know what you're going to see that might trigger you. So a lot of times you could be completely tired scrolling through social media mindlessly, see just one thing and then all of a sudden you're up for 2 hours thinking about it.

Whether it's a project or something that made you frustrated or anything like that. You just never know what you're going to see online. And so having that media shut down, you see all of this information online about how you shouldn't be looking at blue light screens after a certain amount of time. But there's so much more to it than that.

It's not just the blue light in your eyes and everything else, it's really the fact that you

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can't control what you're going to see and that can affect your brain and your mood and your ability to go to sleep and have a good night's rest.

WHEN DO YOU START?

Your evening routine can start whenever you want to. A lot of people think an evening routine is like your bedtime routine and that's not exactly the case. If we try to cram all of our evening routine into the hour before bed, we are not going to get it done and we are definitely not going to stick with that routine.

So it's really just some time between dinner time and bedtime that you do all of these things. So it doesn't have to be like a one right after the other. And it also helps to align it with your children's schedules and your partner's routines because it's just a lot easier to be able to do it all at once.

YOUR OWN SPACE

This also is going to give you that time to yourself and give your kids and your partner that time to themselves. So if you're all putting together your top three for the next day, everyone is in their own little spaces. And if you're all picking up out of place items in different rooms at the same time, one that takes less time from you because everyone else is working on a different room, but also it kind of gives you that quiet time to just chill out for the day without having everyone around.

KEEP IT CONSISTENT

And it also really helps if you go to bed at the same time every day. I know weekends are hard, but once you kind of get in the groove of going to bed at the same time every single day, you wake up at the same time every day, you sleep better, your mood is better, you know what to expect.

And of course, weekends can kind of flex a little. Like normally I am in bed by 9:00 p.m. And then asleep by ten. And then on weekends we're usually in bed by 10:00 or 10:30. So there is that flex time.

But we kind of have this little routine around the house where we all know that around a certain time we start to get tired. We also know how long it takes us to do our routines and so that helps us be able to go to bed at the same time every night because we have everything done and the routine just kind of triggers our brain that, hey, it's time to go to sleep now.

BOUNDARIES

Now one thing that's really, really important and don't forget this, okay? The main part of an evening routine is having boundaries. A lot of times we go to bed and we feel like there's so much swimming around in our head and we just cannot go to sleep.

TURN OFF WORK

And a lot of times that has to do with work. So some of the things that you can do are to create a work cutoff time where after a certain amount of time, you are no longer thinking about work. You're not worrying about a project you have coming up, you're not worrying about something that you should have said to a coworker and you didn't.

If a work thought pops up in your head, you can quickly write it down in your notes app and then deal with it the next day. But just having that clear, clear time that no more work is happening in your brain, no more work talk is happening, no more work

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emails, no computer opening, none of that, you're going to feel so much more present with your family and yourself and your home and you're going to feel a lot happier at work too.

You should also know what your media triggers are like your social media, or if there's a certain app that every time you open it up, you always feel bad about yourself or even you just get really inspired. Like some people cannot look at Pinterest at night because they get all these ideas on projects they want to do and then they're unable to go to sleep. So knowing what your media triggers are for, just like opening up your brain all over again when it's supposed to be going to sleep, is going to help you know what you should and shouldn't have in your evening.

BRAIN DUMP

Now, if things do come to mind, or if you find yourself in bed and you cannot go to sleep no matter what, because your brain is just like going 100 miles a minute, that's when you can do a brain dump. And really all you do is set a timer on your phone for five minutes, grab a piece of paper and just write down everything.

Write down all the thoughts in your head, all the things you need to do, all the ideas you have, all the things that are bothering you, anything. Dump it out on a piece of paper, it's out of your mind, it's gone now. It's still there. It lives on a piece of paper, but it's not in your head. And you can go to sleep and feel a little less stressed about it.

CLUTTER FREE BEDROOM

And it's also super important to create a clutter free bedroom. So if your bedroom feels chaotic, your brain is going to be chaotic too, and you're going to have a hard time feeling rested in there. Even if you need to take a weekend and just declutter some things in your bedroom, change up some of the decor, decrease what's on the shelves, anything like that.

Whatever you can do to make it feel more like a little resort and less like a piled up space in your house is going to make you feel more relaxed in the evenings.

WEEKLY RESET

Okay, so that is your daily routines. But there are two more types of routines that really help you feel more organized and keep your house cleaner. And those two are a first of the week and a first of the month routine.

A first of the week routine is typically called a weekly reset, and this really helps you get your home and your schedule prepared for the week. It also helps you prevent yourself from forgetting things and allows you to start the week feeling a little more energized.

When you do a weekly reset, you're less likely to procrastinate because you already know everything that needs to be done and you've already done all the maintenance things around the house that take up little chunks of time but add up.

CHOOSE YOUR DAY

Now you can do whatever you want in your weekly reset and you can do it any day you want. It doesn't have to be on the weekend. I like to do mine on Sunday, but you can really do it any day you want. If you want your weekly reset to be on Thursdays because that's your day off, that is the day that's for you.

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RESTOCK

There's five main things that you do in a weekly reset. The first one is to restock something that you use on a daily basis. This is going to be things like adding toilet paper to the bathrooms, or refilling your coffee pods, or restocking the drawer that you make your kids lunches.

DISINFECT

The next is to disinfect something that you touch daily so this can range. You can do the same thing every week or you can do different things. I typically like to do the computer keyboards and the TV remotes. We usually do like light switches and doorknobs when we clean each room in the house. So those aren't part of my weekly reset. I really just go through and disinfect the main electronics that we're touching throughout the week. This can totally be anything you want. It does not have to be electronics. That's just what I do.

DECLUTTER

The next thing is to declutter something that piles up easily. This can be your mail station because that usually gets super piled up after just a few days. It can also be your kids backpack or pet stuff, or your work bag, or that one TV cabinet door that always piles up with all the random things that don't have a home. When you're able to identify that one place in your house that always seems to be cluttered, you can take just a few minutes to straighten it up every week and then it'll never be cluttered again.

SAFETY CHECK

The next thing is to perform some kind of safety check. Whether you're checking your carbon monoxide and smoke detectors, or if you're just doing a walk around the perimeter of your house just to make sure that no trees have fallen or there's no damage, some kind of safety check is a great habit to get into.

PLAN PRIORITIES

And the last thing is to plan your week and identify your priorities. Just like when you're planning your day and you're doing your top three. When you put together your priorities for the entire week, that gives you a list of things to pull from for each day. So if you have a list of all of your priorities that have to be done by the end of the week, you're able to take each one of those and plug it into your calendar so you can see, okay, I already have three main priorities on Monday, but I don't have any for Tuesday.

So what can I pull from my priority list that I can actually work on on this day? Or if you know you have an extra day off work, you're able to add a little extra so you can work on those projects. This priority list keeps you from getting distracted halfway through the week and working on projects that could be done later, while you're pushing back the things that have to be done soon. And then you end up in this crazy procrastination period where you're like scrambling to try to get done all the things that needed to be done and you just kept pushing off.

MONTHLY RESET

A monthly reset is pretty much the same thing, except just a little different. You are prioritizing all the things that you need to do in the month and you're looking at things like birthdays and appointments and events, but on a larger scale.

The monthly reset also helps you maintain

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your home because there's a lot of things that we need to do around our houses that don't have to be done all the time. Like it's not a weekly cleaning schedule type thing, but it is something that if you don't do often, you completely forget about it.

CHECKING MAINTENANCE

Like changing the vents in your HVAC and then all of a sudden you realize it's been like six months and you haven't changed the vent and you open it up and it's just caked on. I can't be the only one that that's happened.

So your monthly reset just really has some of those maintenance things that you need to do every once in a while. And a lot of times it's not even actually doing them, it's really just checking them. But having that list of things just to look over is going to keep them from getting forgotten about.

MINI RESOLUTIONS

And the biggest thing about a monthly reset that really, really helps me the most, and it's helped all of my organizing clients that I've ever had in the past the most too, is treating your monthly reset kind of like a little mini New Year's resolution.

Every year in January, we always get so hyped up to start these new habits or ditch old habits, and then halfway through the year all those are gone, right? But with a monthly reset, this is basically like a New Year's resolution all over again every single month. And a 30 day resolution is way easier to stick with than a twelve month resolution.

So why not treat it like that? You can use this time to set a goal for yourself, a really attainable goal, and just stick with it for that one month. If it works and you want to keep doing it, like if it was some kind of workout goal or a budget goal, you can always carry it over to the next month.

TACKLING PROJECTS

But it also kind of gives you a clear deadline. So if you are wanting to work on a hobby that you never seem to have time to do, and you can decide in your monthly reset that this is the month that you're going to finish that project or you're going to make progress on that project. You have a clear end goal, you have a deadline, and you're able to figure out if it's going to take four hours. That gives you four weeks to work on it for one hour apiece, which is a lot easier to break it down into chunks.

And if you're looking at it from a weekly or a daily standpoint, you're like, I never have time to work on my hobbies. But if you look at it from a monthly standpoint, you realize that I could actually do a little every week and still achieve that versus trying to find one whole day that I can work on this entire project.

TWELVE IDEAS

I put together this list of twelve ideas that you can use to start to build your own monthly reset. Now, you can pick like three to five of these to start with. Make it easy, don't make it too difficult. You can pick a few and then add some of your own, or you can skip this list altogether and just create your own. But if you need the list, it's here. Go ahead and screenshot it. That way you've got it. And you can always make adjustments as you need to.

- Sort & purge mail + papers
- Check smoke detector batteries
- Clean fridge shelves

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- Set * one * goal or intention
- Back up hard drive & clouds
- Declutter entryway or garage
- Organize one drawer/cabinet
- Purge expired makeup
- Delete old phone contacts
- Walk entire property
- Run clean cycle in washer
- Descale coffee maker

CHANGE BY SEASON

One thing I like to do, just to keep my first of the month routine fresh and fun for myself, is to change it up every season. So at the beginning of the season, I shift some of the things that I do in my monthly reset just so it feels a little new. We kind of get bored with our habits and routines, and just adding one new thing or taking away one task and swapping it with another kind of keeps you on your toes. But it also helps you avoid getting complacent to where you start forgetting to do these things or just avoiding them altogether.

FREE DOWNLOAD

So now you have everything that you need to put together your daily, your evening, your first of the week, and your first of the month routines. I do have a little worksheet that you can use and that basically just asks you questions and walks you through how to put together these routines based on your specific needs.

And you can download that for free. It also has a list of Sunday reset ideas, and I have tons of blog posts about putting together these routines and troubleshooting when things don't work out. So you can always visit my blog at lelaburris.com or my social media for more ideas.

KEEP IN TOUCH

I am most active on Instagram at lelaburris and I would love to meet you. So if you enjoyed this and you want to say hi, make sure you pop over and send me a DM to say hello and introduce yourself. I read every single one and I cannot wait to meet you.

I hope you have a great time during this entire event. Thank you so much for watching. And here's to your new routine and a little less stress in your daily life.

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How to Start a Cleaning Routine in Your Home That Works

LESLIE LAMBERT • TRANSCRIPT

Hi. Thank you so much for joining me for today's session. My name's Leslie, and we're going to be talking about how you can start using a cleaning system in your own home. Let's get going.

LESLIE'S STORY

A little bit about me. I'm Leslie, the founder of LambertsLately.com. I started my blog in 2009 as a hobby blog, and I quickly realized that my favorite topics to talk about were home tips and tricks. I've been blogging about recipes, DIY organization, and cleaning for 14 years now.

I started the process of making the cleaning schedule we're going to talk about today in 2012. I was a brand new mom, and my house was just chaos, and I needed a straight to the point way to maintain it. What you're going to see on the screen right now is the first version of that cleaning schedule that I published in August of 2012.

I didn't want to spend a ton of time each day cleaning, but I knew that I needed some kind of system, and I wanted the focus of it to be work smarter, not harder. The issue with this cleaning schedule, though, is it just wasn't detailed enough for me. I'm a very scatter-brained person, and if it's not written down, I'm probably not going to do it. So gradually, I made a little more detail to really get everything you need to do incorporated into the cleaning system.

When I was pregnant with my son in 2015, I published the version of the cleaning schedule that we're going to talk about and start implementing today. I had a pretty rough pregnancy with him, and the last thing I wanted to think about was cleaning.

So I took the cleaning system that I had been using in my home and really dialed it in so that everything I would need to do to clean my home would be written down for me. It worked so well, and I shared it with blog readers. At the end of that summer, it actually went viral pretty quickly and now has been viewed over 1.5 million times, which is crazy to me. It also inspired a whole cleaning book called Journey to Clean that we'll talk about a little bit later.

GET YOUR DOWNLOADS

So with all that being said, let's get started actually showing you how you can start using this cleaning system in your home. So, a little bit of housekeeping before we begin. You can download both the Daily Sheet and the Room of the Week Chore Guide that are really the foundation for this cleaning system in your Resources section below, I'd recommend doing that before we get going.

There are two basic elements of this cleaning system. You've got the Daily Sheet and the Room of the Week Chore Guide that you see on your screen. I know this is a lot of information. We're going to go through all of it together, I promise.

The Daily Sheet that you see on the left is

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just that it's everything that you need to do daily. It shows you what you'll need to complete each morning, then each evening, and what specific items need to be done on any particular day.

The Room of the Week breaks your house into zones and tells you what specific cleaning tasks need to be done daily. It's much more detailed and it's meant to be used as part of the daily sheet.

MORNING ROUTINE

We're going to start off by introducing the morning routine. This is pretty basic stuff, but it's so important to your cleaning routine. In this cleaning system, there are some things that are constant each and every day, and the morning routine is one of those.

TEN MINUTE DECLUTTER

Every morning, you're going to set a timer for ten minutes and declutter. My basic rule with this decluttering routine is if that timer has not gone off yet, you keep going. There's always more in the home that can be decluttered. But with that being said, when the timer stops, you stop. This is meant to be a quick and efficient cleaning session. So while it might be tempting to keep going over that time limit, find a quick stopping point and then go on to your next task.

Some of the best areas to focus on when decluttering are the living room, the kitchen, the playroom and the kids' bedrooms. I also like to go through junk mail or extra papers and put them in place. You could work on putting up toys, extra food from breakfast, or even items in the bathroom that you might have misplaced while getting ready.

It really depends on your home, your routine and your needs. But there's no specific rules to decluttering as long as you do it for ten minutes.

UNLOAD DISHWASHER

I also clean out the dishwasher first thing in the morning. You'll start the dishwasher the night before. We'll talk about that in a minute. So getting this knocked out first thing, it feels great and it sets your day up for success.

MAKE BEDS

And finally, I also make the beds. It seems insignificant, but you would not believe how much more put together your home feels when you make the beds each morning. I really encourage this not to be a just you thing, though. Make sure that every person in your home is making their own bed so you don't have to do it all.

I get a lot of questions about when you should do the morning routine, and my answer is always that it's really going to depend on your life and your schedule. I know many of you are going to be working outside the home, so telling you to do it later in the morning just isn't going to work for you. It shouldn't take more than 15 to 20 minutes to do this, though, so you fit it in where you can find time. I usually recommend that parents try to get it done when their children are eating breakfast or if they're a little bit older when they're getting ready.

If you don't have kids, a good time to get this done is right after you get ready for the day, so you leave your home clean. I mean, we all know how good it feels to come home to a clean house. If you're at home for most of the day, your choices are going to be a

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little bit more open. I personally like to get this done right after I drop my kids off at school each morning. It's a really good way to get yourself focused for the day and start off on the right foot.

START SLOWLY

Now, I know you're ready to have that perfectly cleaned home now, but Rome was not built in the day and your cleaning routine isn't going to be either. Try doing this morning routine each day for a week before adding in anything else. This will really help you build that habit slowly and gradually, which is going to help you stick to it. Then after a week, as long as it's working, you can move on to the next step.

EVENING ROUTINE

All right, so you've successfully been doing that morning routine for a week. Now it's time to start doing the evening routine. While the morning routine is super important to the cleaning system, the evening routine is really where the bulk of the work is going to be. But if you get down to business and you use your time as efficiently as possible, you can have this part done in a little over 30 minutes each day. You're going to notice some similarities in the morning routine and the evening routine. They're really not that different.

ANOTHER DECLUTTER

Just like you did in the morning, you're going to declutter for ten minutes. This has the same set of rules. You're going to set a timer for ten minutes, and you don't stop cleaning until that timer goes off. A few places I like to declutter in the evenings are the kitchen, since it always seems to get cluttered throughout the afternoon, the entryway and the living room.

LOAD DISHWASHER

You'll also be loading and starting the dishwasher. I recommend doing this after dinner so you don't have a ton of extra dishes in the sink overnight. Now, this might sound counterintuitive, but even if the dishwasher isn't totally full, you're still going to start it. It doesn't waste a ton of water to have it a little under full. And your dishes actually usually come out cleaner if the dishwasher isn't totally full. Plus, you're reinforcing that cleaning routine by starting it at the same time each day. Trust me on this one. Overall, it's just better to make this a habit. And normally we fill up the dishwasher in our home at about this point anyway.

CLEAN KITCHEN

You're also going to clean the kitchen right after your family finishes dinner. I always have to wipe down the countertops and the table after we finish eating dinner. I also try to make sure that there aren't a lot of crumbs on the floor. And if there are, I just grab our portable Dyson and do a quick runover. Another thing that I do is make sure all food is put away, including leftovers. We like to put our leftovers in single serve reusable glass containers to portion out meals for the next day. Makes for a really convenient and quick lunch.

These little tasks are great places to get the kids involved. We have a dishwasher routine in our home where each member of the family is responsible for loading and unloading the dishwasher each day. And even younger kids can help wipe down the counters. Again, get everyone involved so the whole cleaning burden doesn't fall on you.

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PRACTICE FOR A WEEK

All right, let's stop here and try to incorporate the first part of the evening routine for a week. Do the evening clutter session, the dishwasher and the kitchen cleaning routines for a week on top of that, full morning routine. Once you've got that down, you can add in the daily chores, which we'll talk about next, and the room of the week.

DAILY CHORES

Okay, now that we've got that first part of the evening routine off and running, let's get into the daily chores, which is the next step of your evening routine. This is a list that you'll quickly know, like the back of your hand if you're using this cleaning system. I've had it memorized for years.

On Monday, we clean outside areas for us in our home. That means we tidy up the garage by putting away toys and tools, or we blow leaves off of the driveway in the deck. This is also a good time to pull any random weeds in your garden or put out any fertilizers that you need to use.

On Tuesday, we clean surfaces. That mostly means I dust the high traffic areas in the home, like the living room, end tables, the kitchen table, the dining room table, or any shelves in the living areas. This is also a great time to spot clean tables and cabinets. I usually find a drink ring or two on tables that needs to be cleaned.

Wednesday is the day to give your fridge and pantry a quick clean. This is not meant to be a deep clean. We'll get to that later on. But you're going to wipe any spills you find in the fridge, throw out expired food, organize leftover containers, or put things in the pantry back in their place. The first three tasks shouldn't take more than about five minutes each. This is my easy part of the week.

After this, the daily routine does get a little bit more complicated. On Thursday, we vacuum and mop. Now, this is going to depend on your home and its needs, but for us, it's more than enough to vacuum and mop half of the house each week. If your house is more high traffic, your needs might vary, but there's no point in overcleaning. Make this as simple as possible. I'll also mention here that we're able to get away with half of the house each week because we have a robot vacuum. I highly, highly recommend you have one of these. You have no idea how much is on your floors until you see what the robot vacuum picks up each day.

On Friday, you'll clean all of the bathroom, sinks and toilets. This is just a quick wipe down of the sink and a scrub for each toilet.

Saturday is laundry day. Now, I know this is kind of controversial, but I'm a once a week kind of laundry girl. I just prefer to get it all out of the way at once rather than having to constantly fold laundry and worry about putting it away throughout the week. If you're a daily laundry kind of person, you may want to incorporate this into your morning routine.

And finally, on Sunday, we have rest day. I am a big believer in having a rest day incorporated into your routine. You can use this day to catch up on anything you missed and kind of make it a restart day so you're ready for the next week.

FLEXIBILITY

Now, keep in mind that this routine is totally flexible. If I'm being honest with you,

I don't follow this perfectly. I figured out a year or so ago that it worked better for our family to get laundry knocked out during the week, so I swapped laundry and surfaces day. I also usually try to get everything done Monday through Friday, so I have weekends off and it works just fine. So don't be scared to modify this to your own needs.

However, I do recommend completing each task each week. There are certain cleaning tasks that need to be done weekly, and then there are those that just need to be monthly tasks. These are the ones that I found that really need to be kept up each week.

ROOM OF THE WEEK

Okay, just as a reminder, we've already covered the first three parts of your evening routine, which are decluttering, cleaning the kitchen and doing the daily chore. The last item on that evening routine is to knock out two or three of the items on the Room of the Week list, which is page two in those printables I talked about earlier. This page is going to break your home into weekly zones.

There are four weeks in most months, so the home is broken into four zones, which are the kitchen, the living areas, the bedrooms and outside areas, and the bathrooms and closets. These are all the tasks that you need to be doing in your home at least once a month. You'll also notice there's a fifth section at the bottom of the sheet called Odd Weeks. These are meant to be done in those months that have five weeks in them, which usually happens about four times a year.

These are cleaning tasks that are a little bit less important, but still need to be done occasionally. I've added and taken away from this schedule over the years. But the items that are here are the ones that have really stood the test of time and shown to be really important.

But you'll see that there's blanks below each section? That's for you to write in tasks that need to be done in your home that aren't on this list. Every home is going to be different, so you're probably going to find a couple of needs I haven't addressed. Make sure you add those as you see that they need to be done.

KITCHEN WEEK

Let's take a look at kitchen week. I've also added the dining room into this week, if you do have a separate room. I like to make sure the insides of my cabinets are neat and tidy, meaning, like, items are grouped together and things are stacked neatly. I also use a damp microfiber cloth to gently scrub any gunk or grime off of cabinets. We have lighter cabinets in our home, so this is a must each month.

All right. No doubt this is the question I get most about this system. What is BWDW? I get this question at least once a week. This stands for baseboards walls, doors, and windows. You'll do this one each week on your task list. You're just going to wipe down each one of these areas, making sure that you use glass cleaner on the windows.

Polish furniture and china is a quick task. I just make sure the tables and chairs are wiped down well and any display china is dust free.

COMMAND CENTER

Organizing the command center is a must each month. If you don't know what a command center is, it's just an area in your

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home where essentials are kept. We keep things like shared credit cards, checkbooks, pens, and pencils, notepads and office supplies here. It's also where we contain our paper clutter. I have two stacks of paper in this area. One that's for random paperwork that needs to be saved, and one that's for papers that come home from school each day.

Any paper that comes into our home either goes in the trash or into one of those sections. Then once a month, I go through the papers to figure out what we need to save long term and what can be shredded or trashed. We also look at what we need to scan into our digital filing system. I mark the date on the back of the kids papers with a rubber stamp and file those away for later, and usually save about 15 to 20 papers each year from that file. My goal is to clean out and organize the command center. Once a month, I organize the supplies area, and then I leave as few papers in those stacks as possible.

Moving on, I take down decorative towels, chair covers, and those potholders that you forget to wash and put those in the laundry once a month. It's best to try to time this one with your laundry day.

DEEP CLEANING

I also give the pet bowls a quick wash this week. When you're doing the counter cleaning task, make sure to take small appliances and decorative items off the counter and clean under those. It can be easy to forget to do that, and food's going to find its way under those. I don't have this listed, but this is also a good time to wipe down your backsplash if needed.

I clean my stovetop, do a deep clean of my oven if needed, and steam clean the microwave this week. I also give the small appliances a wipe down dishwashing. Any parts that are dishwasher safe. Make sure to hit your air fryer, your instant pot, and your convection oven when doing these cleaning tasks. Usually those are the messiest and they get forgotten easily.

Take the soaps and sponges out of the sink and give it a deep clean by covering it in cleaner. I use baking soda and vinegar in my porcelain sink, but you might want to use whatever's safe for yours. Scrub well with a melamine sponge or just a plain old dish scrubber, and then rinse it down.

The trash can might not need to be fully clean once a month, but I do make sure there are no crumbs around the trash and that the top rim is clean.

FRIDGE TIME

Now, here's where you're going to get a lot more particular about cleaning your fridge. Take out the shelves and clean. Make sure any expired food is thrown out. Clean any shelves that can't be taken out, and you might even want to make sure the freezer doesn't need to be defrosted. You can also organize food by type and make a quick inventory of essentials you might need to buy.

The last two items on the list are pretty quick. I give the light fixtures a quick dust once a month, as well as wiping off any fingerprints or gunk that collects on light switches and outlet covers.

LIVING AREAS

All right, let's take a look at the living areas. This is going to be your living room, family room, office playroom, laundry room, foyer, basically any area that's not covered in

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another weekly zone.

Wipe down the washer, dryer and deep freezer once a month. If the washer or dryer needs a more thorough clean, this is the time to do that. This is also a good time to defrost the deep freezer if needed.

While you're in the laundry room, organize those cleaning cabinets. I also try to organize the items under the sink. With this task, you can consolidate cleaning supplies, throw away old or unneeded items, and make sure everything is in order and easy to access.

BWDW once again, stands for baseboards walls, doors, and windows. Wipe each of those down, concentrating on dust, fingerprints, and spills.

DUSTING

The next three items are tasks I like to group, so I actually rearranged this list a little bit from the printable you have. While you have the duster out, hit the curtains, the tops of the fans, and the tops of the picture frames. You also might want to use a little bit of glass cleaner on the fronts of those frames if there are smears or fingerprints. And in an effort to work smarter, not harder, I go on and dust all of these items in the bedrooms while I'm at it, so you can go on and mark off that for the next week.

DIGITAL CLEANING

Your computer is important to keep clean too, even if it's not an actual physical space. This is a good time to organize files, delete anything that you don't need, back up your computer and use a software cleaning system. I personally have a MacBook and I love Clean My Mac by MacPaw for this. It's really inexpensive and it has worked well for me for years. If you Google that name, it should come up.

With the mud room lockers. I pick up and organize shoes. I vacuum the cubbies really well to eliminate all that dirt that accumulates, and I'll organize the baskets in the cubbies. This also applies to an entryway if you don't have a mud room in your home.

I take any blankets, pillows or chair covers in the living areas and wash them once a month. Again, this is a good one to line up with your laundry day.

VACUUMING

The next two are great to line up with vacuum day, I run the vacuum over my furniture and spot clean any stains on upholstery. This is also a good time to run a fabric shaver over upholstery as well. And if you have stairs, make sure to vacuum those and clean the railings.

Give those light switches and outlet covers a wipe down.

If you have a playroom, this is a good time to organize it. Put away any wayward toys, group similar toys together, wipe down chalkboards, throw away art supplies. If you store toys anywhere in the house, this is a good time to hit those areas too.

And wrapping this section up. Organize the areas around your TV. They can easily become littered with DVDs and cords and video games, so put all of that away with this task. It's also a good time to dust behind the TV and devices.

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BEDROOMS AND OUTSIDE

Now we're moving on to the bedrooms and outside areas. I grouped these two areas together because they honestly don't require a lot of work. So it's no issue to knock out two areas in a week. And with this zone, I'm going to go a little out of order from the printables you have, but I'm still covering all the items.

BEDROOMS

Let's start with the bedroom tasks. Go around to each table in the bedrooms, wipe it down and organize items on those tables. That's a really easy place for junk to accumulate, so it helps to have a task to clear it.

Once a month you'll clean light switch and outlet covers just like the other rooms, and you'll also dust tops of furniture, like any tables, headboards, footboards, chest of drawers or vanities. While you've got that duster out, go in and hit the tops of the fans too, concentrating on fan blades, but you can omit that one if you covered it during Living Areas week like I suggested.

I personally rotate which comforters I wash each month because it's just a lot of laundry to wash all of them each month. I wash my kids' comforters one month and then ours the next month.

Then finally you'll hit baseboards walls, doors and windows in each bedroom.

OUTSIDE AREAS

Let's move on to outside areas with the backyard and porch. You'll want to pick up toys, lawn supplies and sports equipment and put all of those back in place. This is also a good time to sweep or blow off outdoor spaces like patios or decks.

Make sure to clean both the inside and the outside of the car. Organize that back seat, pick up and throw away trash, vacuum the floors and clean out that center console that can always get junky.

You're going to go just a little more in depth with a garage or carport than you normally would on that weekly cleaning task. Organize toys, and if you don't have a system to organize those, get one going. Group tools together and put them in order. Sweep the floor, clean the walls, and throw out any trash.

Finally, go through your flower beds and pull any weeds. Replenish the pine straw or mulch and put out those fertilizers that need to go out monthly. You can also inventory plants and make sure no new plants are needed.

BATHROOMS AND CLOSESTS

And finally, we are at our last monthly zone, which is going to be the bathrooms and closets.

CLOSETS

In the closets, hang any clothes that have fallen off hangers and make sure everything is folded and organized in the drawers. Throw away damaged clothing and see if there's anything you can donate.

If you have shoes spread throughout the house, get all of those in one place. Our family likes to keep our shoes in the mud room instead of in our closets. This makes it easy to access when we're leaving the house, and it frees up closet space. It also puts them in a centralized location so everyone in the family knows where they

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should go when taken off. With this task, I take shoes off the floor and put them back on the shelf we have in our mud room. For shoes, you can also give overly dirty shoes a quick clean and throw the ones that can be washed in the washing pile for the week.

BATHROOMS

Scrub showers and grout, and wipe off tubs well. Don't forget to also clean the base of the bathtubs. I like to line up wiping down surfaces with my weekly Surfaces day. I don't normally go in depth with wiping down bathroom surfaces, so this is one task I like to hit once a month.

Because my bathroom trash cans are small, I usually just put them in the dishwasher. With this task, I can fit three to four trash cans in the dishwasher at a time. I also try to put the toothbrush holders that are dishwasher safe in at this point.

Just as I did in the kitchen, I clean all of those light fixtures above the mirrors. I also wipe down bathroom mirrors at this point with glass cleaner, and since you have that glass cleaner out, it's a good time to go on and do BWDW for the week, which is baseboards walls, doors, and windows.

I also like to line up organizing under bathroom sinks with vacuum day. This way I can use an attachment to vacuum out underneath our sinks since they always seem to collect dust.

Clean light switch and outlet covers by just wiping them down on toilet day, the person cleaning will just make sure to wipe all around the outside of the toilet. If you use any kind of bowl freshener, this is also a good time to switch those out.

Finally, try to line up washing bath linens with your laundry day. I wash decorative towels, bath mats, and hand towels on this day, and really quickly.

ODD WEEKS

I did want to take a look at the Odd Weeks list. I'm not going to go into too much detail here since these aren't done that often. As a reminder, you'll do these a few times a year when there are five full or almost full weeks in a month.

When you clean vents in the home, make sure you get both the ones on the wall and the ceiling. This is a good time to change filters too.

When I clean outside windows, I use that Windex that you can screw onto a hose, and I wash those down well. You can grab that Windex off of Amazon.

Edging the yard is pretty self-explanatory, but that's something you'll probably only do in the warmer months.

Wash those blankets that aren't thought about often but still need to be cleaned. Think about maybe blankets that might be in your linen closet or stored in the living areas.

I dust down elevated surfaces that we just don't think about often. Think about tops of cabinets, upper shelves, tops of tall furniture, tops of curtain rods, tops of TVs, and even tops of window framing.

ORGANIZING CLOSETS

You're going to go just a little bit more in depth with cleaning closets in this task. Really inventory your clothing to find what is damaged and what could be donated. Clean shoes, organize clothing, and make

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sure your drawers are organized. Throw out items you don't need in junk drawers, then group like items together to keep those drawers organized. It's totally optional, but I do recommend adding drawer organizing trays to help you out. These are commonly available at dollar stores, and they make a world of difference in keeping your drawers organized.

ORGANIZING GARAGE

You're also going to go just a little bit more in depth with the garage than you did in the monthly task. If you don't have an organization system in your garage, start one. Make an area for kids' stuff, an area for storage, an area for tools, et cetera. Whatever your garage needs. Once you divide the garage into areas, put everything in its place. You can also clean the walls and windows and sweep really well with this task.

Deep detail cars is also pretty self-explanatory. Just get into those smaller areas in the car and clean.

Finally, pressure washing might only happen once or twice a year, and that's totally fine. If you don't need to do it, don't do it.

That brings up a bigger point. With this week, it's okay to skip some of these or all of these. I sometimes use this Odd Week as a breather week, and it works great. These tasks aren't super important and definitely can be skipped once.

RECAPPING

All right. That's a lot. I know. Let it kind of sink in for a minute. Let's quickly sum up the two big parts of the cleaning schedule we've talked about. The morning routine is a ten minute declutter session unloading the dishwasher and making bits. This part of the routine is quicker, and it shouldn't last more than 20 or 30 minutes.

Then there's the evening routine. It has five steps decluttering for ten minutes, loading and starting the dishwasher, cleaning the kitchen, doing your daily chore, and then completing two to three Room of the Week chores. It's going to take you a little bit longer, probably 30 to 40 minutes each night.

And with those two big parts, you have set up a cleaning routine in your home. Congratulations. Thousands of people have used these tips to transform their home. If you stick to it, it really does work, and my home is proof of that. I've followed this system for almost a decade now with huge success.

ADDING WEEK BY WEEK

And as a reminder, I do want you to start slowly with this routine. Week one is for starting the morning routine. Then week two is for starting the first few items on the evening routine. You're going to do decluttering, counters, and kitchen for that routine for this week. Then week three is when you can really start to do all of the evening routine. That week, you'll add in the daily chore and the room of the week chores.

Also, keep in mind that this is going to take time. Your home did not get dirty in just a few days. It's not going to get cleaned that fast either. Trust the process and give it time to really transform your home. After a month, you'll really start to see the results.

KEEP YOURSELF ACCOUNTABLE

To wrap all of this up, we're going to

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talk about how to actually keep yourself accountable with this cleaning system. The checkbox I have on the Daily Chore page is great to use. This allows you to check off each task as you do it each day for the week. I also recommend checking off your Room of the Week chores as you do them.

You have two options when using these pages. You can either print them out and use hard copies or integrate a digital system. The printable option is pretty straightforward. You can either print these checklists as you need them, or you can laminate them and use wet erase markers to check off your items each week or month. That allows you to erase and start over as needed each month.

The digital option is actually the one I personally use. I love designing printables and I've made hundreds over the years, but I actually prefer using digital methods to stay organized. But you can still use this cleaning system if you don't love having printable pages.

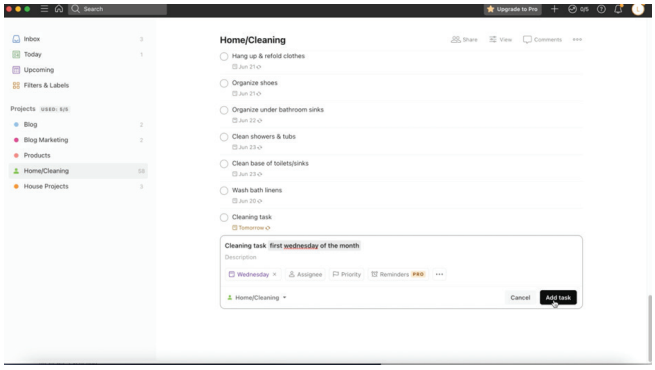
GOING DIGITAL WITH TODO LIST

I use an app called Todoist to keep up with my cleaning system. It's a free app that makes it really easy to put your cleaning task into your regular to do list each month. The best part about it is you can create recurring tasks in Todoist so you don't have to start over and type everything out again each month. Let me show you.

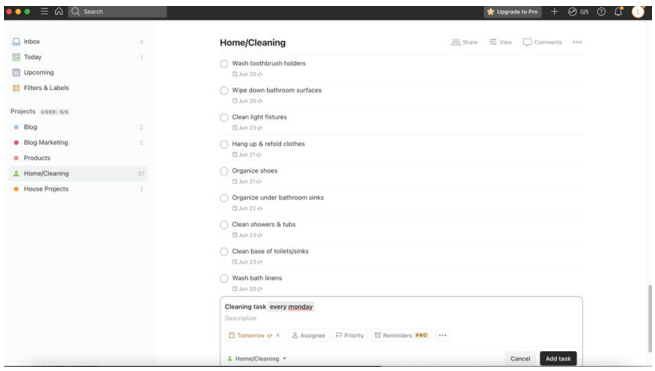
All right, so this is a view of my actual real life to do list in Todoist. You can see that I even have this video on my to do list for today. If I go over to the left column, you'll see that I have a color coded category for each area of my life. I love color coding, so this works really well for me.

So if I go into that home and cleaning section, you can see that I already have all of these tasks in my to do list already. That's because I've set them up to recur either weekly or monthly, depending on the task. The daily chores are set to repeat each week on a certain day.

Let's see how to do that. So you'll put in a task and type every Monday or every Tuesday with it.

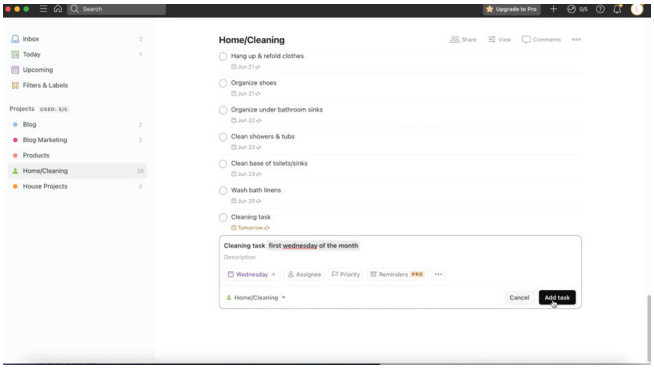


Let's use cleaning task and every Monday, see how that highlights. That means that the task will repeat each week after you check it off for that week.



All right, let's try a task with the monthly repeating date. Say I put in cleaning task and I want this task to repeat the first Wednesday of every month. See how that highlights. And all you're going to do is press add task.

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And that task is now going to repeat the first Wednesday of each month after you check it off.

And one note I will make here is that I don't put declutter sessions, cleaning the kitchen, making the beds, or doing the dishwasher on this to do list. Those are just part of my routine now, so I really don't need the list to remember those each day. This is why I recommend starting that cleaning system slow so you can really make those items habit.

So all I put on this to do list are those daily chores and the room of the week items. And I'm back to my upcoming task. And if I scroll through here, you can see that everything is already organized and ready to go.

I do make a recurring task once a month to check the cleaning tasks and make sure everything is organized and spread out like it's supposed to. Sometimes these OD weeks can knock the schedule off and you have to rearrange everything.

And one more thing. You can see over here that my home and cleaning section has, like, a person icon on it. That means I'm able to share this with my husband's Todoist account so we can work together on the cleaning schedule. And this version that you're seeing is on my desktop. But they do have an iPhone app, too, that's very similar.

Again, this is a free app that just has so much functionality and it's really user friendly. This is the one I recommend if you're a digital cleaning schedule planner.

CLEANING TIPS

All right, to wrap everything up, I've got a few more cleaning tips that I thought I'd share.

ABC

This first one makes me laugh. If you're an Office fan, you might remember Michael Scott saying this one, but use the ABC rule to always be cleaning. That means if you see something that's out of place, fix it. Put up shoes and clothes, throw away trash, wipe, spills just as you go most of the time. This is only going to take a minute, and it's going to save you a ton of time in the long run.

GROUP LIKE ITEMS

Start grouping like items together in your home. I've talked about grouping shoes, but you can
also group toys, books, toiletries paper, supplies. You name it, you can group it in your home. This is one little task that's going to organize your home more than you would believe. It makes it so much easier to find things in your home. And it's a great way to really see how much of something you have in your home so you can plan shopping or donating accordingly.

USE CHECKLISTS

Check off cleaning and organizing tasks to hold yourself accountable. This is massively motivating for me. I'm one of those people that can't stand having something unchecked or can't leave something on a

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to do list. And if you're like this, actually holding yourself accountable with either that printable or the digital system that I described helps a ton.

HONOR REST DAYS

Really try to honor that rest and reset day in your cleaning system. You're going to burn out quickly if you're cleaning nonstop. You need to take time to actually enjoy all of your hard work. So even if you have an item that didn't get done that week, really evaluate whether it actually needs to get done. If it's a must do, you can put it on the next week. But if not, make it a reset day by just deleting those items for the month. Don't worry, it's okay. Nothing on this list can't be skipped once. I even usually have a few things each month that don't get done.

TUTORIALS AVAILABLE

I have a lot of individual cleaning task tutorials on my blog that I'm going to link in that resources section that you can download below. Check those out for more specific cleaning tutorials to really get to know how to carry out those tasks.

GET EVERYONE INVOLVED

And finally, I know I've said this before, but make sure to get the whole family involved. The whole system shouldn't fall on one person. If you have others living in your home, make those Room of the Week tasks into daily chores for your kids. I've been doing this for a while, and it's made a world of difference in my workload.

It's also a known fact that my son is going to do mopping each week and my husband is going to clean toilets and sinks. These are tasks that I never have to worry about because it's on them.

JOURNEY TO CLEAN

All right now, if you need a little more guidance in starting this cleaning system in your home, you're in luck. Shortly after this cleaning system went viral, I decided I'd go really in depth and make a whole cleaning eBook about it. Journey to Clean was born, and it's now on its 7th edition. It gives a lot of detail I've talked about today, but it goes way more in depth with the nitty gritty of starting this cleaning system in your home.

The thing that people love most about the eBook are the calendars. I literally sit down with all 365 days of the year and tell you exactly what you have to do each day. It's also got a whole section about deep cleaning your home.

There are over 60 printables across all the parts of this eBook that absolutely hold your hand the whole way. You can find more information about that eBook at the address on your screen. And as a special treat to those that are taking this course, I wanted to give a discount on the book. Just put in the code on your screen and you'll get 50% off any of the items in the Journey to Clean lineup.

Again, thank you so much for joining me for today's session. I hope you got a lot out of it and can start using these tips in your own home. You can find me@lambertslately.com and on social media at lambertslately. Bye.

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Quiet Time Baskets

LINDSAY GRISWOLD • TRANSCRIPT

Hi, my name is Lindsay and today I'm going to be sharing my quiet time baskets. I have two quiet time baskets.

PERSONAL QUIET TIME BASKET

This is my personal quiet time basket. And then I have a basket for my family for family devotions. So I'm just going to kind of walk through them. I will share any links that I can if you're looking for resources. But I have loved having everything in a basket.

CARRYING IT ALL

First of all, especially a basket with a handle, just because it makes it very easy for me to be able to move around. So I can do my quiet time at my desk. I can do it on the couch. Sometimes I can even take it outside if the kids are playing. I can just carry it like this. Even road trips, I've done that before, where instead of having to try to pack everything in a backpack, decide what to bring, I can literally just stick this in the car. So this has been super helpful for me to have a basket and then just to have everything together in one place.

HAVING IT ALL

So I'm going to go through and show you everything I have. First of all, I will also say I don't use every single thing every single day. So don't think that I spend like 5 hours and I go through everything. I just like to have everything together.

The other benefit is it gives me different things to do. I can change up my quiet time. I can go through different stuff because I have it in a basket. I can just pull out what I want that day and I don't have to do the same thing every single day, if that makes sense.

BIBLES ON HAND

Okay, so first and most important is my Bible. This is the Bible I use every day. This is an ESV Inductive Study Bible. I've been using this for several years and I really like it. It has charts in the Bible that you can fill out, so it kind of helps you to dig a little deeper.

The chapter themes as well are not filled in so that you actually fill it in. So as you're reading, you get to, after you finish a chapter, figure out what you would call the chapter, basically. And then in the back you have a chart to fill out. So this is a very interactive Bible that really helps you kind of dig deeper. And it's a journaling Bible, so you can write in it. But I've loved using this Bible. So this is the Bible I use every single day for reading.

And then I have this Bible. This is the He Reads Truth Bible. There is a She Reads Truth Bible for women. But I do actually prefer the He Reads Truth Bible because they have some really cool charts that the She Reads Truth Bible doesn't have.

So they have a lot of maps and stuff. Like this, "Emotion in the Psalms," just different

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cool charts to kind of help you dig deeper. So, "Who is Jesus?" So that's why I like this one.

But this Bible is actually my prayer Bible. So for 2023, I decided to write a prayer every single day for the Psalms. So I just come in here and I write my prayer. I usually try to date it, but it's just a really good practice to kind of pray Scripture back to God. I have loved doing that for many years. And this year I just decided to kind of dedicate a Bible to just prayer. So that is what this Bible is. So it just has all my prayers. I can just come in and write a prayer down.

BINDERS FOR NOTES

Okay, so next I have my binders. So I have several binders that I just use for different things. I have this one for Bible notes. So this is just where I take all of my notes in my Bible and can just keep them in one space. I have some things separated by topic, so, like, I have an anxiety topic, so I can take notes about things in anxiety, about the kingdom of God, about suffering, and then just different studies.

But then I also keep notes for the book. So a book I am studying, I do have them for all I have dividers for all the books of the Bible, but this one just has the ones that I am currently reading this year. So then I can keep everything together. So I have like a bookmark, and then I can just take notes. I have key words, I have recap pages. This is something I do called Declare Truth, where I write a truth about God, truth about who God says I am, and then just all my notes so I can kind of keep it in one spot.

Even if I was to listen to a sermon on Titus, I would then stick it in here. I just found that after switching Bibles often, sometimes I would want to look back on a particular note, maybe about the armor of God or something, and I could never remember which Bible is in. So I decided to start keeping a notebook that can kind of hold all my notes together in one spot.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY BINDERS

Okay. And then I have a Scripture memory binder. And this binder just holds all my Scripture memory. So I go through different parts of Scripture, different chapters, different books. So one time I studied Psalm 46. So this is everything I did to study it. Sometimes I'll do a word study, and then a lot of times I just write down the verse over and over again because that just helps me to memorize it. I also did the armor of God. So again, I just wrote it down over and over again until I had it memorized. And then I did an Advent one, and then I did one for 2023.

So these are just the verses I'm currently studying so again, I just kind of come in here and I write down my verses. So that is my scripture memory. Anytime I'm memorizing, trying to memorize any scripture, I keep it in this notebook.

PRAYER BINDERS

And then my last two binders are prayer binders. So I have my prayer. This is like a daily prayer. This is just where I kind of journal different stuff. So just journaling and writing out prayers. And then I have a gratitude section where I write out my gratitudes. And then I have a "who he Is," where I focus on an attribute of God every month. So every month I make one of these and stick it in my binder. And I can just focus on a different characteristic of God. So I have several in here.

And then last I have my prayer journal

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where I pray for all my friends, my heart, my marriage, just stuff like that. I will again stick printables in here to help me. My children each have their own page that I can pray for them of specific prayers. And then I also keep prayers, like more biblical based prayers. So as I'm reading my Bible, if I find a verse that I want to pray over my kids, I will write it in here and then keep it in this section. And then just family, friends, motherhood, my home, work, all that kind of stuff. So that's my prayer journal.

MAKING YOUR MARK

And then the last few things I have in here are pen, marker. But I keep all my crayons in here. I use crayons for my Bible. I find that there's a lot of colors of crayons, rather than highlighters - these ones, I found like the liquidy ones kind of bleed through. So I have liked crayons. Crayons also erase. So if you make a mistake or you accidentally colored the wrong color, you can erase crayon. And then I can put a different color on top of that. So those are the crayons that I use to highlight my Bible.

NOTING IT DOWN

And then in here, I just have post it notes. I really love these clear post it notes to mark different pages or even in my prayer journal. In my Bible, I will write notes on these because they're like translucent. You can still kind of see what's behind them and just write extra notes. So that is everything that is in my personal quiet time basket.

FAMILY STUDY BASKET

Okay, next we're going to move on to the kids' basket. So this is for them. This is for more family devotions. My daughter does have her own little basket, but this is what we personally use. So it doesn't have like my daughter's Bible. It has our family Bible, that kind of stuff.

RAINBOW BIBLE

So first family Bible, someone we can just read. Everyone has access to it. It's one of the colorful Rainbow Bibles. Rainbow Study Bible. I really like it just because the kids can see the different topics and kind of see what the verse is talking about. So that is our family Bible.

CHARACTER BUILDING

And then I have another little bin in here. And we have character traits, these character trait cards and then manner cards. And so it has scripture on the back. It also comes with little tokens. And so I usually put . . . they get to choose the one we're going to do. They put it up on the whiteboard and then we will read through it. So those are character traits and manner cards.

BOOKS TO BUILD ON

And then I have Field Notes: Explore the Word. For my daughter, this just helps her kind of dig deeper into scripture. So we write down the Bible verse, what the theme is, and just simple questions like what am I learning about God? What does this word tell me and how can I follow God today? And then she can write it out, she can write notes, she can draw a picture. But we have really liked this for just different verses we're kind of going through.

This is another great resource, The Bible Made Easy for Kids. This just goes through different things. It'll tell you what scripture it is and just very simple for kids promises in God's word, God will guide us, he will bless us. It goes through the New

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Testament, too. Just a really good resource to kind of help you dig deeper.

And then we have What Every Child Should Know About Prayer. This is a series where they have several, like What Every Child Should Know about the Bible. My kids really love it because it's very colorful and pretty. I should also stop and tell you the age of my kids. So I have a two year old, I have a nine year old and I have an eight year old. And the eight year old son has autism. So I'll kind of show you some stuff that helps him.

ALL DIFFERENT AGES

But my quiet time, or our devotional time can be all over the place with a two year old who doesn't want to sit still, and then with a kid with autism, who again has a hard time sitting still. And then I have my nine year old who can read stuff and then sometimes it can be hard. So that's why I have a lot of resources in here, just so I can kind of gauge the mood of everyone and see what's going to work.

But we don't do all this every night. Sometimes we might just choose a chapter out of this or just do one or two things. The other book that the kids really like is this, Little Pilgrim's Big Journey. And this is the second book. There's one before this that we already read and finished, but great illustrations and the little kids like it. And then my older daughter can answer some of the questions, like there's a summary we go over and then understanding it so she can answer those questions.

And then I have this Training Hearts, Teaching Minds. This just goes through the different catechisms and then it gives you the answer and then it just gives you kind of a schedule, a very simple little thing to read every single day. So again, just very simple. It would not take a ton of time to do this with the kids. And so I like to keep this in there.

ANOTHER BINDER

And then we just have a binder for my daughter. This can just hold anything that I print off for her that she might want to keep. She's got the Ten Commandments, just little printables and then when we were studying the Psalms so I just like to have this so she can kind of hole punch stuff and keep it in there.

And then this is a great book too [WonderFull: Ancient Psalms Ever New]. This goes through the Psalms, goes through every psalm and kind of just gives a simple commentary for kids and then sometimes it'll have you do something like read this, rewrite them as a prayer. One time it had her list something out, so it kind of gets them to interact with the Word. So this is a great resource too.
ALL THE AGES

And then that is the main stuff. The other things I do keep in here are for the younger kids and honestly it's more of a distraction, I guess, to kind of keep them occupied. So this is for my two year old, something I made. It just goes through has like . . . it's fun. She obviously doesn't know how to do it yet, but it's just fun to pull off and do that. So that's for her.

This is also for her, it's just scripture memory. She likes to draw on it. It's mostly just a notebook I made for my daughter. But I do let . . . my youngest one does scribble in it sometimes.

So again, just having stuff that everyone likes. And then my son really likes Corey Ten Boom. For some reason he loves when

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I read this. So a lot of times I will read something I want to read. Like we'll go through this and then I'll say, okay, after that we will go through Corey Ten Boom because I know he likes it.

So I'm really a fan of having resources for all the kids so that everybody has something that they like in the basket. But that is my personal quiet time basket and then my kids' family devotional basket.

NINE-YEAR-OLD BASKET

Okay, so the last thing I guess I'll show you is my daughter's basket. So again, we have my personal one, I have the family devotional one. And then she has her own stuff. So this is stuff, some of it she can do on her own and some of it is more if the other kids are maybe taking a nap or doing something else, me and her can work on this stuff together.

STICKERS

So first she has a sticker book, so her own personal sticker book. And then she has a Bible. She just kind of started this one she does have a kid's Bible, but she wanted to try having a more adult Bible, I guess, or a non-kid's Bible, I guess.

BIBLE AND JOURNALING

So she's got this Bible, the same Bible that I have, and then she has a Write the Word for Kids. So this goes through and she's been doing this for a while. So this is super fun. But it tells you it tells you the verse and then they can write it down. They can write a few things and then they can draw it. So this has been super fun. Clearly her little sister has gotten into it too.

But this is just a really fun journal to do for kids and can just kind of help them to get in the word. And so what I used to do is when she was younger is I would write the verse and then I would give it to her. And this is something I would give her on her own. So I would write the verse and I'd say, okay, go in your room and I'd help her find it in her Bible. But then she could just spend some time writing it and drawing a picture. So that is a great resource that she has loved.

HOW TO STUDY FOR KIDS

And then this is a book that me and her are going through just together, just me and her [How to Study Your Bible for Kids]. So again, this is a little harder with the other kids. So this is just something me and her do, but it just kind of goes through and teaches how to study the Bible for kids. And this is actually the same people who created this Bible. The Inductive Study Bible created this. So I really like this. So it goes through and just kind of teaches you like the Bible is a puzzle. You have to figure out who, what, when, little activities. It's just kind of fun to go through and they're questions you answer. It has you look up certain verses. So this has been a really cool resource and we go through it pretty slow because it's a lot. But it is just kind of teaching her how to study the Bible.

So that is her little quiet time basket.

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Email Organization: 3 Strategies to Make Your Inbox Work for You!

LISA MCHARGUE • TRANSCRIPT

Hey there. Welcome to this presentation that is all about email organization. That's right. In this session, we are taking on your inbox. I know it seems really scary and overwhelming, but hang with me. I promise I'm gonna make it easy.

ORGANIZED BY NECESSITY

If we haven't met before, my name is Lisa McHargue. I taught high school Spanish for ten years, and in that time, I learned to be really organized. I was already an organized person before I became a teacher, but teaching is really hard, and if you don't have systems, it's even harder. So over the years, as a teacher, I really honed my digital organization, and that's what I do full time now.

I work as a digital organizer, and I work with people to organize their digital spaces so things like their inbox, their Google Drive, Dropbox, computer hard drive, Canva. If you use Canva Design, any digital space, really. I will help people create file naming conventions, file folder systems declutter, and create habits to maintain that organization so it doesn't become a hot dumpster fire two weeks later.

REACHING LISA

Here are all the places you can find me online. I would love if, after you watch this, if you would send me a DM on Instagram or email me and let me know which of the three main tips I'm going to be sharing today was your favorite.

SPOILER ALERT

All right, so let's dive in. First of all, I have a bit of a spoiler alert. Your email inbox was not meant to hold every email you get forever. I am also not an inbox zero fan. I'm not going to tell you you should have zero emails in your inbox at the end of every day. I don't think that's realistic, and I honestly don't think it's the best approach for most people.

WHAT SHOULD BE IN YOUR INBOX?

So what should be in your inbox? Well, my system and what I usually advise people is that the emails in your inbox should be things that you need for the near future or the immediate future. And if you don't need them in the immediate future, you should either delete them . . . that's like the gold standard. Best option. I'm a minimalist. You can archive them, which I'll talk about later in this presentation, or you can file them away in a label or a folder.

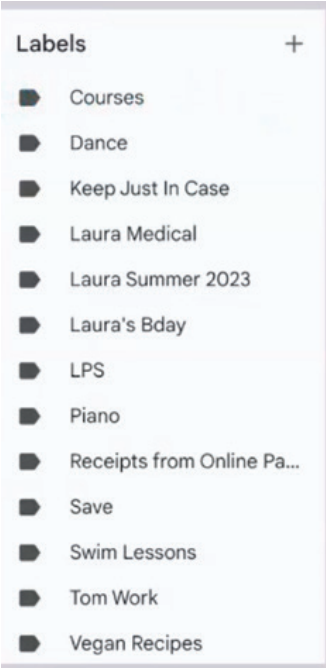
LABEL IT

Now, I'm going to be showing you how to do things today in Gmail, but whatever email platform you use, there is some kind of equivalent for most of this. So Gmail has these things called labels, and they work as labels, but they also work as folders. And I'll show you what I mean in a minute.

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So labels are essentially folders where you can move stuff out of your inbox and put them into these folders so that you can find them later, or you can save them just in case. So you might be thinking, okay, great. Well, what kind of labels should I create? Here are a few examples.

And right here this is actually a screenshot of the labels I have in my personal email.



I have a lot of email addresses [sic], but mine I have are courses . . . So this is any course, membership summit, anything that has a username and password that I'm going to need to remember I put it in the courses folder so that I can go find it if I forget.

I take dance lessons, so all communications from my studio go here.

These are things I need to keep just in case. In case someone tries to come back and say, well no, we never said we were going to do that. Like a company maybe it's going to replace something, a warranty around my house. And I say, oh no, I have this email from you right here that says you are.

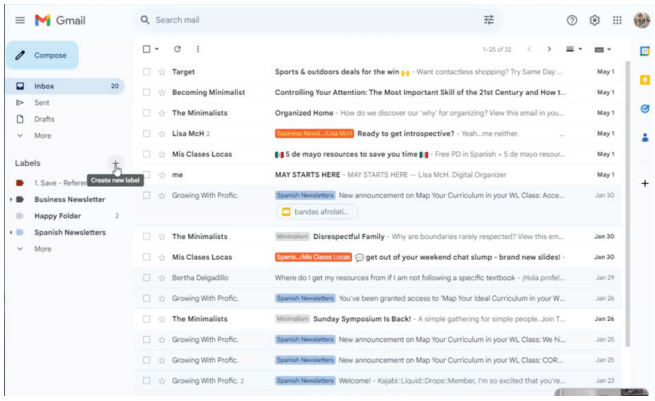
Laura is my kiddo. So I have her medical records here. Summer of 2023, all of her summer activities, all those communications, planning for her birthday party. LPS is her school. You can kind of read through the rest. But these are some labels that you might find useful.

And if you're trying to think of what labels should I create, look at your inbox or think about the emails you get, what kind of categories naturally jump out at you. Those are the labels that you should create.

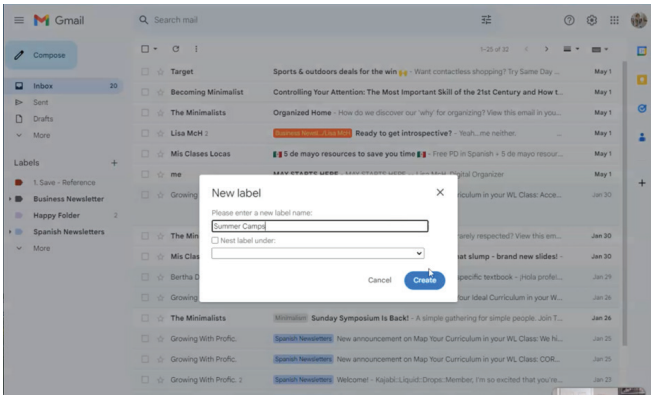
CREATING A LABEL

So how do you actually create a label? Let's jump out to Gmail and I'll show you. So this is actually a test account that I have. I have an entire self-paced course devoted to email organization and inbox setup called Tame Your Inbox. And this is my test account for that.

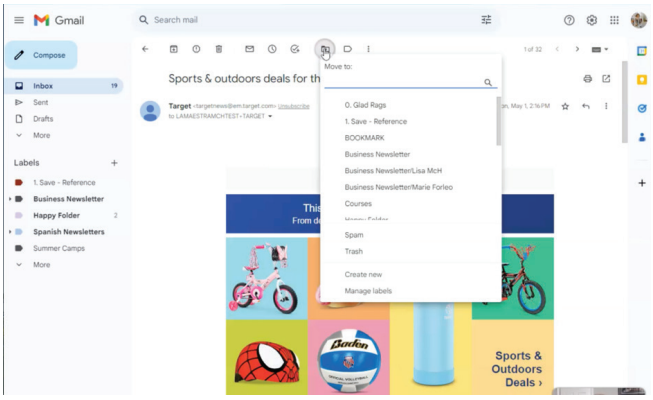
So in Gmail they make it really easy. Off to the side here, you see labels and there's this plus sign. You just click the plus sign,



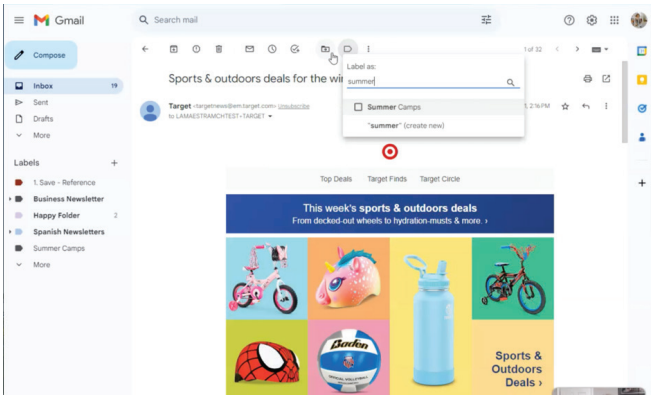
and let's say I'm going to make one for summer camps. Create. And now I have this label.



Okay, let's pretend this Target email is about, it's a summer camp email. So now when I'm reading it, I can either move it to summer camp

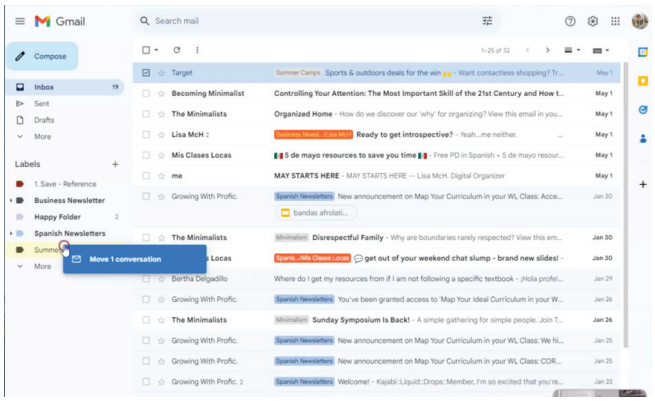


or I can just say, you know what, I want to leave it in my inbox, but I just want to label it.



I'm going to go ahead and apply so you can see what this looks like. So now in my inbox, when I look at this email, it has this label on it, summer camp. And you'll see a few other ones here. Business newsletters. Spanish newsletters. Minimalism. So it has this label.

Now if I want, I can just drag and drop it over to summer camp.



And now you can notice it's not in my inbox anymore. But if I click on summer camps there, it is. Really easy to find when I know it or when I know when I need it. So that's how easy it is to create labels in Gmail.

And again, if you use a different system, they have their own version of this. A quick Google search will find you the instructions. All right?

YOU HAVE TO USE THEM

So once you make these labels, the key is that you have to use them, all right? You have to remember to actually label the things, move them in there, remember to go and check them. So if you're like, oh gosh, what door am I supposed to drop my kid off at for summer camp at this school? Let me go to the summer camp label because I know I put it in there. Oh, and now I can find it. So if you need to have some colored sticky notes near your computer on your desk, you can see I actually had this one on my computer with a reminder until it becomes a habit. There is nothing wrong

with a little reminder.

GETTING FANCY

You can get fancy with labels, you can color code them, you can set up filters so that your emails are automatically labeled or automatically sorted right into those folders when they come in. You can customize which labels show up in that left hand menu, like when they don't all have to show at the same time.

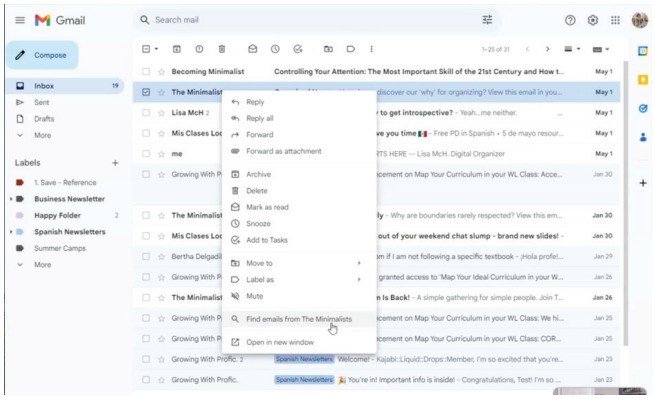
So actually I'll show you what I mean by that. You can see I only have these labels. I actually have more. And you can also nest your labels. But I'm a minimalist. I don't like visual clutter, so for me, I like to hide them. You can get really fancy and create a label system that works for you.

And I go into depth in all of that, including filtering and automatically labeling and sorting emails in my Tame Your Inbox course because it's not difficult, but there's a lot you can do. And so that is its whole separate, its very own training. So my first tip to you is to create some labels.

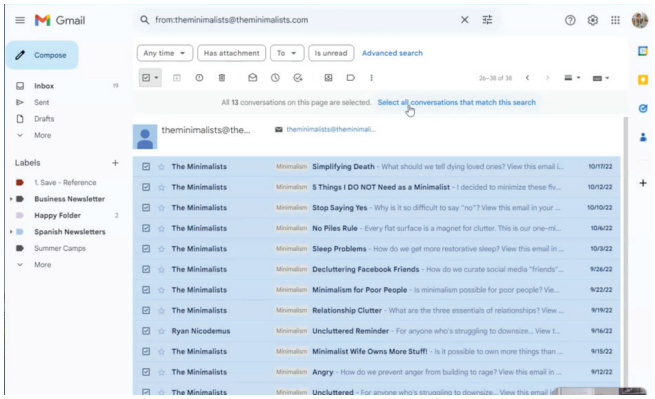
FAVORITE DECLUTTERING TIP

I'm going to share my favorite decluttering tip and when I show this to people they're always like, oh my gosh, this is amazing and it's so easy. Here it is. And this is one, it might only work in Gmail. I don't know if other email platforms do this, but if you right click on an email, you get this pop up menu and you'll see this find emails from and then whoever the sender is, when you click on that, it's going to search for all the emails you have from that sender. And then you can either mark them as read, you can move them to a label or a folder, you can archive it or you can delete it.

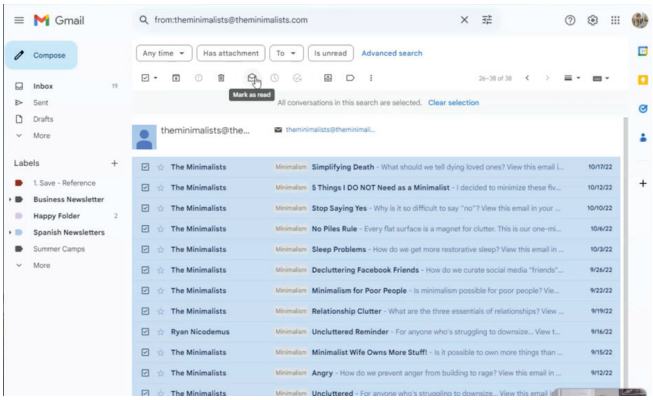
So let me show this to you in action. So let's say I want to find everything I have from The Minimalists. They send a fair amount of emails, so I right click on it with my mouse. I come down to Find Emails From The Minimalists and it's going to take a second, it's going to search. I have 25 per page showing, this just tells me one through 25 of many.



I'm not even going to see how many actually. Let's see, there's one, two, oh, 38 of them. So it's not that bad. So you can select just one page at a time or you can say select all of them

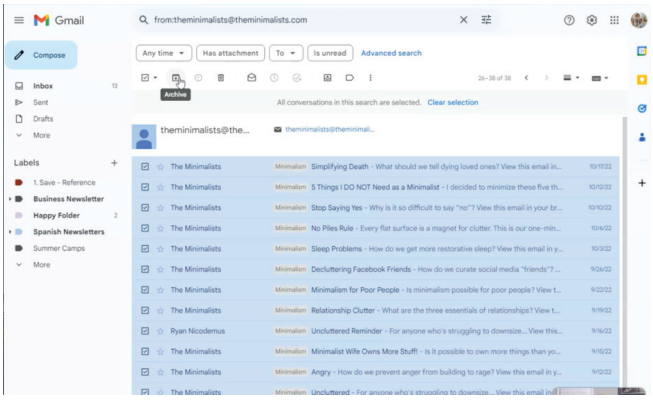


and I can say, you know what, I want to mark all of these as being read already



and it's going to say, hey, you're doing something to a lot of emails at once. Are you sure? I'm sure. So I'm going to say, okay, so now it's going to mark like I've read all of them so that little unread number is going to go down. I can select all of them, and I can now, if I want to, some of these are all kind of in a folder already, but I can label all of them with this minimalism label, and I can go ahead and apply that.

And then if I want to, I can select all of them and I can hit Archive. What that does is it moves them out of my inbox and they're only going to show up in this Minimalism folder or label that I have. They actually show up one other place, which I'll talk about in just a minute.

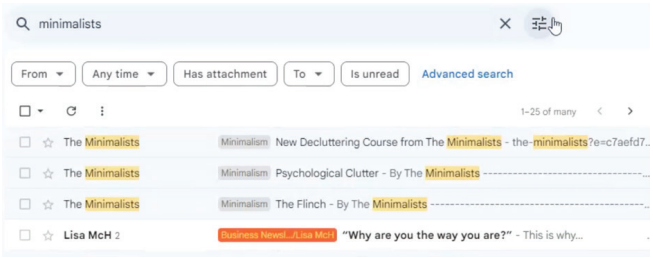


But that is my favorite decluttering tip. So let's say if I search everything from becoming minimalists and I say, oh, I don't want these anymore, I can just click them all and I can delete all of them and they're in the trash. And that is my favorite way to declutter is just to go sender by sender and delete all of them.

So if you haven't done that before, give it a try. It's oddly satisfying. I would watch YouTube videos, okay, I probably wouldn't watch those, like it's so satisfying, like YouTube videos or Instagram reels about that, but it is. You just have to trust me. It's really satisfying.

Oh, one other thing I wanted to tell you, and again, I'm not going to dive in deep to this today, but I want you to be aware of it. You can explore it on your own or I do go in depth in my Tame Your Inbox course is that you can use advanced search options when you're searching in Gmail.

So rather than just typing in up here, oh, find my Minimalist emails. Well, there's like all kinds of stuff in here if you click these three slider lines and you also get the same options here, but I'd like to click these three slider lines up here. And now you can search by a bunch of different criteria and it can help you find emails faster.



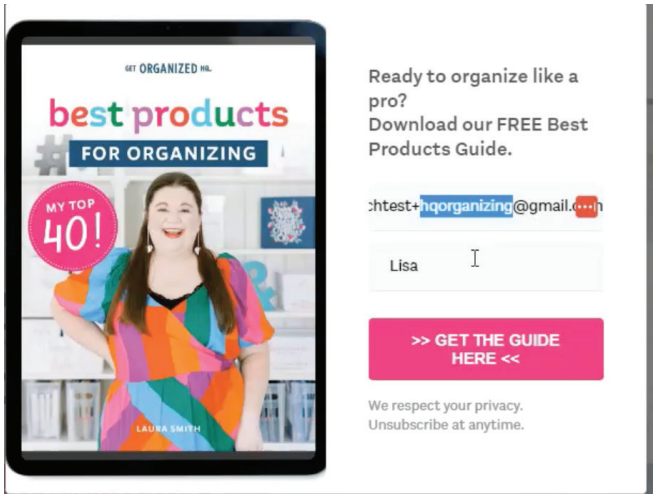
So I just want you to be aware that these advanced search options are here if you're looking for specific emails when it comes to decluttering or unsubscribing and things like that.

USE UNIQUE ADDRESSES

Okay. This is a tip not a lot of people know

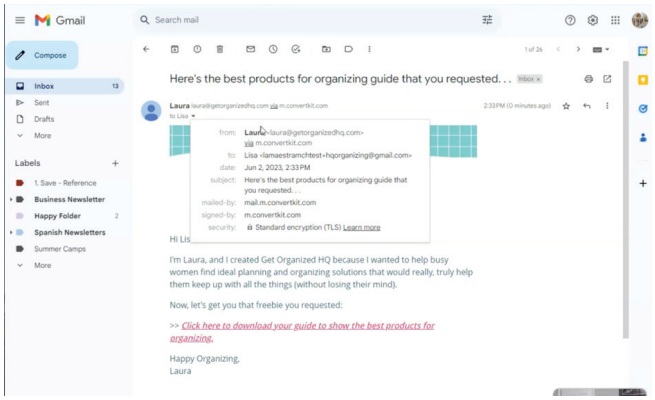
about and it is so useful. Did you know that you can create unique email addresses using the plus sign. So you don't have just one email address. You actually have unlimited emails. And this works if you have a paid Gmail account like my email is lisa@lisamch.com. That's when I pay for. Or a free one if your email is like, lisa@gmail.com, this works.

All right, now I'm going to show you how to do this, and then I'll explain why it's amazing. So let's say I am out on the Get Organized HQ website, and this pop up comes like, yeah, I want these best products for organizing. Hello. Yes, please. So I'm going to type in my name and now where it wants me to type in my email address. This is the first half of the email address that you see here, this inbox. And then I'm going to put a plus sign. And then you can put whatever you want. After that, I like to put something that helps me remember what it is I'm signing up for. So I'm actually going to say hqorganizing. And then you can't see it because my last is passing here. I do the at sign@gmail.com.



Okay, so it's my actual email address+hqorganizing@gmail.com. And whatever you put here between the plus sign and the at sign, you can put anything you want there. And I think it can be long. Okay. It doesn't have to be really short. So I'm going to go ahead and say, get the guide here, think I clicked it. There we go. My computer's taking a little long, so yay, my freebies on the way. I'm going to pause this, wait for the Internet to do its magic, and I'm going to show you what happens when that email shows up in my inbox. We're back in my inbox. And here is that guide that I got.

So I'm going to click on it, open it up, and you can see it came straight to my inbox, to the same inbox I've been using. But when I click to see the more information, the details, look at the address it was sent to. It was not sent to lamaestramchtest@gmail.com. It was sent to lamaestramchtest+hqorganizing@gmail.com. And it showed up, no problem at all.



Cool. Lisa. Why do I care? So glad you asked. All right, here's why we care about this. Here's what this is great for. It is great because it helps me remember when and why I signed up for things.

WHY THIS HELPS

So whenever I attend an online conference or summit or something like that with speakers, I will generally sign up for all this. Oh, I love that presentation. I want to sign up for all of their guides and freebies and all of the things. But what I'll do is I will sign

up with like let's pretend I'll just use lisa@lisamch.com, my actual email address. As an example, I will sign up with lisa +, let's say, getorganizedvirtual@gmail.com. So then when I start getting emails from all these people. I'm like, who's this person? I don't remember signing up for this. Who are they? And I look at the two address, who they sent it to, and it says get organized, like virtual.

Or I can't remember what I said I was going to type in. I go, oh, that's right. They were a presenter at that summit, and I really liked it. And so I signed up for their email list because I wanted to see if I really liked their stuff so I remember what it was.

The other thing is, it helps me remember what people's niches are. Like, if you get an email from lisamch, you might be like, who the heck is lisamch? What does she talk about? But if you sign up for my emails with something like lisa+ like digitalorganizing@gmail.com, you look at who it was sent to. You like, oh, that's right, she's the digital organizer.

I do this all the time for my business. If it's a copywriter, I sign up like lisa+copy@lisamch.com.

Or if it's a graphic designer + graphic design. If it's a summit, like I said, I do, plus the summit name. Because sometimes I don't remember what people do. I get a lot of emails and I can't always remember what their topic is or why I signed up or what they're teaching me. And when I use these custom addresses, I remember, and it helps me. And instead of me being like, who, what, why, how? It really just helps my overworked, burned out brain not have to remember everything.

EASY FILTERS

And this is really great for easy filters. I mentioned filters back in labels. They're really, really powerful. And one of the things you can filter by is the address things get sent to. So you can use these unique addresses. Like if you sign up for Target emails and they send a ton of emails, if you sign up lisa+Target@lisamch.com, that's the email address you put in for Target. It makes it really easy to filter all of those Target emails to get labeled or put right into a folder so they're not clogging up my inbox.

But give this a try. And again, to do that, I'm actually going to put this in edit mode. All you have to do is you type in the first part of your email address. This is my email address. All you do then is put the plus sign and then whatever you want between the plus sign and the app sign, and that becomes the unique email address that your emails get sent to. Just like this one went to lisamchtest or lamaesteramchtest plus hqorganizing@gmail.com.

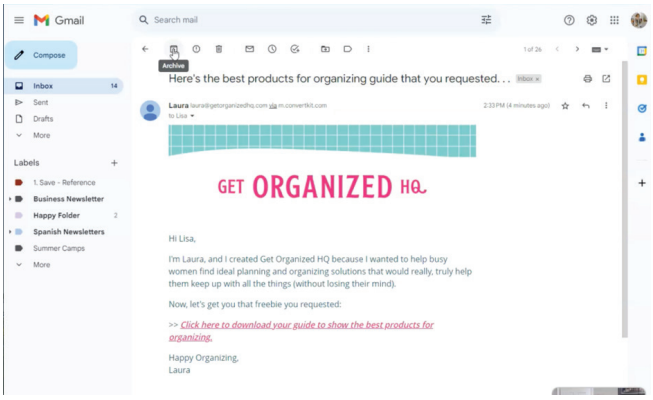
So it's really, really simple and it's a little thing, but oh my gosh, I cannot tell you how many times it has saved my brain.

WHAT DOES ARCHIVING DO?

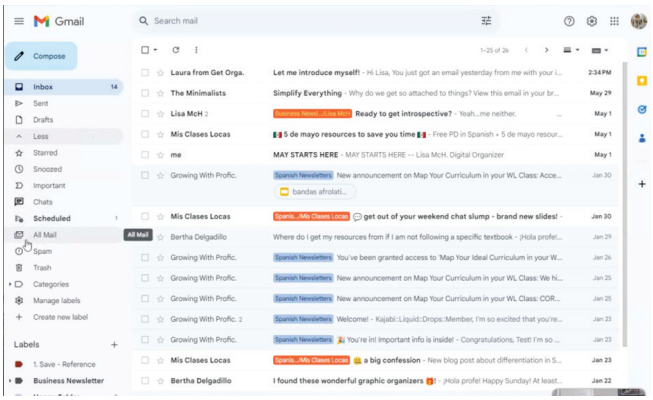
Final quick tips for you. I've been talking about archiving and people, a lot of times are like, what does archive even mean? Where does it go? I accidentally hit Archive and, oh my God, where did the email go? Is it gone forever?

No, it's not. When you archive an email, I'm actually going to archive this one. If you hover over this button, it says Archive. I'm going to go ahead and click it. What that does and says Conversation Archived.

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It moves it out of your inbox, and it puts it in Gmail in this All Mail category.



So if I click here, you can see there it is right there, and it actually says it's still in my inbox, which is weird. But when you archive something, it just goes to this All Mail. All Mail is all of your mail. It's everything in your inbox. It's everything in your different labels and folders. It's anything you have scheduled to be sent in the future.

So that's what archive is. Oh, it's there because I got another email, that's why. So let me archive that one. And now go to all mail. So when you archive something, there they are. There's two of them. When you archive something, it's still searchable. So if I am in my inbox here and I search, yeah, I'm looking for something from Laura Get Organized HQ, it will find it, say, oh, yeah, there it is.

It's in my All Mail, and it will find it. So that's all Archive is. It just takes it out of your inbox and puts it into the All Mail category. That's all.

UNSUBSCRIBE

Unsubscribe. If you take nothing else away from this unsubscribe from emails, okay? That's how you cut the head off of the beast if you're like. I get too many emails. Well, if you get too many emails, we have to figure out a way to stop them from coming in. Unsubscribe from things you no longer want.

I always do this after the holidays. If you do a lot of online shopping, you will end up on so many lists. When the holidays are over, have an unsubscribe party, put something good on the TV, on Netflix, whatever. Stream a podcast and set a timer for ten minutes and just unsubscribe. All right? It's not very fun. Some companies make it tricky because they're mean moldy blanket-heads, but I promise you, it is worth it. So you have to unsubscribe if you want the emails to stop coming.

EMAIL ALIAS

My other quick tip is, if you do a lot of online shopping, have a whole separate dedicated email account just for online shopping. If you buy a lot of stuff from Amazon, if you do a lot of online shopping around the holidays. I have one set up specifically for online shopping, for all those pop ups that are like, put in your email address to save 10%. Well, I don't want all of those promotional emails going into the same account where emails from my kid's school or my kids' activities are coming, because I don't want important emails buried under Save 10%, Check Out Our Latest Sale.

So if you have a whole separate account for it, it keeps your personal inbox less cluttered and it makes it easier to find those emails that you need. If you're like, wait, I have a confirmation email. Why hasn't it been sent? And if you have a whole separate inbox just for those, it's way fewer emails that you need to go through. And again, if you use labels, and let's say you have whole separate account for online shopping, a label for Amazon, a label for Target, a label for wherever you shop online, even more organized, even easier to find those emails and delete them once you no longer need them.

MORE FROM LISA

So there you go. There's a few final quick tips for you. If you are like, oh my gosh, this woman is like the email whisperer. I need to learn more from her. I have a free guide. It's called Three Steps to an Inbox That Doesn't Look Like Crap. Spoiler alert, that's not the actual name, but it is three tips that are short, they're simple, and I don't know if this video will play again, let me replay that.

There's actually custom little videos that I created. So there's step by step instructions and then there's videos that show you exactly where to click. Because I'm all about making it easy. You can get that at lisamch.com email when you put in your email address. You could use that + digital organizing. So when an email from lisamch shows up and you're like, who is this lady? Oh, she's the digital organizer. That's right. You can do that. So you can use what you learned right now if you want more email cleanup.

EMAIL RENOVATION

If you are ready to fully dive in and you're like, I want a whole email renovation. Like, I want to gut it and start over, and I want to log into my email and not feel stressed out or overwhelmed, you might want to check out my Tame Your Inbox self-paced course. It is step by step tutorials to help you get out of your inbox and get back to life.

I dive deeper into folders, into filters, walk you through what to delete and archive or save. Different ways to set up and sort and view your inbox that might work better for you than the default. Plus my favorite features that make Gmail better, things like that + sign email address hack, but like all my favorite things about Gmail.

SPECIAL OFFER

And you can learn more about at llisamch.com/tame. Plus, I created a special discount just for you, just for attending this conference. You can save 15% on my course. Just use the code, GETORGANIZED, all caps. And that code is good for the rest of 2023. So if you decide in a few weeks or next month that you really like, I wish I would have gotten that inbox course, you can. You can save 15%.

So head to lisamch.com/tame, save 15% and take back your inbox, because email is supposed to make life easier, not stressful.

THERE'S MORE!

I have one final kind of promo of goodies for you. If you signed up for the All Access Pass to this amazing summit, you get a Digital Organization Quick Tips calendar from me. It looks like this, except for there's actually stuff in the squares. And it's four weeks of daily decluttering tasks that don't take long at all. And it's four weeks Monday through Friday because we're taking the weekends off, right? And I walk you through quick things to organize your email inbox

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computer hard drive, your Google Drive, and just miscellaneous things for the Chrome browser that are really cool.

And again, there are video tutorials. It is me showing you exactly where to click, because there is nothing more frustrating than when someone's like, oh, do this. And you're like, okay, great. How? How do I do that? I hate that. So most of them, if they don't have a video, it's because it doesn't need a video. But you can see most of these, there is a custom video tutorial showing you exactly where to click.

So if you sign up for the All Access Pass for this summit, you're going to get that four weeks Quick Tip Digital Organization Digital Decluttering Calendar.

KEEP IN TOUCH

All right. That was a lot. I try to cram as much as I can into these trainings, and there's so much more I could tell you. So let's hang out. Come find me online. You can find all the ways to contact me lisamch.com. I would love, if you're on Instagram, send me a DM and tell me the one thing that you are going to do today or this week to get your email organized. If you don't have Instagram, you can find me on Facebook. Lisamch, you'll find my Facebook page. Or you can always email me at lisa@lisamch.com. It really is me.

It's just me behind the scenes. There's no bots. There's no one else answering my emails or my Instagram DMs. It really is me. And I would love to hear what you thought of this presentation, what action you're going to take, or what questions you have.

So please reach out. I would love to hear from you. I hope you've loved this. I hope you're inspired to organize and clean up your email inbox, and I hope you enjoy the rest of this amazing online event.

Have a great day.

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Garage Organization Tips

LISA TRIGSTED • TRANSCRIPT

TASHA: We are so excited to have Lisa from Get Neat with Lisa here with us today. We're going to be talking about organizing garages. So thank you so much for joining us today, Lisa.

LISA: You're welcome. Thank you so much for having me. I love this conference, and I'm so excited to talk about organizing. I can talk about organizing all day, and specifically garages. My team thinks I'm crazy because as organizing garages is one of my favorite spaces to do.

THE SCARY GARAGE

TASHA: That's awesome. Yeah. When you think about organizing, I think a lot of times we think of the pantry or a linen closet or a clothes closet. And the garage is kind of like the deep, dark, scary place that you go to last. But I'm so glad that we can break it down today.

And so, I do think for a lot of people, the garage can be really overwhelming. So where do you even start when you walk into a garage that you're going to organize?

UNMADE DECISIONS

LISA: And so that's true that when you said garages can be like this dark space. I always say that garages and attics and basements become a dumping ground for unmade decisions. And so when I come into a consultation at our client's house, the first thing I do is I walk through the space.

And I ask all the questions like, what do you want your garage to be? Because garages are supposed to be where you put your car, right?

And for us in the south, we get a lot of hail damage, and so the north is all cold and wintry, so the garage is the actual home for your car. And a lot of our clients don't have that. They still park in the driveway. They still park in the streets because they just have a tendency to just put everything out in the garage that they have not made decisions on. And then pretty soon you're overwhelmed and it just becomes too much.

TAKE IT ALL OUT

And so that's usually when they call us. And so what we do is we start by taking every single thing out of the garage. We pull it out into the driveway and we start sorting it. And when we pull everything out, just like if we're doing a pantry or a closet, when you pull everything out and see it out of the space, it does two things.

Number one, it shows you, wow, our garage really is a great space. We just couldn't see it. And then number two, it shows you how much stuff you have. And so by taking it all out, we talked to our clients about, okay, all of this was in your garage, and you saw how it looked.

Now we're going to systematically go through every single pile. We categorize things like with like, that's just a big

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buzzword in organizing. That way you can say, oh, how come we have five snow shovels? Or we have three of this that we don't need or use. And so when we do that, it shows the client, okay, we have decisions now that we can make to either sell or donate one of the items.

And it also helps you decide, okay, how long ago did I use it? When was the last time we needed this? So that's kind of where we start. We take it all out, sort like with, like, categorize, and then we have our clients start making decisions on what to keep and then what to save.

VISUALIZING THE SPACE

TASHA: Yeah, so I love how you said that when you get everything out, you can see, like, there is room to put my car in here, or there is room to put a little workbench in here, or whatever your vision for the garage is.

So that really is one of the benefits, I guess, of taking everything out of a space so that you can really visualize where you're going.

LISA: Absolutely. And then because I always tell them, I know how you want the garage to be. They see pictures on my Instagram or on my Facebook, and I know that's why they called me, because we make our garages beautiful.

We want that to be an extension of your home. It's the first place you see when you come home, usually if you come in through the garage. And so I really want to make it aesthetically pleasing.

USABLE SPACE

And so by taking everything out and kind of making... we designate zones and make a design to get everything up off of the floor so that you have usable space for your cars. And by doing that, it just helps our clients see, okay, I do not want it to be like it was.

So we're not going to put everything back in because obviously these are just delayed decisions they haven't made, and so we're there to help walk them through, and I'm here to help you guys walk through that as well.

WHAT IS IT ABOUT GARAGES?

TASHA: Yes. I think recognizing that it's those decisions that are really more of the hang up, maybe, than even the actual things. So are there maybe it's delayed decisions or other things that you've noticed with garages that are like specific pain points, maybe even exclusively to garages that people can look out for?

We've done the pantry, we've done the linen closet, but what are the hang ups going to be as they go through the garage?

LISA: Yes. And so if you think about, think about what's in your garage today. So when we go in, it's usually there's tools, there's bikes, there's kids' toys, there's sports equipment, there's paint and products that you need for your house. Leftover tile, leftover lumber, all of these things.

And so what we do is what we come in is we try to make up a plan to get every single thing, we want to get it up off of the floor and get rid of the pain points. And the pain points are things that, like I said, delayed decisions. Things that you don't use very often. I know a lot of people have their holiday decor out there, but it doesn't always have to live on the floor.

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THREE PAIN POINTS

So, pain points are the biggest ones are you can't park your car in there, you can't find what you need when you need it, and then it just becomes a place of anxiety for you. So those are the three biggest pain points that we find.

TASHA: I think you just listed everything that's currently in my garage. So sports equipment, paint, extra stuff from the house, all of those things. But it is helpful to hear that a lot of people have the same types of things and they are able to get it organized and functional.

GET THINGS OFF THE FLOOR

So what are some of the products that you found are most useful for getting things off the floor and getting your garage organized?

LISA: Absolutely. And so when I say get things up off the floor, that helps for several reasons. Number one, it creates space on the floor that you can park your car or put your bike.

GO VERTICAL

So put the things that you want to get to most often. So my favorite ways to get organized, my favorite tools to use are go vertical. So I love the rolling racks that have shelves that are on wheels, because then when they're on wheels, you can roll them out of the garage and you can sweep back there, you can get back there and clean. It just makes it easy.

And then if you move, you can take them with you. If you want a more permanent solution. I love the Elfa shelves from the Container Store they're built in. You can also take those with you, but they're more of a permanent spot.

LOOK UP

But I love using, if you think about all the vertical space in the garage, including the ceiling, so they make amazing ceiling racks. If you think about the garage door, there's sometimes not that much space, but those ceiling racks are adjustable. And even if it's enough space to get your luggage up there or tall enough as a tote for all of your holiday items, by utilizing even that little bit of space on the ceiling, you're getting everything up off the floor.

So shelving all the way from the floor to the ceiling. The rolling racks, because you can move them out. I even love rolling toolboxes because again, you can roll the toolbox out if you want to work on something outside of the garage in the driveway, or you can move it around. With your toolboxes that are more stationary you don't have as much flexibility.

PEGBOARD

But again, we just did a garage where we have the toolbox and then they live out in the country. And so all that space above the toolbox, we did like a pegboard. And all of the chainsaws and the big outdoor garden tools that they need, not every day, but when they go out and work in the back of their property, they need them.

So if you think about a toolbox being up against the wall and then all of that wall space above the toolbox, that is prime real estate. And so my goal when I come into organize garages is to get everything off the floor, use all the vertical space that's available.

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Declutter, because you can't make it look, I know you can't get to where you want it to be unless something goes away. And by putting, like I said, like with like, it does help you see exactly what you have and what then we have too many of this or we never use this. And so those are the decisions that I help make.

SPECIALTY PRODUCTS

But those are some of my favorite organizing tools, as well as the bars that go across. And you can hang them on top. You can hang double bars if you have enough room, that you can put the bikes up on those bars. So the bikes are vertical.

All the garden tools, they make so many different hooks that you can put hoses and gardening tools and shovels and all of that thing just to get it up off of the floor.

TASHA: I love the pegboards in garages. I think those are so clever. And it does use that vertical space. It's interesting. It doesn't seem to matter what kind of space we're talking about, whether it be a pantry or an office or a small space or a clothing closet, like vertical space is like the number one thing I think I hear everyone talking about using.

LISA: It's true. Because if you think about the back of a door, like even the back of your garage door, you can get these over the door hanging racks and put all of the spray paint cans in there or have all of your paint supplies like your brushes.

YOU CAN FIND THINGS!

So that's the beauty of getting organized is everything is in one spot. It's like with like and it's there when you need it and then you can find it. So by creating zones, it helps you in the long run.

And then when you do bring home something new, we always say the one in one out rule. So say you do have to get something new that you need for your home and it has to live in the garage. So then it's going to help you decide, do I really need that item? Do I have space to organize it? If I bring it home, is there something else that can go away and then this can go in its place?

IT LOOKS GOOD

And then when everything is aesthetically pleasing, even in a garage, garages can be aesthetically pleasing, even with the cement floor. I love to just make it look nice because then you want to keep it that way.

So just like in your home, you decorate your home. You can have aesthetically pleasing garages as well. And I have lots of pictures. I'm going to show you guys.

TASHA: Yeah, we'll share some of those here in this session as well. So people can just see and get some of the inspiration for what a garage can be.

In your experience, how long does it take to go through this process of organizing a garage?

LISA: So there's two different ways that we can do it. Normally I bring my whole team in and we can do it, usually it depends, everything depends, but usually in a day. So we bring everything in, we pull it all out. The clients are going through what they're going to decide to keep while we're putting the systems in. And the systems are the rolling racks and hanging the bars and putting the ceiling racks up. So while we're doing that, then the client is going through

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all of the things, the decision making.

ALL ABOUT THE BINS

And then we love to use matching bins. That's the other thing that is one of my favorite things to do is because everything, the visual clutter goes away when all the bins match. Whether ... I have all white bins in my garage, believe it or not. And they stay clean, but they make so many different colors of bins. White, gray, black, those are our favorite colors to use.

And then we label the bins. So then at a glance you can say, okay, here are all of my paint supplies, or here are all of my outdoor rugs that I like to change out for the seasons. Or I have like some Christmas decor in mind. So I have one that's all of my little miniature trees. So just different holidays, Fourth of July bin, fall bin.

BINS MAKE BOUNDARIES

But then that bin also creates a boundary of this is how much room I have. Because when we come in, we're going to measure everything, we're going to make it fit perfectly. And then this is your barrier. So I love fall, I love fall decor, but I know that I only have one tote that I have room for in my garage. So I'm very careful then when I go to the store and there's fall decor everywhere and I'm not going to just be tempted to just grab it and put it in my cart, right? I'm going to be thinking, okay, I have one tote in my garage and so if I buy this, then something else has to go away. And so that's the beauty of getting organized in any space, but especially in the garage.

STRANGELY SHAPED ITEMS

TASHA: Yeah. So when it comes to these decor things, especially, have you run into any situations where something just does not fit into the standard matching totes that they have? Like I'm thinking something like a Christmas tree or a really large lawn tool or something. So what do you do whenever they just don't really make a bin for something of that particular shape or size?

LISA: For sure. And we have that. I have some Fourth of July flags that are metal flags that are so cute. And I love them and I use them every Fourth of July over and over and over. They're metal, but they will not fit in the bin. So where my Fourth of July bin is, on the shelf, right behind the shelf I lay those metal flags. So when I pull the Fourth of July bin down there's, my flags that I... the metal flags that I can grab.

For Christmas trees, that is one thing that I always say as an organizer, I say it's okay to put that in an attic if you have space. But use a Christmas tree bag that's pliable. Those cardboard boxes that they come in, you can never get the tree back in in the same, right? You can't close the lid or you're using up a whole roll of tape trying to get the box closed. So transfer that into a storage bag.

And then that can go either up on the ceiling rack like I mentioned before up there. Or that one item in my attic, that's the only thing that's up there is our really big Christmas tree because we have tall ceilings. And so it's like a twelve foot Christmas tree. And so that one thing that I have said that's okay to live in the attic. And that's it. That's all I want up there.

DO IT YOURSELF

But when we come, that's what having an organizer does, is they come and help you.

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And so I always say, if you can't afford an organizer, follow tips online. You can have a friend. I love having the friend idea. Like, you come and help me with the project, and then we're going to tackle this. And we're going to do some research on it, and we're going to go look at Lisa's Page on Instagram and be like, okay, this is how she does garages. We're going to follow that.

But I'm going to do it with a friend because doing it with somebody is always more fun. And that's what our clients say. Because you're here and standing here, I'm going to finish this project. But if I was here on my own, I'm like, forget it, I'm overwhelmed, I can't do it. And then you just close the garage door and go in the house, right?

AVOIDING DECISION FATIGUE

TASHA: And we talked about at the beginning, there's so many decisions to make. And I would think that that's probably the most overwhelming part of the entire process is hitting that decision fatigue. And these are the complicated things, right?

They're the things that you probably need to keep, but you don't really know what they do and all of those types of things. Do you have any tips for guarding against ... I mean, we mentioned like, the Christmas tree is the only thing in your attic. I could see it being a temptation to be like, okay, well, we made 60% of the decisions and this other 40% is now going to move to the basement or to the attic. Because I don't know what to do with it. So what tips do you have for just, like, avoiding the decision fatigue and actually getting it done?

ASK YOURSELF

LISA: So the questions that you want to ask yourself is, when was the last time I used this particular item? And you have to be honest with yourself. That's what I always tell our clients. We're not going to force you to get rid of anything, but we're going to ask you to be very honest with yourself.

When was the last time you used it? Do you love it? Like, is it something that you absolutely love? Would you buy it again today? If you were out shopping and you saw this particular item, would you buy it again? Like I said, when was the last time you used it?

BE HONEST WITH YOURSELF

So if you're honest with yourself on all those questions and the answer is, yes, I love it. Yes, I would buy it again today. Yes, I use it every year. Then we're going to find a spot for it. And those are things that we're not going to force you to get rid of.

And like you said, if it doesn't fit perfectly in a bin, there's ways to still store it, but not have it visible and in your way. So behind the bin on the shelf, or sometimes if you get those rolling racks that have wheels, there's like a gap underneath. You can slide it underneath those and use that. Like I said, the ceiling rack, or you can hang it on a wall.

I had a client that loved every holiday. She went overboard for every holiday. And she had a million of those cute metal signs for Valentine's Day and a huge turkey, and every season she had the big metal yard signs. And so she had a four car garage, and in one of her garages, we hung those. We made, like, a cute, like, gallery wall, and we hung them up so they were all up. They all were visible. So when it was that time for that holiday, she could go and grab it off the wall, go stick it in her front porch, flower bed. And then when she was done, she had a spot to put it back on.

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So you can get really creative with finding ways to get organized, but the biggest thing I feel like is just making those decisions of when was the last time I used it? Do I love it, why am I keeping it? Because a lot of times, people keep things because somebody - their emotional attachments - somebody that they love, gave it to them. That's no longer with us.

Or I get this all the time. Well, my mother in law gave me that, and if she comes over and she doesn't see it out, I'm going to get in trouble. Right, we hear that all the time. So we're here to just gently nudge you that it's okay, it's your house and it's okay to say I didn't use it and I found someone who loved it and was able to use it. There's ways to get around it.

So those are my tips for helping you guys.

MAINTAINING THE SPACE

TASHA: Yeah. And just what you said with being able to find what you want whenever you want to use it and then putting it back I think is also key to maintaining the space.

So what are some of the tips you have for maintaining a garage? Keeping it organized for the long term once you've put in all this upfront work to get it organized?

LISA: Yes. And that's the beauty that I always say that we help provide, is that we provide long term solution. And so if you're going to go to all that energy and spend the money to get the systems in place and to make it work for you, I want it to be a long lasting system.

ONE IN, ONE OUT RULE

And so I don't want you to have to rechange every year. And so you can get organized one and done. And the best way to keep it that way is, like I said, you have to practice the one in and the one out rule.

So like I said, if our client that loved all of those yard signs, if she went to whatever store that has all those signs and she saw one, she was going to be more apt to stop and say, okay, I already have this, five signs for this holiday. If I bring this home, I'm going to have to get rid of one that's on the wall. And if you're willing to do that, then yes. So it helps you curtail your shopping habits.

NEW SHOPPING MINDSET

So we always make just those rash quick decisions and we get to the checkout with a cart full of stuff that we don't really it's just mindless shopping. And so that's why people get in trouble after they've organized, because they're not being mindful about now what are we bringing back into the house?

Once everything gets out that you don't want and don't use and don't love anymore, you cannot continue those bad habits of just bringing more stuff in. So be mindful about your shopping habits, be honest with yourself, and then do the one in, one out rule and then those things will really help you.

The other thing I always suggest as well, and I did this before I launched my business in 2017... I was a teacher and I love clothes and I love shoes and I love cute bags and all the things that teachers love, right? And I was seeing a pattern in myself that I was just mindlessly spending, not paying attention. I had extra money because I always say to my husband, your money is our money, but my money is my money. And

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so I always had the fun money, but it was a very bad habit. And it's funny, but it's not funny because it just gave me permission to just mindlessly shop and not pay attention.

SPENDING FREEZE

So I decided to put myself on a spending freeze for an entire calendar year because I saw the bad habit. I didn't like it. I'm like, I would rather use that money to go on a fabulous trip than all the silly purchases I'm making at the store where everybody goes and put stuff in their car, right?

And so I really did that, and I put myself on a spending freeze, and it really changed the way I think about shopping and consuming. And it made me stop because it was just, like, literally a bad habit of just like, oh, that's cute, or that's on sale. So I would just grab it and put it in because it was on sale or because, oh, I thought I needed it. But once I got my closet the way I wanted it and organized... I've always been an organized person, but I really went overboard and was like, I do not need another black shirt. I've had, like, however many.

RETRAIN YOUR BRAIN

So every time then I would go shopping... And it wasn't just for my closet. It was my whole home. I was just mindful about, why am I putting this in my cart? I have to change this bad habit, and I'd rather go on a vacation or I'd rather save money for something that's more important than random stuff, right? So by doing that spending freeze, I really challenge you guys to do it, even if it's just a month or two months, just try it, because it really does retrain your brain on how much we consume without thinking about it.

TASHA: And I think your idea of having an end goal of what you want to do with that money instead can also be really motivating. It's not just like, well, I'm going on a spending freeze to be boring, but it's so that I can actually do something that really... If someone came to me with every purchase I've made over the last year and said, you can have all these things, or you can go on this awesome vacation, like, which one would you choose? And it's just a prolonged process of making that choice.

So thank you so much for just sharing all of this with us today. Before we wrap up, are there any last thoughts or tips that you want to share with us?

GIVE YOURSELF GRACE

LISA: Well, just be gentle on yourself too, because I know sometimes when you watch organizer accounts, it can be overwhelming. And we're a lot like, we're always have all this energy, and that's our natural gift. And so we're always used to we can get in there, like I said, we can get in there and organize your garage in a day or two.

And that's not most people. So give yourself grace. Get your family involved. I always say everybody that lives in the house should be involved in these family projects. And I love as a teacher, and I'm the oldest of seven kids. That's what my parents did. We always got involved in projects together as a family, and then everyone in the home has put some time and energy into doing it. And so then they see that, okay, this is important to my mom, or, this is important to my dad, or I like how my room looks. And I really don't like having to clean up my room before company comes. And now if I do a little bit every day, it helps.

So give yourself grace. Don't compare yourself to others. Don't compare yourself

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to professional organizers, but just reach out to us. I'm always available on my Instagram to answer DMs. I love talking to people. I love helping people. I love coaching people.

And so just give yourself grace. Find a partner or hire an organizer if you're able to, but just give yourself some grace. And don't feel the pressure to do it all in one day, because you cannot. We don't even come in and organize your whole house in one day.

MORE THAN A DAY

So bite it off small pieces, one drawer at a time. I always say one closet at a time, one room at a time. And then pretty soon, you turn around and your house is organized, and you feel light, and you're like, okay, I can enjoy what I've worked hard for. I don't feel stressed. My family doesn't feel stressed. That is the beauty of organizing.

TASHA: I love that advice, because people watching are probably going from session to session to session. We're talking about garages here, and they may go to a pantry organization session next, and then an entire session on how to overhaul your meal plan and redo your budget and all of the things.

And all of those are good things. But just like you said, it does not all happen in one day. And so this information, these tips and ideas and action steps that you can take are here for you, but they're not going anywhere.

You can still take them next month or whenever you're ready in your process to take the next step towards your garage specifically.

KEEPING UP WITH LISA

So where can people find you Lisa? I know you mentioned your Instagram. Where can people find you if they want to learn more from you or DM you or anything like that?

LISA: Yes. So my website is getneetwithlisa.com and my Instagram getneatwithlisa Facebook. Pinterest. TikTok. All the things are getneatwithlisa.

TASHA: Awesome. Well, we'll leave links to website and your Instagram down below. Thank you so much for your time today.

LISA: Thank you for having me. Have a great day, everybody.

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The 4 Secrets To Effective Homeschool Rhythms (For Moms With Young Kiddos!)

LISA YVONNE • TRANSCRIPT

Ever feel like you're balancing on one leg on a tightrope with a toddler in one arm and an octopus on the other? Yeah, me too. That's sometimes what it feels like to homeschool with young kids at home. But good news, when you set the right rhythms in place, a lot of that chaos goes away and a lot more calm and joy enter the picture.

So today we're going to talk about how set the ideal rhythm for you and your family and your home school. How to make sure you get the four R's taken care of. This is the most important part. What to do when it's not working. And a few extra tips from a veteran homeschooling mom of eight to you that I think will bring a lot of peace and delight into your home.

CRAFTING AN IDEAL RHYTHM

Are you ready? Crafting your ideal rhythm is way easier than you think. There are just a few things you need to take into consideration.

First, I want you to ask yourself what your non negotiables are. Second, think about what season of life you're in. Third, we're going to talk about the factors that are important for the people that are going to be using the rhythm. And fourth, we're going to talk about how to assemble that in a way that makes sense without stress.

Now, here's the fun part. Everybody's rhythm is unique to their home and their home school because every one of you is unique and so are your children and so is the way you are your household.

THE FOUR IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

So the first thing that we're going to take into consideration is what season of life you're in. That is going to be foundational to crafting your ideal rhythm. The second thing we're going to do is look at the anchor points of your day and also the things that we can't change. We need to build our rhythm around those. Third, we're going to take into account the four R's. Very, very important. Can't do this without them. And then fourth, we're going to talk about assembling it and making it work in your home. Are you ready? Let's go.

WHAT IS YOUR SEASON OF LIFE?

First things first. Let's talk about seasons. Very literally, we can look at whether or not you are in a season of lots of daylight or shorter days. Is it spring and summer? Or is it winter and fall? Because that does affect when our kids get up and how well they settle down in the evening.

But we also want to take into consideration seasons of life. Do you have any baby at home? Is your husband working a different shift? Maybe you have somebody staying with you for a prolonged period of time. Or maybe you have a family vacation plans or it's a holiday season. Maybe it's Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year.

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We all know those things tend to throw schedules out the window.

They can also derail rhythms. Yes, rhythms are more gentle than schedules. But it's very be aware of our seasons so that we can take them into account when we craft our ideal rhythm. I'm led to have rhythms that we do that are still very predictable and safe for the kids during those busier seasons.

STEP ONE: NOTE REGULAR PATTERNS

Let's ask ourselves what time are we waking up in the morning and when are we going to bed? Are there any things that we need to consider? Trips, company events and so on that happen and what time of day will those be occurring systematically throughout this season? And is anything important to you that you want to make happen? Whatever it is, think through those things and make note of them right now. That's step one.

STEP TWO: NOTE OTHER PEOPLE

Step two is to consider it the other persons of the season of life that you're in. So have a baby? When does he or she nap? When are you nursing? When are doctor appointments usually scheduled for? Is your husband working a different shape than usual? Is your family meal happening in a different time of day? Things like that. Make those notes as well.

WHAT CAN'T CHANGE?

Now that you've determined what season you're in, the next question to ask yourself are what are the uncompromising responsibilities and anchor points of each? You're homeschooling with young children, so this could be something as simple as nap time. Or it could be a bus schedule If you have a child going somewhere, a sporting event or practice that takes place at the same time every week. Or maybe you have to carpool or run errands at a specific time in a specific day. We want to make sure we jot those down.

Any other commitments or responsibilities, including but not limited to, church services, play date, sports practices, library story time - you get the idea. I'm just trying to jog your thought process here. Write those things down. The things that have to happen at a specific time and don't get to have the advantage of a gentle rhythm doesn't have to derail the beauty of the rhythm.

In fact, these can serve as anchor points that help it flow more smoothly. We just want to make note of them. So grab the paper and pen, use the printables or your own notebook and write them all down.

And don't worry if you forget one or two as life happens. Just slide it on in there. We'll shift and adjust and we'll keep moving forward.

WHAT ARE THE FOUR R'S?

Now we get to the four R's, which is quite arguably the most important part of crafting your rhythm. And the four R's are making sure that the people are being served by the rhythm and not the other way around.

You see it can be so easy to take the beauty of a gentle rhythm and still end up serving it like we do rigid schedules and that's not what we want to happen here.

So we're going to make a list. Again, the

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printable, the page is ready for you. If not, go ahead and take your paper and divide it into four sections. Draw a line and a line and you've got your four sections for the four R's.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The first section is for your responsibilities. Now, you're going to have a page for yourself and also a page for your children. On your own list, I want you to make the responsibilities that you have very clear in a way that makes sense to you. Whatever those responsibilities are, I want you to jot them down.

If you work from home or have your own business, and you have responsibilities in team meetings and responsibilities to the business, I want you to go ahead and write those down. These are important things to keep in mind

On your child's paper, I want you to write down your child's responsibilities as well. Now, this might involve making their bed, brushing their teeth, helping make lunch, picking up toys. Also, we want to remember their education, because school is their main job when they're homeschooling students.

So when we're homeschooling young children it pays to be super-duper specific. So if there's a skill that you're trying to teach them, list that in the responsibility column so it doesn't get overlooked.

RELATIONSHIPS

The next section is relationships. Relationships that you are tending, growing, cultivating during this season. If you're married, your husband is at the top of this list. We both know you're a mom, so your kids are also on here.

You also have extended family members and friendships that you want to tend to. And if you don't make time for that, if you just tend to try to fit those into the margins of your day, you'll go days, weeks, maybe even months, without intentionally pouring into them.

All right, write down the most important relationships in your life. Try to keep this to five or less. These might include friends from play dates, church groups, sports activities, and be as important as your best friend, your mom, your sister, your brother,

As well as the relationships for your children and possibly be a little bit different. But there are friends that they have with play dates, or church, or sports activities, things like that. Relationships with grandparents and relationships, of course, with mom and dad. So make that relationship list then.

REFRESHING

Number three is one that moms way, way, way too often overlook for themselves. That is refreshing. I want you to ask yourself very seriously, what refreshes me? Maybe it's a bubble bath. Maybe it's reading a novel and having a nice cup of tea. Maybe it's going out with the girls for appetizers one night a week or once a month.

Maybe it's sleeping in, or going to bed early. Maybe it's staying up late and watching a fun movie on Netflix with your husband. Maybe it's baking a cake or maybe it's playing in your garden. Whatever it is, if it breathes life into you and revitalizes your joy, keeps you feeling fresh, I want you to write it down.

Now, here's the thing. Often this activity

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changes with seasons. Take winter, spring, summer, fall, and jot them all down. And also look at the season of life that you're in. If the thing that usually refreshing you most is out of reach because of the season that you're in, think about what could replace it. Let's be focused on truly finding something that we can do that's refreshing.

Children also need refreshing. And this comes in a couple of different ways. One, if your child is very social, it might come in the form of playing with peers or friends or just doing something with you. But two, children also need downtime, whether it's a nap or just quiet time, children are refreshed by that empty space in their schedule.

Three, depending upon the child, they might love art, or music, or reading, or time to create with Legos, or play with dolls, or dig in the garden. Whatever it is, find out what refreshes and brings life into your child and make notes of those things. Again think through winter, spring, summer, fall, and the season of life that you're in so that we can make sure your child is getting fed not just academically, but from a heart and mind perspective.

REST

And of course, while refreshing is wonderful, so is rest. Rest is downright essential. It doesn't matter if you are nailing all of the responsibilities, running yourself ragged doing it, serving all of the relationships so that everybody else feels paid attention to, if you're too tired to feel all of the goodness and love and joy that comes from them yourself. And you're making sure that all of those refreshing activities happen but you can't really enjoy them because you're always thinking about what time you need to go to bed at night and wake up in the morning.

Understand we'd all love a ten hour night or at least an eight hour night and we're probably only getting four or five, maybe six. So let's be realistic. But also let's start eliminating some things from our daily rhythm. And yes, I know it feels impossible that we might need to do it, to make sure rest is a priority.

Now, the other thing that you can do to make rest more effective is have a really solid evening and morning routine so that you're not feeling rushed. Not watching TV within an hour of bedtime and avoiding my phone and my laptop within an hour of bedtime gives me a much higher quality of sleep.

You might find the same is true for you. There are a lot of studies out there about this. We make it a point to turn our blue lights off by dinner time every night and only have warm lights from then forward.

Things we do actually do help our bodies rest better. Rest is not just about sleep. It's about the time that we give our bodies to calm down. Think about what you need to have in your daily rhythm so you can rest well. Quality of rest is more important than quantity of rest.

And now do the same for your child or your children. What rest do they need? What do they need to wind down to sleep well? And how much sleep do they need at night?

HOW DO YOU ASSEMBLE YOUR RHYTHMS?

The rest of it. Now that you have all of this written down. It's time to put it together. How do you do that? I'm glad you asked. You have answered all of the questions and

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it's time to assemble your rhythm and start implementing it.

Now, before we go too far, I want to remind you that this is your first draft. You're going to have to practice and live with the rhythm to see if it needs to be tweaked. And that's okay. We're not going for a perfect schedule here. We're going for a beautiful progressive rhythm that helps soothe the rough spots of your day, leaves you feeling refreshed and rested, and helps you get everything done so that your young kids can learn and enjoy learning and you can maintain your sanity.

So you've looked at the four R's, you've examined your season, and now we're putting it all together. Take a blank piece of paper or use the printable from below and fill in those unchangeable points of your day. If you have uncompromising standards, like a family meal, go ahead and put that on there too, and right around the rough time that you would like it to happen each day.

Now break the rest of your day up into segments - before breakfast, before lunch, before dinner, before bed - and kind of group the other things that have to happen, your responsibilities first.

Next I want you to schedule in the rest period. So for you that's probably your wake up and your go to bed time. And if you have a time of day when you know you just need to sit for 20 minutes because you're exhausted, go ahead, put that in too. Now schedule your children's rest.

So you've got responsibilities and rest put in. Now it's time for the fun stuff. Go ahead and add in the things that give you refreshing. Now not all of them will happen every day and that's okay. But kind of pencil in a block of time that might be able to be consistent, but for a couple of different days.

So each day might have a slightly different rhythm based on the things that have to happen in it. And we're getting a broad strokes picture of what your week will look like with this activity. Once you've filled in all of your responsibilities and all of your rest and sort of making notes for the things that refresh you, look at what time is still there.

And we always want to have margin. I don't know about you, but in our house the magic happens in the margin. It's always those fun surprises that are amazing and you want to make sure you have room for them.

Last but not least, definitely not least, we want to look at those relationships. I want you to think about your marriage, your family relationships, your friendships, and think about when you might be able to fit activities in, whether it's texting, conversations, phone calls, date nights, cookouts for families to get together. And look at those things. Some of these things will be monthly. Some of them will be weekly. Some will be daily. If you're married, definitely work some time in each day, at least five focused, intentional minutes to connect with your husband.

And then I want you to think about those further relationships. Maybe it's your neighbors, or parents from Cub Scouts, or sports fairs. And maybe once a quarter, make time for an activity that includes them. You'll notice in the printables that I gave you there is time for those external things that we want to remember on a quarterly basis. That's a great place to put those notes.

Once you kind of put this together and got a picture of it, ask yourself, on a scale of

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one to ten, how doable does this feel? How peaceful am I or how anxious am I? And what are the problems that I anticipate if I go to implement the schedule as I've written it right now?

Okay, now that you ask yourself those questions, do you need to tweak anything? There's always things we need to let go of that we think we can't. And it's okay when we do. I want you to pull out the least important thing from your page, whatever it is, even if you felt pretty good about your schedule, I want you to go ahead and erase the least important thing, the lowest priority item on your daily rhythm, and give yourself a little bit more margin.

And then ask yourself those same questions again. How are you feeling? How doable does this feel? How's your peace or anxiety level when you look at it? If it's better, leave it off. If it's worse, go ahead and add it back in. And this is how we begin to craft our ideal rhythm.

The next step is to live with it for two or three days. See how you feel, see what worked, see what didn't, and then come back and tweak as needed. We're going after progress, not perfection. You can do it.

Now that you started to implement it and you see how it's working for you and you've adjusted as needed, it's time to get the whole family to buy in and make sure that it works for a longer period of time. And the way that you do that is you make it visible.

Now, you could do that with a really simple calendar time blocking chart if that's how you roll, but kids are really visual. You could also do it with pictures. You can do it with an app on your phone. Whatever it is, make sure you put it out there in a way that everyone can see it and roll with it and knows what happens next.

Now, in different seasons, with different age children, we've done it different ways, and there's really, again, no right or wrong reason. It's whatever works for you and the people in your home. And for you, mom, you decide what works best for you. If it's alarms on your cell phone, things put into a to-do list app, or maybe just a piece of paper, or a digital calendar on your phone that you do. Whatever it is, keep your rhythm visible.

And that's the simple, easy way. I promise, it really is simple and easy. Implement rhythms in your home and to get everybody on board. If you have someone who bucks the system, because we all have that kid, right? Or at least a child who's that kid for a season. It's okay.

Give them grace. Give yourself a lot of patience and maybe an extra cup of coffee, and just lean into it. Have conversations. Why does this bother you? What is it that's holding you back from enjoying this? What would you like to see differently? Go ahead and ask for feedback and implement some of that so that they feel like they're a part of the team and making it work better.

Here's to implementing well. You got this.

WORKING HOMESCHOOLING INTO YOUR DAILY RHYTHMS

Okay. Now, a couple of things to consider as we build out this rhythm. When you're homeschooling young children, most of your day is not going to be spent on school. It's going to be spent on life. You have to live. In fact, most of our learning happens in this room, the kitchen. Most of the important conversations we have as parents with our kids happen right here.

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And it's not by design. It's just natural. When you have food, when you have drinks, when you have laughter, it's a great recipe for togetherness and unity as a family. And when kids are happy and relaxed and feeling connected with you, they're more eager to learn from you.

Now remember, when you're homeschooling, it's not just about reading, writing, and arithmetic. Although I got to tell you, a lot of arithmetic happens in this room too, as does reading, actually.

It's also about teaching them responsibility. For instance, kids can help wash dishes when they are learning how to wash the dishes, or maybe you're washing, it teaches them how to take care of things.

COOKING TIME

One of the best ways to do math and to teach your kids life skills when you're homeschooling young children is to invite them into your daily rhythms, as we've already discussed. I love doing that with cooking. For instance, tonight we're going to have a breakfast casserole for dinner. So what do we give? Well, the first thing we gather the eggs. We actually have enough chickens in our back yard, and our kids love to run out back and grab them.

The next step, I'm going to let them count. How many eggs are we cracking? We're going to use eighteen. One, two, three... eighteen. They're going to help me whip them. Next, I leave the kids the job of tearing up the bread to put in the bottom of the pan for the casserole. They'll help me pour in the eggs on top. We'll sprinkle on our veggies and we'll bake it.

They'll get to have said they made dinner. They'll eat more food than they probably would have tried without being my helpers. And we'll have had a marvelous time together. They'll have been hands on in the kitchen, they'll have practice counting and cooking. And we'll probably talk a little bit about the life cycle of the bell peppers we put in, and where the cheese came from, and maybe even about the chickens and maybe eggs.

All hands on learning and balance. Plus they tell me all about their day and their adventures, even though I was a part of all of them. They love talking about them and processing as we make dinner together.

CAR TIME

And let's not forget about the car. I'm sure you spend a lot of time running errands and taking kids places. This is an awesome opportunity for audiobooks, great discussions and singalongs. Car time is not wasted time, and it's a great way to work your home school with littles into the everyday parts of your rhythm.

LUNCH TIME

Another great way to work learning into your day when you have young children at home, is to do it at time they're going to be busy and sitting still anyway. Case in point, lunchtime. I love lunchtime for read aloud. You can grab a favorite classic. Wind in the Willows is our current family read aloud. You can totally open it up, capture their attention while they're eating, and share the adventures of your favorite characters from literature.

OUTSIDE TIME

Another important part of your daily rhythm is getting your kids and yourself outside. Sometimes we bring a picnic blanket and

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do school in the front yard. Sometimes we do school with our nature journals, exploring the yard, the neighborhood or somewhere that we've driven to.

And other times we just grab books and all kind of spread out and enjoy. Or we climb trees, pick fruit. The sky's the limit and creativity knows no bounds outside. Pro mom tip: this is also a great way to reset if frustrations are rising high inside. Great way to reset and get happier attitudes.

If you have a swing set or a park nearby, this is also a great thing to add into your rhythms maybe once a week or even a little bit every day. Getting outside and playing is so much fun.

FUN AND GAME TIME

Don't forget the power of fun and games. Board games like Candy Land and Hi Ho Cheerio are great for your youngest learners. Sequence, Ticket to Ride, Catan Jr., and so on for young children. We've even got our kids play Quirkle, which strategy and numbers, colors and patterns. There is so much learning that can be had around the board game and so much strong family culture building that can be done too.

So make sure that fun and games are part of your daily home school rhythm or at least your weekly homeschool rhythm, because kids who are having fun are retaining more information and more eager to learn.

I am sure you are pretty likely to have these in your home. They are great for math. We can talk about how many you know? Two, four, six, eight, ten, twelve and count by twos. Two, four, six, eight. Okay, what's twelve plus eight? This is great. If your kids are even younger, stick with one, two, three blocks instead of counting the little dots. You can use this to build. You can use geometry practice. Creativity. Let them build a scene from history or the story that you recently read. Legos are a fantastic way to teach your children. And also, it's great for their sensory input, too. But they know, right? They love the feeling and they love the pride and satisfaction they get from completing your project.

MUSIC TIME

So here's where a lot of our music lessons happen. This is our vinyl record player and our collection of old vinyl records. You'll see, we have a tale of Beatrice Potter. We have other audiobooks. We have music that spans everything from folk to Electric Light Orchestra, to Elvis Presley to Nat King Cole, to modern day rock, and so on.

TV TIME

And sometimes this is a secret weapon. It can buy you peace and quiet. But we can also use it for lessons on days when mom loses her voice or doesn't feel well, a kid just needs to rest, or because we built it into our schedule to teach us something that we want to learn outside the pages of a book. Using the TV, often YouTube, sometimes videos from the library, or movies that we have in our collection, we can learn about cultures and music from around the world.

We can explore important historical movies that have shaped our culture. Just recently, we watched Fiddler on the Roof and talked all about that. And we can also use it to watch documentaries about science, learn math facts, phonics and reading, and more. We love having a variety of ways to teach the kids.

BONUS TIPS

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And here are a few bonus tips, Mom, from me to you.

LITTLE FEEL GOOD IDEAS

I want you to do what makes you feel good. Just something small every day. For me, it's putting on a pair of fun earrings.

I also like the idea of a mom uniform. If you're not someone who needs a new outfit every day or a style every day with that outfit, a mom uniform is great. I have two of these tops, two of a favorite T shirt with a V-neck on them that I feel like looks great on me. And I feel wonderful in two pairs of my favorite pants and a pair of jeans. And I just rotate through those clothes, day in and day out, for my normal at home mom days.

Now, on days that we go out, I have fun sweaters I can add to the shirt, I have a favorite hoodie, and so on. Keeping it simple and reducing the decision fatigue is a fantastic way to get things going.

I also have a favorite coffee mug. In fact, you might have noticed it in some of these videos because I absolutely love drinking a delicious cup of coffee and having it a fun mug. So between my earrings, my easy mom outfit, and a quick updo and a favorite mug, I feel equipped and ready for each day.

Whatever that looks like for you, go ahead and make sure to work that into your daily rhythm.

Sometimes I've had a late night and I give myself permission to have a shortened morning routine so that I can have a little bit more rest to show up better for my family. You know, it's important that you take care of these little things because they do enhance your own joy and they give you what you need to show up well for your family. Also, pay attention to your kids. They might have something like that.

ONE-ON-ONE TIME

Are you ready to embrace rhythms in your own home and home school? You get to enjoy the sanity, peace, joy, and productivity that come with fabulous rhythms once you set this system in place.

I have some special one on one time with each of my kids each day and spread them out throughout the day. Some do great in the morning, some do better in the afternoon, and some need that in the evening. So pay attention to what makes your rhythms easier and what enhances your day for you, what helps your spouse's day better for them, and what helps your kids' day flow better for them.

IMPERFECT PROGRESS

Don't be afraid of imperfect progress. Remember, rhythms are meant to serve you and they're meant to change in the seasons, so you will be reassessing and reestablishing. That's okay. Revamping them is wonderful. So take what you've learned, implement it in your home and enjoy all of the many blessings of rhythms on your journey.

And be sure to come back and let me know what you think. Drop a comment under this video come visit me on Instagram @ themomentsathome or send me an email at lisa@themoments@home.com. And before you go, be sure to grab your printables to help you with this process.

Take care and I look forward to hearing from you.

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Modern Calligraphy for Planners and Bullet Journals

MAIRA VIAL • TRANSCRIPT

Hi friends, welcome. My name is Maira Vial and I am the founder of Vial Designs, a calligraphy blog. I'm so excited to be here with you guys today and be doing this workshop at the Get Organized HQ Summit. I've been doing calligraphy for over seven years and I've been teaching it for the past five years.

AN OBSESSION

And I am so excited that I am here teaching you calligraphy. I've been obsessed with calligraphy ever since I started learning and I just want to give you a fair warning that you might become obsessed too. So with that said, let's go ahead and get started with the workshop.

BAD HANDWRITING? NO WORRIES!

The first thing that I wanted to tell you about this workshop is that it is for complete beginners. You don't need to be creative. You don't even have to have good lettering or beautiful penmanship.

That is one of the mistakes that most people make and they don't even attempt to learn calligraphy just because they think that they need to have neat handwriting. And that's just not the case. I'm going to show you how you can learn from the beginning, step by step, and you're going to find out that your handwriting has nothing to do with the way that you learn calligraphy.

PRACTICE IS THE KEY

That being said, I just wanted you to keep in mind that this is the first time that you're learning calligraphy. Even if at first you think you're not good at it, it does take practice to become better. My advice is for you to keep practicing and learning and then come back to this workshop and you will be amazed at how much progress you've made after you've been practicing for a little while.

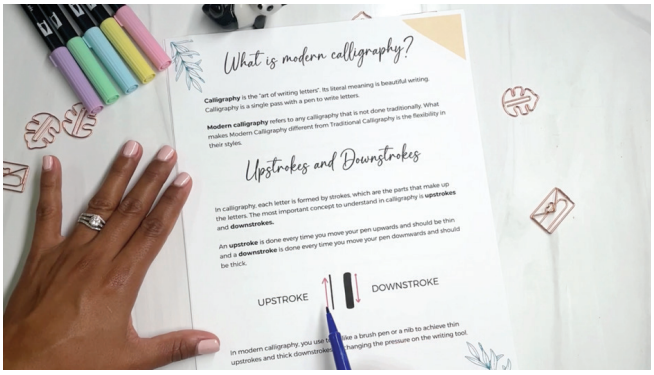
I did create a workbook for you to make it easier for you to follow along with me during this workshop. It is going to be in the link down below. It's going to look like this. So I do recommend that you go ahead and print it if you can. If you cannot print it for whatever reason, it is completely fine. You can always look it up on your phone or tablet or any device that you have handy that you can refer back to it. And you can always just use pen and paper for this workshop because you will be able to follow along what we're going to be doing.

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE STROKES

So let's go ahead and get started with modern Calligraphy for Planner and bullet journal. So the main thing you got to remember when it comes to modern calligraphy is that each letter is formed by strokes, which are the parts that make up the letters. Most important concept to understand in calligraphy is the upstrokes and the downstrokes.

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Upstroke is done every time you move your pen upwards and it should be thin, just like you see here. Then a downstroke is every time you move your pen downwards and it should be thick.



THE RIGHT TOOLS

And the way that you achieve this thickness and thickness of the upstrokes is by using a tool that has a flexible nib, or a flexible tip. So for example if you see this one right here this is considered a monoline pen because no matter how hard you press on the tip of this pen the width of the strokes are going to be the same.

So now let me show you a brush pen. This one right here it is a brush pen with a small tip and as you can see right here it is a little bit different and with this type of pen to do calligraphy when you press hard you're going to achieve the thick downstrokes.

I'm going to show you another brush pen. This is another brush pen and if you can see the tip is brush like. This one is going to give us larger size calligraphy, as you can see the tip difference between these two.



FAUX CALLIGRAPHY

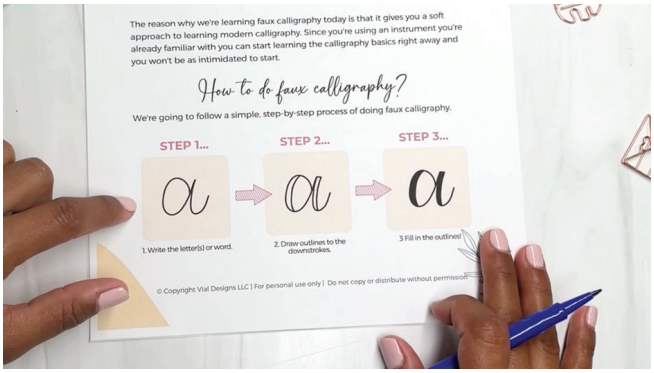
And so what about doing modern calligraphy with a regular pen? Well I'm glad you ask because doing modern calligraphy with a regular pen is usually referred to as faux calligraphy, which basically we're going to be imitating the look of calligraphy using any regular pen. Starting with faux calligraphy, it is the best place to start and it's also the easiest because we are going to be using a tool that you are already familiar with. You won't be as intimidated to start learning, it's going to be so much easier for you.

So the main difference between faux calligraphy and regular calligraphy is the tool that you're going to be using. These are the three steps that we are going to follow to do calligraphy.

The first one is that you are going to write your letter or word and then the second one is that you're going to draw outlines to the downstrokes. A downstroke, like I mentioned already, is every time you move your pen down. For example, when you're doing the letter A, you go up right here, and then right here, you start to come down. And this is where we're going to add that downstroke. And then you go back up again. And so, same over here, you go down until I write right about here, and then you go up.

So pay attention when you're writing your

letters, when you are moving your pen down that's when you know that you are going to be drawing these outlines and then the third step is to fill in the outline. So this is how you're going to create calligraphy.



A CHALLENGE

Based on what we learned about faux calligraphy so far we are going to do a challenge. Yes we're going to do a challenge to start. For the challenge I want you to grab your pen and in this first space right here you're going to write the word Monday. Based on what I explained to you go ahead and write Monday. So now don't worry about it being perfect, just try your best to write Monday using faux calligraphy using what you know using what I just told you. You can pause the video for a little bit of the workshop. Go ahead and write it and then come back to it.

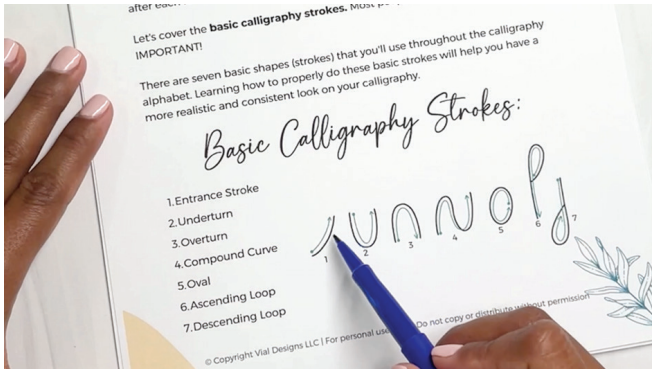
Now don't do anything in here because we're going to come back to this one later. All right? So I'm not going to write Monday with you guys just because I might be giving it away by the way that I write Monday using faux calligraphy. So I'm not going to participate in the first part of the challenge, but I still want you to do it. You can pause the workshop and then go ahead and do it and come back to it.

BASIC STROKES

Now that you did the first part of the challenge, let's go ahead and cover the basic calligraphy strokes. And I find that this is one of the things that most people missed when they're starting to learn calligraphy. And it's arguably the most important part about learning calligraphy, is learning about the basic calligraphy strokes.

So we have seven basic calligraphy strokes and we're going to go ahead and go over them. These are super important because these basic calligraphy strokes is where you're going to use to form each letter of the alphabet when you are doing calligraphy.

This page right here, you're going to see the basic calligraphy strokes. And right here also, as you can see with the teal line, the circle shows where you should start this stroke and then the arrow shows where you should finish it. Now, we're not doing any calligraphy just yet, but it is super important for you to learn and practice and master these basic calligraphy strokes. So that's why we're going to go ahead and go over them.



ENTRANCE STROKE

So the first one that we are going to do is the entrance stroke. And as you can see

here, we're going to start at the baseline. Real quick, I just wanted to refer back to this page because in this page I have here the name for each of the lines that I'm going to be talking about. So if at any point you don't know what I'm talking about, go ahead and refer to this page.

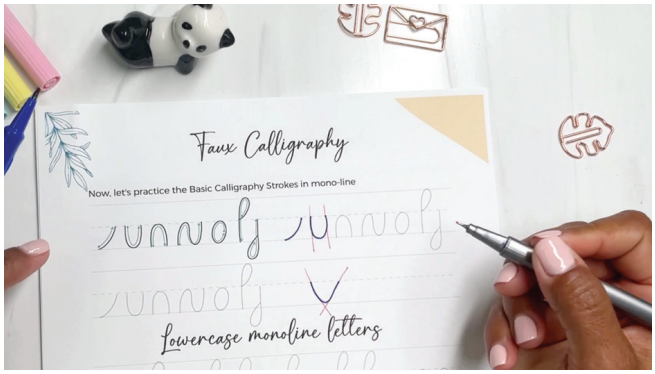


Because in here it has the ascender line, which is basically where all your tall letters are going to end up. Right here, the X line or the waistline, the X height is where the body of your letters is going to be and then the baseline and then the descender line. I just wanted to point that out just in case you didn't catch this right here. So anytime, go ahead and refer back to those as well as the names of the basic calligraphy strokes. Okay, so let's start. We are going to go from the baseline and then we're going to go up to the waistline.

UNDERTURN STROKE

Now this one, this is the under turn. We are going to start at the waistline. We're going to go down and then with the strokes the way that you are going to stay consistent with them is that if you draw a parallel line, if you draw a line in the direction of the strokes, they should be parallel.

So what I mean by this is like, for example, if you're doing the underturn and then let's say you do it like this, right? If you draw a line in the angle that you are doing it, it's not going to be parallel.



OVERTURN STROKE

So this is something that you are going to want to make sure as you are practicing the strokes, the same goes here for the overturn. You just want to make sure that you stay consistent because again, if you were to draw the overturn like this, every time you draw a line, it's not going to be parallel. So again, this is what we want when we do the angle of the letter, we want everything to be parallel and to have the same angle.

COMPOUND CURVE STROKE

Now we are going to do the compound curve, which is kind of like a combination of these two. So we go up and then down, and then we come back up.

OVAL STROKE

Now we are going to do the oval. This seems easy, but it can be a little tricky and it honestly takes a lot of practice. The main thing that I am going to tell you about the oval is that you want to make sure that you start on the side. Now this is going to make a little bit more sense when we start adding the outlines and everything.

ASCENDING LOOP STROKE

So we're going to start right here. We're going to go up, down, and then up. And

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right here, we're going to start at the waistline. We're going to go up and then down. We're going to stop right there.

DESCENDING STEM LOOP STROKE

And then we're going to do the descending stem loop. Now, I gave you a space for you to practice and then you can continue practicing in here. Now, the good thing about this workbook is that you can print it as many times as you need to. And the more you practice, the more that you're going to get used to it.

PRACTICE BUT SAVE MONEY

One tip that I'm going to give you, if you want to save on printing, I recommend you to have a tracing paper handy. This one is one of the cheapest ones that I found and it is for practice. So you don't need anything fancy or expensive. You can grab it from Amazon. And then what you do is that you can grab the page and then you will put it on top of it and it will be perfect because you can see everything that you're writing. And that way you only have to print your wordbook once. And then with the tracing paper, you're going to be practicing a lot.

ADDING THE OUTLINES

Now we are going to add outlines to the downstrokes. So, for example, to the entrance stroke, you know, our pen was going up, so we're not going to add an outline there. Right here to the underturn, our pen was moving down right about until there. So that's why we are adding the outline.

So here for the overturn, we go up and then we start going down right here. And this is where we adding the outline. Now for the compound curve. So we go up and then we go down, and then we go up again. So right here is where we are going to add our outlines.

Now, if you can see right here, I added an outline to either side of it. So for the oval, remember, we're going to start on the side. We're going to go up and then we're going to go down right there. And then we're going to go up. And that's where we moved our pen down. That's where we're going to add the outline.

So right here we go up and then we go down all the way over here adding the outline. And so right here, we start with the outline because we start right there and then we go down and then we come up. So that's why right there is where we are going to start adding the outlines.

FILLING IN

Then you're going to fill in the outlines. And now I left this part over here so you can try it. So do the same thing. Add the outlines and then fill them in. Now this is the moment that you've been waiting for. We're going to start creating calligraphy using a regular pen, aka faux calligraphy.

THROUGH THE ALPHABET

As I mentioned before, every letter of the alphabet is formed by the basic calligraphy strokes or some sort of variation of the strokes. So I'm going to go ahead and go over the whole lowercase alphabet and I'm going to be telling you the basic calligraphy stroke that we're going to be using to form each letter, as well as adding the lengths to the downstrokes.

Now I'm going to be getting a little bit fancy

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using different color pens to create the alphabet only because I'm going to show you how to form each letter of the alphabet using the basic calligraphy strokes or a variation of the strokes. I'm going to be using a color for each of the strokes. And then in case you were wondering, I'm using the Paper Mate Flair pens.

First thing that we're going to do is the entrance stroke. Before this is the stroke that you're going to be using a lot. As you can see, I don't go all the way to the waistline. I'm going to stop right there.

The next stroke to form the letter A will be the oval. And then I'm going to do the outline where my pen goes down. And then I'm going to color the outline. The next stroke that we're going to be using is the underturn. And then again, I'm not going to go all the way up. I'm going to stop right there. And then I'm going to do the outline.

CONNECTIONS ARE HUGE

Now, one of the reasons why I did the alphabet strung together like this is because this is going to be huge for you later on. When you are doing the connections with the letters, the entrance stroke is going to be your best friend doing the connection. So that's why I went ahead and did it like this. So you will start getting used to connecting the letters.

Now for the letter B, I'm using the ascending stem loop. And then I'm going to do an inverted overturn. And then I'm going to do the outline right there. I'm going to be connecting with the entry stroke for the letter C. The C, as you can see, is like an oval. But I am not going to connect it. So that's why I'm going to do it with green. And then I do the outline and color it in. And then now for the D, I'm going to do an oval as well. For this part of the D, this is going to be an ascending stem loop. And then we're going to connect it right there with an overturn. I'm just going to keep the color the same, but I just wanted to let you know that.

The E is also like an oval, like a version of the oval. Now the F, we're going to do an ascending step loop, and then it's going to mirror the same ascending step loop. So we're going to go down, and then we're going to end right there. And then I'm doing the outline where my pen was going down. Going to connect it with the entrance stroke for the G, going to do an oval. Now, as you can see here, I'm extending the oval a little bit. And this is just because it is like my style of the lettering. Usually you will just do an oval, but I think this one looks a little bit better. And then the next part of the G, we're going to do a descending stem loop. And then we're going to do the outline. Then we do the entrance stroke at the letter H. Again, we're going to do an ascending stem loop with the outline.

DIFFERENT STROKES

Okay, now this is the first time we're doing a different stroke, which is the compound curve. We're going to go up, down, and then up. And then we're using that as a connector to the next letter, which is the I. And then the I, we're gonna do a modify underturn with the outline. For the J, it's going to be a descending stem loop with the outline as well. And as you can see, this is for you to use as a reference. The letters do not have to be perfect. This is just for you to help you practice. And then also, as I mentioned, practice is super important for you to get the muscle memory to then start doing the letters of your own.

And then I'm going to do the entrance

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stroke to connect the J with the K. Now the K we're going to use an ascending stem loop and then the outline. Now the K is one of those letters that it is a little bit of a rebel. And then this is one of them that we don't really have a basic calligraphy stroke to do it. So that's why I'm doing this black right here. And then this one is kind of like modified underturn. For the L, we're going to do an as in the ascendant stem loop. And then we're going to connect it with the underturn.

For the M, we're going to do a downstroke. Just kind of like the first time we're doing an overturn. And now we're going to do a compound curve. Now with the N, it will be another downstroke with the outline. And then we're going to do a compound curve again.

A COMMA DOT

And then the letter O is an oval with an outline. And this friend right here is called a comma dot. And then as you can see right here, it is used to connect the letters and then it is called a comma dot. But it could also be like a modified version of the underturn stroke. Moving on to the letter P, we're going to do an entrance stroke. We're going to do a downstroke. Now this downstroke is a little wonky. I'm just going to go ahead and fix it a little bit. Now this is like a reverse oval entrance stroke to connect the P with the Q and then an oval with the outline. And now we're going to do a reverse descending stem loop.

REBEL LETTERS

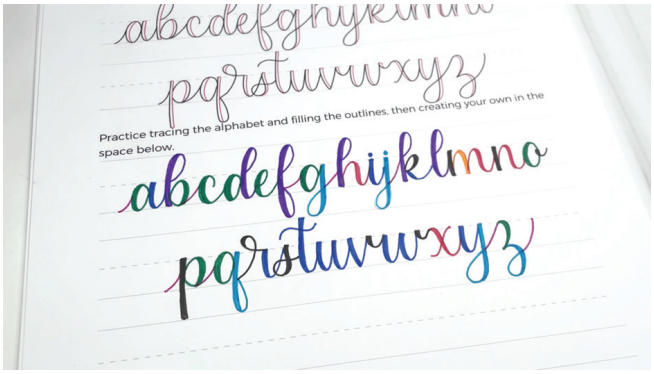
Now the R and the S is there another two like rebel letters that don't really follow a basic calligraphy stroke. But then like right here, this could be our underturn. Like a little bit of a modified version of the underturn. And then S right here, this one is another one that doesn't follow like an actual basic calligraphy stroke. Now for the T, we're going to have like an under turn, but then it is a modified one because we're going to extend it all the way in up to here. And then to cross it, you can do this wavy line, which I love, just to give it a little bit of a style, but you can also just do a horizontal line.

Now we're going to keep this color because the U is going to be formed by one and then two under turns. And then the V is going to be a pointed under turn, if you will. And then we're going to connect it to the W with a comma dot. And then as you can see, the W is going to be one and two underturns. And then we're going to connect it to the X with a comma dot. Now this one, the X is like a wheel form of the compound curve with an upstroke. And then we're going to add the outline right here, which is where our pen was going down.

Now for the Y, we're going to do an underturn and then we're going to use a descending stem loop. We are going to do the outline, going to connect it to the Z with an entrance stroke. And then the Z is going to be sort of like an oval, a reverse oval because it's going to go like this. And then sort of like also like a descending stem loop, but it's going to be very curved. And then we're going to finish with an entrance stroke.

And there you have it, the faux calligraphy alphabet using the basic calligraphy strokes.

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MONDAY, MONDAY

And now you are more than ready to do the second part of the challenge. So now that you practice doing the letters with the basic calligraphy strokes and now you know exactly how to add the outlines to the letters so you can create faux calligraphy, we're going to go back and we're going to write together the word Monday.

As always, I recommend for you to start with the entrance stroke. So we're going to go ahead and do that. So for the letter M, we're going to write a downstroke. And then I'm going to go ahead and color it in. And now we're going to do an underturn. And then I'm going to be adding the outline. And now I'm going to be adding a compound curve. And so I'm going to be adding the outline here. And then just a tiny bit here. As you saw here, I just added it on one side. I probably should have added it here. But now another thing that you want to keep in mind is to keep the downstrokes consistent.

We're going to do the O, which is going to be an oval. And then I'm going to write the downstroke right here. Now we're going to do the comma dot and add in the outline for the letter N, I'm going to do the downstroke and then I'm going to do the compound curve. So I'm going to add a little bit here and then just another tiny bit over here. Now we're going to do the D. So the letter D, remember, it is an oval. And then we add the outline. And then we're going to do an ascending stem loop when I start right here. Go up to the ascending line and then we go down. And then we go up right until there. And now I'm going to go ahead and add my outline right here. This is a little bit wonky right there, but that's okay.

Now for the A, we're going to be doing an oval. So this is one thing that's one of the reasons why I recommend for you to start on this side is because if you see here, the connection wasn't great. But we're going to fix that in a little bit when we finish doing the letter. Let me go ahead and add the outline. So here I'm going to add a little bit more weight to this side because I don't want to keep adding weight here because I want to keep in mind as I'm doing the letters, that they stay consistent. Now, the way that I'm going to fix this is that I'm going to do the underturn and I'm going to make it a little bit close. And then I'm going to add the outline. Now for the Y, remember, it is an underturn. Again, we're adding the outline right here. And now we are going to do the descending stem loop. Okay. Now we're going to add the outline and we're going to color it in. And then we're going to end with an entrance stroke.
And there you have it. This is how we write Monday doing calligraphy using a regular pen.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

Now, a couple of things that I want to make sure you analyze when you're doing your letters is that as always, you want to try as much as possible that all your downstrokes or the outlines that you did to your letters are somewhat consistent. And now another thing that you want to also make sure is that the space between each letter is consistent as well.

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And then the last thing that you want to make sure is the angle. You want to make sure if you write a line through each of your letters, the line is parallel. So if you can see right here, my letters are very upright, you can also write them at an angle. But if you do it in one letter at an angle, you want to make sure that all the letters have the same angle. You don't want to have one straight and then one angle.

Now, with all of this being said, I want to take a moment and I want for you to give yourself a pat in the back because you completed this challenge. And also make sure that you compare the second try with the first one that we did at the beginning when you didn't really know anything about calligraphy. And then the second one after we went over all the basic calligraphy strokes and how to form the lowercase letters.

Now, even if you don't think that your second try was the best, please don't be discouraged. Imagine if this was only with 30 minutes of practicing and learning. Imagine what you can do with a lot more time and practice.

BULLET JOURNAL CALLIGRAPHY

And now I wanted to show you real quick how I put in practice my faux calligraphy skills into my bullet journal. So hopefully this can give you a bit of inspiration for you to do the same in your bullet journal or planner. Since I'm recording this workshop in June, I thought I will show you my June bullet journal setup.

COVER PAGE

And so the first thing that I create is the cover page, as you can see here. Now, I did speed up a little bit of this process just because I already went through each letter of the alphabet. And so when you're doing it, just make sure you take your time and you go slow when you're doing your faux calligraphy.

And one of the things that I love about faux calligraphy is that you can be creative in the way that you fill in the outlines. For example, here I decided to leave just a little bit of the blank space to create a cool effect in the letters. So I love all the things that you can do when it comes to faux calligraphy and decorating your planner or bullet journal.

IMPORTANT DAYS PAGE

And then the next page that I do is the important days page which is the same as a calendar page but I try to keep it simple only to write down the important activities, appointments, anything that I need to remember in here.

And then also before you tell me that you don't have time for this, you might not agree with me, but remember that we make time for the things that are important to us. And I do see bullet journal as a creative way for me to express. And the cool thing about this system is that you can be as elaborated or as simple as you want. The only thing is that you want to make it work for you. And for me it just helps me stay creative and at the same time it helps me stay organized and on top of things.

BRAIN DUMP PAGE

The next page that I usually do in my bullet journal is a brain dump and here I just put everything and anything that is bothering my mind and then I've learned how

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important it is just to write things down. It helps you clear your mind and then make decisions with a more clear perspective.

MONTHLY GOALS PAGE

The next page is for the goals for the month and I divide it into family and business and it's pretty self-explanatory. I just write down the things that I would like to accomplish for each of those categories for the month.

GRATITUDE PAGE

The next couple of pages that for some reason, didn't get filmed, but I will show them to you in a little bit is the gratitude page, where I try to record every day something that I'm grateful for because I've learned that that just helps you see everything with a better perspective and being grateful for the things that you have instead of focusing on the things that you don't.

CURRENT ACTIVITIES PAGE

And also I do like to have a page for the things that I'm doing currently. It is so fun just to look back and see the things that you're watching, listening and things like that.

WEEKLY SETUP PAGE

And then last but not least is how I set up my week, which is exactly what I'm doing here. And as you might have already noticed, I sketch everything with pencil first. You definitely don't have to do it, but for me it just helps me with the placement of everything in the page and to stay consistent with my calligraphy.

MAIRA'S JOURNAL

And so let's do a quick flip through of the June bullet journal setup. The first thing is the cover page. And here is the final result with the floral doodles that I added. I love that they are very simple to make and they always create beautiful results. The next thing is the important days page, which I love to just add different colors to the outlines like I did here, or just leave them blank like I did for the brain dump. So those are other options that you have when it comes to faux calligraphy. And also I decided to add just a little bit of color by highlighting some of the dates. The floral doodles, as I mentioned, they are really, really simple to make and they just like embellish the page. So good.

Next we have the June goals. The next thing is the June currently, and this is what I write, what I'm currently reading, watching, working on, listening, all those things. And next we have the gratitude page that I do have two pages for this because I like to add a couple of lines of the things that I'm grateful for each day. And then last but not least is the weekly setup. And this is how I use my calligraphy into my bullet journal almost every day or weekly.

FREEBIE OFFER

All right, so I hope that with what you learned here today, you're going to start making beautiful letters in your planner or in your bullet journal. Now, if you want to practice a little bit more, I do have a freebie that I created exclusively for this event. I will provide the link below. If you want to keep practicing and learning, you can go ahead and grab the freebie so you can get on my email list.

I am constantly providing free worksheets.

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I also have workbooks that you can use to keep practicing and learning calligraphy lettering. Also doodling that you can add to your planner and your bullet journal.

DISCOUNT OFFER

Thank you so much for sharing this time with me here at this workshop today, and I hope that you learned something new and that you feel inspired to start making beautiful letters in your planner or your bullet journal. If you want to continue learning calligraphy, I do have a modern calligraphy course for beginners where I teach you how to do calligraphy using a brush pen. I do have a special discount for this event, so if you want to take advantage of that, I'm going to put the discount in the notes down below.

But thank you so much for being here and I appreciate being part of the Get Organized HQ. I hope that you enjoyed my workshop. And that is all for now. I hope I will see you next time. Bye.

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Closet Organization Tips

MARIE JACKSON • TRANSCRIPT

TASHA: Please join me in welcoming Marie Jackson from Organized Marie. And today we are going to be talking about how to organize closets, so primarily, like, master closets, clothing closets, that type of thing. So thank you so much for joining us today, Marie.

MARIE: Thank you so much for having me. I am so excited to be here, especially talking about closets. It's one of my true passions.

WHAT'S FIRST?

TASHA: Absolutely. Yeah. So can you tell us just if you're going to organize a closet, what is the first thing that you would do, maybe even before you went in and took things out? I don't know. Where do you start in this process?

MARIE: Well, and that's a great question because it can be very overwhelming if you're going into your closet and you have not ever touched it or it's been ten years, and you're like, it's a cluttered mess. You gotta be ready. I shouldn't say ready, but close to ready, because if you're not willing to make that change and take the time to go into it, you're going to kind of keep prolonging it and pushing it off.

IT'S ABOUT MINDSET

So you have to be at that point where you're like, okay, I need to tackle this. So there's a huge mindset component when you go into this, because once you get into it, it's going to be a lot of emotion attached to it, and you're going to have to be ready for that, make some hard decisions.

There's going to be pieces of clothing or things that you might find that bring back memories and could be good or bad, however you may want to look at it. So it is an emotional process. So you need to know that going into it before just going in, taking everything out, because it's easy taking everything out.

You go on in, I'm like, all right, I will take it all out. And that's how we'll start, which is great. But once you get into the nitty gritty of sorting through everything, that's that emotional component. So you gotta know kind of your mental strength, your capacity around that before you really dive into it.

TASHA: Yeah. So whenever you work on a closet, do you typically try to, I don't know, divide it into chunks or sections and do, like, I don't know, maybe all the shoes or all the clothes, or all the formal clothes versus other clothes? Or do you try and do the whole thing as, like, one three-day weekend project?

TAKE IT OUT AND SORT

MARIE: No. So typically how we work when we go in and we're organizing a closet is we take it all out, and it's easy for us because we're not emotionally attached to that, so that's why it works well. But when we go in there, we take everything out.

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We sort everything into the categories like you expressed. We've got the shoes, we've got the sweaters, we've got the dresses, we've got the swimsuits, we've got the socks, we've got the jewelry, we've got the handbags, like you name it. Anything that goes into the closet, we put it all into their respective categories.

DECLUTTER

Once that's done, that's when we go in and we work with the client and we're holding it up and we're like, keep or toss, keep or toss. And what's really important in this process, especially if you're doing it on your own, is physically touching the product and holding it up, looking at it.

If you need to try it on, try it on. But it gives you that sense of you're going to know once you hold that item up, tap into how it makes you feel, because that will give you that answer. If you're on the fence of not sure if I want this or need this or however that may be, you will know. Because you have this idea the second you grab that item, that how it's making you feel to keep it or get rid of it.

ACCOUNTABILITY PARTNER

It also helps too, having someone with you to do it. If you don't feel that you're going to have the capacity to do it on your own or, you know, you're going to cheat, so to speak. Like, oh, I'll wear this soon, even though I haven't worn it in the last ten years or five years, whatever it may be. I'm still going to wear it. And when you have someone there that's holding you accountable, you're a lot more honest with yourself. So if you have that ability to do that, I highly recommend that.

TASHA: Yeah, absolutely. So whenever you work on a closet, what are some of the main pitfalls that you see people falling into?

OPTIMIZE YOUR SPACE

MARIE: One is really not optimizing their space. And that's really what we kind of come and do and take a look at what's in there. And there's two different ways really to go about this too, because a lot of closets are the ones that we've worked with . . . I say not a lot, but half of them are . . . So kind of have your typical wire shelving in there, which there's nothing wrong with it, but it's figuring out how to best optimize that.

Other ones already have some closet presets in it and still trying to figure out how to optimize it. There's these beautiful closets that they've had done, but it's not optimizing their space well enough. And that means getting a good system in place that works for the things you have.

So for example, let's say a closet we have worked on where someone got a nice beautiful closet put in there and it wasn't being utilized well. We took the space where it was hanging space and utilized product that was stackable bins that could go there for sweaters and put other items there for shoes as well. We've done that where it utilizes that space and it's not wasted.

So really kind of going vertical in that regard is what I see a lot of people not optimizing. What is there, making use of wall space or adding drawers. Stackable bins are a major game changer, especially if you're using the wire type shelving because it creates that shelf, more of that shelf space that you typically need.

STAY IN YOUR LANE

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And I think also with the nicer Newark type closets, using shelf dividers in there too as well, because they are like your rules to the road, I like to call it. If you think about driving, if we didn't have lines on the road, people would be all over the place. It would be utter chaos.

And shelf dividers keep you in your lane. It holds you accountable to make sure what you're putting back there is neat and tidy and it's not just thrown in there on the shelf. So it kind of just gives you that weight there to be like, okay, I have to fold this, otherwise it's not going to really fit. And then everything kind of falls apart. So it just keeps you making sure that you're optimizing your space by making sure you put things back also where they belong.

SO MANY OPTIONS

TASHA: Yeah. And you mentioned like custom closets systems you can get put in. I know the Alpha system from the Container Store is really popular, but that can be a really overwhelming design process because you kind of have this blank canvas and you really want to do something useful. You want to put the right amount of shelving versus hanging space. There's almost too many options.

It's awesome that there's so many options if you happen to know exactly what you want, but it can be really overwhelming. So do you have any tips or strategies for how to even consider putting in something like that?

HELP AVAILABLE

MARIE: Yes. So the first thing you really want to consider if you are looking into Alpha or something of that nature, the Container Store has free design. So I would highly recommend just working with a designer because they do free designs, they can do it over the phone, they can do a video chat, but they are very well versed with the product, so they'll be able to identify what components that you need in there.

If you're saying, I think I want more shelving or more shoe space, they'll be able to tailor that design to fit your needs. So the whole saying that is don't work harder, work smarter, use the tools and resources that are there to help you in that process. Especially when getting a design.

DIY KNOWLEDGE

When it also comes to if you're looking into something that you want to do on your own, you don't want to go the Alpha route. There's also ClosetMaid and there's also Ikea and those other kind of DIY options which are great.

You just have to know what you're getting into before you start. So knowing your measurements, knowing an idea of what you want to put in there, if it is going to be more shelving and doing a little bit more research.

So if you're going to do something on your own, you're going to have to make sure that you've looked at the solutions that are there, that it fits what you're looking for, for your budget, and that you can install it. Because the end of the day, you could find this great closet and then you start installing it and you're like, well, this is not fun at all. So just being prepared to know that there's work to do if you're going to do it DIY.

But there's also design specialists that are out there that will create those designs for you, for your closet.

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TOP HACKS

TASHA: Yeah. So can you share a little bit about it maybe with those systems specifically or products that you've used, what are just some of the most, I would almost call them useful hacks you've seen for organizing a closet. Either a product that can be used or like, hey, if you're going to be putting in one of these systems, definitely think about adding this that people don't think of very often.

MATCHING HANGERS

MARIE: Yes, I would say number one, hands down on every single closet that we have done is hangers and having matching hangers, but specifically velvet hangers. And I am a big proponent of those because of the space saving ability that they have. So they are slimmer than your standard plastic holders, but they also just have an instant element of warmth to your closet.

It gives you that little added like luxury when you go in there and you see things matching because our brains are attracted to cohesiveness and symmetry and it does that, it just gives you that elegance and you don't have mismatched things all over the place.

So matching hangers are for sure my number one, I would say hack of getting your closet. The product that I would recommend doing, if you do anything out of getting any type of product that will instantly change your closet, for sure.

STACKABLE BINS

The other thing that I usually do or we like to put in closets is stackable storage bins because there is a lot of space that doesn't get optimized. And when we use those stackable storage bins, we're able to put them on a shelf however it is and use what's there rather than just letting it be wasted space.

SHELF DIVIDERS

The other couple of products that are kind of my go to that I like to use is the shelf dividers that I mentioned before and just keeping them on the shelf to keep the piles nice and neat. Adding labels on the shelves is something that I do recommend and that we do add as well. You don't see that too often, but it's that guide it's back to that whole driving scenario. If you're taking a trip, you put it in your GPS, it's giving you the directions to get there and that's what labels do. They get you back to that destination. So getting the shirt and sweater back to where they belong.

HANDBAG HANGERS

And I would say the other thing that I actually like to use quite a bit in closets is handbag hangers. Because there is a lot of space that doesn't get optimized with the closets that we have used very well with handbags, and I like to display some of them as well. But there's also a lot of hanging space that goes unused in some of the closets that we use. So we like to use handbag hangers just to make use of that hang space so it doesn't feel like it's not being used at all.

SOMEBODY ELSE'S SYSTEM

TASHA: Yeah, absolutely. So have you encountered any situations where you've gone in to organize a closet and maybe it was a closet that already had some sort of system installed, but now there's new occupants for that house. I think the more that these closet systems are becoming

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popular, you're going to move into a house and someone put all of this awesome time and energy and money into making a perfect closet for their stuff. But you're like, oh, wow, what do I do with all of these very small cubbies?

Our closets had so many hooks. I mean, just like lining the walls and they were tiny hooks. I assume they hung like jewelry. I'm not really sure. So what can you do when you're like, wow, I kind of hate to rip all this out, but it's also not really functional for me.

ADJUSTABLE OPTIONS

MARIE: Yeah, and that's a great question because at the end of the day, ultimately the number one goal of organization is making things functional and making it work for you.

So when you run into that scenario and you've got something that you're like, this is not what I like or want or love. And I've run into a situation with this exact issue where we went in and she's like, this closet system is here and I hate it.

I'm like, okay, now, thankfully, it was Alpha. So with Alpha, you have a lot of flexibility to make a lot of different adjustments, which we were able to do and move some bins around and shelving and that sort of thing. That's why I also love Alpha so much because it is so customized. Like, you can do so many different things with it. So we were able to do a workaround with that, but not everyone's going to have that option.

So if you have a system in there that you don't like taking a look at, a lot of the built in systems have adjustable shelving in them. So can you take the pegs out to remove a shelf and make space with a better bin in there that you think that you would like better? Just taking a look at what you have there to figure out, is there anything that I can add or remove based on the system that's in here to make it a little bit more functional for myself versus having to rip the entire thing out and work with that.

TIME FOR NEW?

And after you work with that for some time, and if you still don't like it, then that might be time to reconsider putting in a new entire system. But taking a look at it, just figuring out what you like, what you want it to do, and crafting a solution from there.

TASHA: Yeah, absolutely. What would you say for someone who's like, oh, this sounds awesome, but I don't have a closet that is either big enough to put a whole system in or some people, I've seen tons of those closets with the double sliding doors and things like that. Would you still try to put a system in there? Would you stack from the floor? What would you do with a pretty small space?

SMALL SPACES

MARIE: Yeah, so if you're looking at a really small space, my first go to number one option always would be to look, to put into a new system. I would look automatically go to Alpha. That's my go to. We just actually finished up doing a closet that was very small and we ripped it out and we were able to put in the Alpha system and it was an utter game changer for her. So in that regard, that would be my first option.

So if you have a small closet, take a look at your measurements and you'd be surprised too. Some people think that it's going to be costing so much if you have such a small closet that it might be

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worth the investment and might not also cost as much as you think it would. And the Container Store does a ton of sales throughout the year, so keep your eye open for that and that sort of thing.

Now, if getting a new system in there isn't an option for you, I would definitely look into stackable bins. So if you have a small closet, you at least have probably some shelving in there. So at least on your top shelf, I would add some stackable bins up there to make use of that height.

DRAWER UNITS

And I would also add a drawer unit if you can. I'm thinking of just like a single if you have a single open door closet and it's relatively small, adding a drawer unit in there, optimizing that vertical space.

Another thing that you could do is use stackable shoe bins on the bottom down there just to optimize everything that's down there. But really going vertical is going to be your best option when you're trying to figure out your small space to figure out how to make it work best for you.

VERTICAL SPACE

And I would say actually the last thing too would be utilizing the wall, being able to put hooks on there or whatever it may be, that you could hang things there to use that wall space. The wall space is often something that just doesn't get used as much as it can be. And don't forget to use a wall.

And I would say, actually, I got one more last thing, is the door using the door as an organizer. Because the door again, is another thing that you forget about. You open up the door. Well, you have that space right there, so there's plenty of door organizers out there that you can use that you can store your shoes, your handbags clutches. You could use jewelry, could even put in clothes there, depending on what type of system that you have there.

So those would be my options. If you've got a small closet to go vertical and utilize the door, and then I would say then the last thing would be use the wall would be my order.

TASHA: Yeah, definitely. Which really all of those are another version of going vertical. So if you're not sure what to do exactly . . .

MARIE: Right, I know. Just go vertical. You'll be happier, I promise you.

SEASONAL CLOTHING

TASHA: Yes, absolutely. So do you have any tips on seasonal clothing and how to make a closet function well? I live in the Midwest. It'll hit 100 some summers, and it will hit negatives some winters. And so I've got to have the parkas and also the tank tops, and I don't want all of those in my face all the time. I don't want it to be 90 degrees outside and my Sherpa sweaters, they're not what I'm looking for. So what have you found works well as a strategy for dealing with just totally different seasonal wardrobes?

MARIE: No, I completely get it because I'm originally from the Midwest as well, so I completely understand that you could have a snowstorm one day, and it could be 80 degrees the next. It's wild sometimes.

So, yeah, having the clothing there, seasonal clothing and having it organized makes a huge difference. So what I've run into and what we like to do is we have a seasonal storage option. Now, you can store

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this if you don't want it in your closet. You could go under your bed because there's great space to use under there. And I have it labeled as seasonal, and I do seasonal because the seasons change. So this way you're not having to keep changing out your labels where it's summer versus winter and that sort of thing, but having a seasonal spot for your sweaters versus your swimwear, basically, and keeping that.

KEEP IT CLOSE

You could have it like an open bin shelf, I do with our kids in their closets. Their seasonal clothes are on their top shelf, and it just says seasonal. So I keep that in there. And then when it comes time to change, we flip it out. And if you just don't want to have it in there, then finding another place to store it. And I would say keep it close to your closet because that's important. So you don't have it too far away, because when you have items that are in different locations that are further away from the home base, that's how things start to kind of spiral.

So if you decide to keep your winter clothes in the attic or outside in the garage, that's how things are going to fall apart, so to speak. Because let's say you needed to go get now a sweater down. So you go down and you get the sweater and then you just put the bin back up. But then now you got the sweater that's in your closet, but now you're not going to go put it back up there. So having the transitional bins that you're going to use for those clothing items, keeping them stored close to your closet will make a world of a difference.
Definitely. I found that to be the case that I want it to be close because of also like you said, the weather can snap. Or you're going to go camping. So it's summer and the days are in the but the nights can still get down into the fifties and sixties, you know the sun's down, it's a lot cooler and I don't want to have to go to the attic and lug out my entire thing. That's just overwhelming. So I think you're totally right. But keeping the things together is really helpful.

SHOES, SHOES, SHOES

And then also another category. So we've talked about handbags, we've talked about shoes, things like that. So do you use stackable bins for shoes? Do you use tiered shelf? What's your preferred way? I guess if you had all the options, what would be your preferred way to organize shoes?

MARIE: My preferred way to organize shoes is stackable storage bins. And there's just only one from the Container Store that is my tried and true that I consistently use. And the reason why I like using them is because they are accessible and functional. Meaning and there's not as many steps involved. So it's an open bin, but it's stackable. So you can go ahead and just put your shoes in and you take it out. There's no lid there.

And I'm not against lids and using lids, lids though to me, just add an added step and it may seem small because they're like, oh, it's 10 seconds or 3 seconds to open up a lid. But after time that can get annoying and it's not easy and it's not functional. And so that's why I like using these stackable shoe bins where you can keep up to like three pairs of sandals in one little compartment or you can have your sneakers one in each or you could have a couple of pair of flats in one.

So it has a lot of flexibility where you can store more than one pair of shoes in one little compartment and it's just really kind of playing around with it to see what will fit

and work in there. But when you need that pair of shoes or whatever it is, you go in and grab it and you can take it out.

OPEN CUBBIES

The other I would say is like my backup shoe organizer is your basic open concept. It's like a white shoe organizer that you can just go in. Again though it's the open cubbies, getting it in and getting out. There's no lid involved and that uses vertical space as well. So those are really my go-to because you can just get it quickly. You can see it too. You're not having to open up a lid, you can't see everything in there or anything like that. And that's why I really like those two specific products when it comes to organizing shoes.

ALL ABOUT ACCESS

TASHA: Yeah. And really with everything, I think what you're saying about it being easy to access, we talked about that with seasonal clothing, shoes, same with your sweaters and your handbags. And if you have a uniform you have to wear to work, like having those easily accessible, you want the things that you want to grab, really easy to grab.

Well, thank you so much for your time today. Diving into all of this. Before we wrap up, are there any just like last thoughts on closet organization or last tips that we just haven't gotten to that you're like, oh, you totally need to know this?

ALL ABOUT ACCESS

MARIE: Yes. I would say when it comes to your closet organizing, and this is what I really preach to people when we are organizing their closets, is keeping what makes you feel good about yourself. We all have that shirt or dress or sweater that we put on and we love it and our confidence is glowing. And it's not necessarily about you want to keep something because you're like, oh, I'm planning to get into this one day, or oh, this needs to be repaired, that sort of thing.

You know what shirt you have that makes you feel really good about yourself. And that is what is really important to have in your closet. Because when you go into your closet and get yourself ready for the day, you're going into your favorite department store essentially, and you're now picking out everything that makes you feel good.

You might not necessarily love what it is, but it also makes you feel good about yourself. And that's what's really important. Because when we do that, we put forth our best self and that's how we kind of elevate everything and it makes us feel good. And then we are better versions and we're exploring and doing all these other things rather than putting on something that you're just like, this just doesn't make me feel good about myself.

THE RIGHT CHOICES

TASHA: Absolutely. Yeah. I found for myself, I don't know why it's so hard to choose the clothing that I actually like. That seems to be when I'm at the store and I'm like, oh, this would be like a staple, I shouldn't spend money on this. It's way easier to spend money on the one time use exotic things.

MARIE: And that's another really good point to only buy the things that not only make you feel good, but colors are things that accent you, that look good on you. Not just to buy it because it's on sale, and I can be a sucker for that. I will be a full . . . admit. I'm like, oh, my gosh, this is on sale. I can

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get this thing for, like, $20, but do I really need it? Is it going to make me feel good about myself? And is this a good color for me?

So just being conscious about those decisions because you want to again, if you're shopping, you want to buy something that makes you feel good and it brings out the best in you.

TASHA: Absolutely. Yeah. Well, where can people go if they want to learn more from you and follow along with your organizing projects?

FOLLOWING MARIE

MARIE: Absolutely.

You can follow me on Instagram at OrganizedMarie, we share all sorts of before and after so you can see the entire transformation take place and share tips and all that good stuff.

TASHA: Awesome. Well, we'll leave that link down below. Thank you so much, Marie.

MARIE: Thank you so much for having me. Absolutely.

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10 Things You're Doing To Ruin Your Outfit!

MARNIE GOLDBERG • TRANSCRIPT

No matter what our best intentions, there are things that we often do that completely ruin an outfit. So today I'm going to walk you through those things and the ways to fix them.

And just remember, I said we. I am guilty of every single one of these things myself. So let's walk through this together and help each other out.

WHO IS MARNIE?

If you've never seen me before hi. My name is Marnie Goldberg and I make mostly fashion videos geared to the everyday woman in everyday situations. My tagline is Real Style for Real Women, meaning the everyday practical outfits that I wear in real life, the real beauty products that I use on an everyday basis. I gear my videos to women like me. Those of us who love a good deal would prefer to buy more budget friendly items, but we don't mind a splurge now and then if it's justified.

TEN THINGS TO RUIN YOUR OUTFIT

So, knowing those things about me, let's get to the ten things that you're doing to ruin your outfits. So, as I move through these tips, please know that if I have any specific product recommendations, I will have those linked for you.

1. WRINKLES AND LINT

So in no particular order, number one has to be wrinkles in your clothing. And with that, I'm going to add visible lint, pet hair, or in my case, my own hair, somewhere on your clothing. I can't tell you how many times I've filmed what I think is a great video, and then I watch it back in editing and there's a big long hair strung across my shirt. It is what it is, but we can try to avoid these things.

OUT OF THE DRYER

So as far as wrinkles go, I have an iron, but I couldn't even tell you when the last time I used it. I have a few ways to avoid or get rid of wrinkles in my clothing. Number one, get the clothes out of the dryer as soon as the dryer cycle is over. That is key. That goes a very long way.

STEAMERS

Now, if that is an unavoidable thing, there are a few products that I like to use to steam my clothes. Like I said, I hate ironing, love steaming. So I picked up this travel steamer a while back and then just ended up using it every day as well. So I do pack this when I go on vacation or travel, but I also just keep this in my bathroom and steam on a regular basis. Doesn't have to be huge. There are tons of options on Amazon. Doesn't have to be expensive either.

A new option that I recently picked up is this guy. Now, this is a combination, it's not

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a hair straightener, although it looks like you could use it, don't use it as that. But this irons and steam, you can see the holes here in the plate. What I like about this one is that let's just say you're about to walk out the door and you're wearing a dress or a skirt and you see some wrinkles on the bottom. You don't even have to take it off to fix it. You just run it along the hem really quickly.

Generally speaking, do not ever use a steamer on yourself while you're wearing the clothing. That is very dangerous. This is a very specific situation, just the hem of a skirt or dress. But I like this idea also. You can really get into the corners, the nooks and crannies of a particular garment.

So that's what I would recommend. As far as wrinkles go, get it out of the dryer cycle. Use a steamer.

LINT ROLLER

Now, as far as lint and pet hair, or in my case my own hair, lint rollers are great. This one is one I've been using a bunch. It's so much more user friendly and it also happens to be very travel friendly. You could even throw it in a purse or backpack. It is a travel lint roller. And what's cool about it is on the inside it has this sticky gel and it spins a little ball in here and you just run it over whatever garment you have.

You don't have to worry about peeling off that weird tape or the other kind that's just like a velour feel. You know what I'm talking about? Those just kind of pull and tug, but they never pick up all the stuff. This is very sticky. You can roll it anywhere and everywhere and it's reusable. Once it's full of lint, you just run it under warm water and it all comes off and you start all over again. So I really like this one. For those of us that like myself, are rather lazy about reaching for the lint roller, this one's also fun to use and easy too.

2. VISIBLE PANTY LINES

The second thing we are doing to ruin our outfits is having visible panty lines, or VPL as we like to call them. I used to be a big fan of the thong. I have reached the age where I don't care how it looks, if it is uncomfortable, it is not happening. And I don't care what any of you say, thong underwear is not comfortable. I spent most of my twenties and thirties discreetly reaching around to pull it out of my rear end. Those days are over.

NO MORE THONGS

So if you want to avoid a visible panty line, but you do not want to wear a thong, I feel you. There are options. Pretty much every brand on the planet makes some kind of seamless underwear. Now, for me, I've been wearing one brand for years and I'm not getting paid to tell you this. It's just the brand that I've worn for years and I keep purchasing over and over and it's from Soma.

SEAMLESS UNDIES

They have a specific line called their vanishing line. And there are a few options throughout that. There's just their regular vanishing edge, which is seamless underwear. They have options that are mostly cotton. They have some that are more of a microfiber bikini, high rise, boy shorts, all kinds of style options. But the key here is they are seamless.

And what I particularly like about all the vanishing panties is that on the rear leg opening, they are lined with almost like a

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little bit of silicone. So you will never have to discreetly reach around and pull anything out of your rear end. There's nothing riding up. There is some sort of seamless underwear for everyone. So VPLs can be a thing of the past.

3. POORLY FITTED BRAS

Going right along with visible panty lines is a poorly fitting or a poorly fitted bra. So first and foremost, a bra has a job. It's to keep the girls lifted up. And did you know that there is a rule of thumb on that?

So the rule of thumb is, when properly supported wearing a correctly fitting bra, your breast should fall no lower than the crease in your elbow. I know. Go ahead, go check it out. Make sure they are lined up so when they are lifted up into the proper place.

Well, first of all, there's less strain on your back and less strain on your shoulders. That's very important. But if your breasts have fallen below that line, then they just sort of blend in with the middle of your torso and they make you look heavier and larger than you really are.

MAKE ADJUSTMENTS

So there are some ways to fix this. First of all, if you're like me, you're reaching for the same two bras all the time. It doesn't matter how many you have in the drawer. We have our favorite two and we just keep wearing them over and over.

If you aren't making sure that the straps have been tightened up every once in a while, definitely go do that. As we wear them, the straps just start falling a little bit, and before we know it, the girls are somewhere south of the equator. Just make sure you're adjusting that and make sure as you are stretching out the strap.

That's why you have multiple hooks on the back of bras that close with a hook and eye closure. When you first get your bra, you should be closing it at the closest to the edge part, and then as your bra stretches out, that's why those extra hooks are there, so you can make them tighter and tighter so you are properly supported in the band as well.

GET PROPERLY MEASURED

Now, if you aren't sure what your bra size is, I do recommend going to a local retailer and getting measured for a bra. If you happen to live near a Nordstrom, they are fantastic at doing this. You just have to put aside your embarrassment. I have done this to myself. It is eye opening, the numbers they come up with.

I remember telling the woman that she was horribly wrong and she looked me dead in the eye and said, fine, I will bring you a bra in that size, you put it on and you tell me. She was not wrong. From Nordstrom to Soma, and even if you can't get to a store in person, there's all kinds of ways to do it. Make sure you're wearing a properly fitted bra.

UNDERWIRES, MINIMIZERS?

Now, I am not a huge fan of underwires. They're generally uncomfortable. I do believe they have a time and a place, but again, I keep going to, Soma it's just easy. I found the stuff I like, and I am a big fan of their Endless line. It's a wireless bra line. They have bralettes those are kind of just like, go over your head, and they have a really nice wide band underneath, so they still do lift everybody up, and then they have

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just a regular bra version with the hook and eye closure. I am wearing the regular bra version today. What I love is they come in a million skin tones and colors, and so there's something for everybody there.

And then for those of us larger chested girls, sometimes you're going to need a minimizer. I am specifically thinking about when you're wearing a button down shirt and you have the gaping in between the buttons, that's the time where you need to reach for a minimizer. And the one that I love is from Spanx.

It does have an underwire, but it's really, really comfortable and it's pretty. Sometimes those minimizer bras look a little industrial, like a little scary, and I still want it to be pretty underneath, even if nobody can see it.

So getting back to how this is going to ruin your outfit so obviously, if your breasts are hanging somewhere in the middle of your torso, that adds pounds and actual visual thickness to your torso. But if it's too tight around the band or the straps are digging in, it's adding bulges and back fat that probably don't even exist in real life. So make sure you have a properly fitted and fitting bra and you won't ruin your outfit.

4. WRONG PANT LENGTH

Number four could be a whole video all by itself, and that is the wrong pant length or jean length, depending on what time of year it is. We could go through all the different options of the kinds of pants and the widths and so forth.

But generally speaking, if you're wearing wider leg styles, they shouldn't be dragging on the floor. And if you're wearing skinnier or straighter leg styles, they shouldn't be bunching up around your ankles. Wide leg pants should be about a half inch off the floor, or they should break right across the top of your foot.

CROPPED LENGTH

And if you're wearing skinny or straight leg and you want a little bit of a crop, an inch, no more than two inches above the ankle. Otherwise, if you crop it higher than that, we're getting into pedal pusher Capri pants length, which I'm not saying is the worst thing in the world, but it is definitely a more dated look. And if you're wanting to look a little more fresh and put together, try to keep the crop length between one inch and two inch on a straight or skinny leg type of pant.

Of course, those lengths are going to depend on what kind of shoes you pair with the pants. So if you have the budget, you may want to choose pants that work with flats and then a different pair of pants in that same style that work with a heel and so forth.

CUFFED?

You can cuff your pants, but generally speaking, you want to make the cuff pretty small. A very exaggerated wide cuff of about two, three, four inches just looks like you're wearing pants that don't fit unless you go for an extreme cuff. That's just a style decision. Confusing, I know, but there it is.

5. BLACK CHUNKY SHOES

Since we're talking about shoes, this is something I didn't think about until fairly recently, and I'm talking about black shoes, specifically black clunky shoes. Now, I'm not telling you to throw away your black shoes. I have a pair of black boots and booties and

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black pumps, and those are staples in my closet.

NUDE SHOES

Generally speaking, and this whole video is all about generalities, because there's always exceptions and there are no rules. But generally speaking, even if you're wearing head to toe black, adding the black shoes just makes everything look heavier, and it draws the focus from your face where it should be down to your feet.

And my mom always said when I was growing up, you know, you have a problem when people are looking at your feet and not your face. So I prefer a nude pair of shoes for pretty much every outfit. First of all, it really helps narrow down the shoe wardrobe. It's great for travel. You only have to pack a handful of things every year. I make sure I have a good pair of nude sandals, nude wedges, nude booties, and nude pumps.

THE RIGHT FOCUS

And back to the reason why I first noticed this when my kids were in high school. It was right around the time when the boys started going to homecoming dances, and we'd get the whole group together and take the group pictures, and I'd see these beautiful young girls in these gorgeous dresses glowing with vitality in youth, and then they're clumping down the street in these big, heavy, platform black shoes.

And it just broke my heart because that's all the eye is drawn to. Not their lovely faces, their twinkling eyes, the beautiful dress that they probably spent days, if not weeks, searching for. It was those big clunky shoes. If you are wearing an outfit and you are wearing black shoes and you're looking in the mirror and thinking something isn't quite right, try swapping them out for a nude pair instead.

6. WORN OUT HANDBAG

Moving on to tip number six. Nothing ruins an outfit faster than pairing it with an old, beat up, worn handbag. I'm talking about something that looks like it's been through some wars with you, that you've traveled across a desert with it.

Now, I'm not saying you have to run out and buy a designer bag or something super expensive. I am partial to designer luxury handbags, but I also have a huge and extensive collection of very inexpensive bags from Walmart and Amazon, all kinds of retailers. This is one that I have been reaching for over and over. It's on trend. It's fun, it's neat, it's clean. Can hold a bunch of stuff.

Another one, if you like the smaller bag. This is one that Walmart releases every season in different colors. For summer, they had it with rattan with a black edging. So it doesn't have to be super expensive, but it should be neat, clean, no worn edging. The strap should be intact, shouldn't be held together with any safety pins.

There's so many options out there. I have recently done a video on all kinds of handbags for summer that are extremely budget friendly, and I'll link it above and down in the description box as well.

7. BELT THAT COMES WITH THE DRESS

Number seven is a personal pet peeve that I am so guilty of violating myself. So I'm not judging anyone. I'm just pointing this out, and that is wearing the belt that came

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with the dress. Now, again, I'm speaking in generalities because there's a few dresses I can think of that I've recently purchased that I absolutely am wearing, the belt that came with it.

But we all know the kind of belts we're talking about. It's when the manufacturer just threw in it's cheap and it's especially held together with those little stringy belt loops. So if you really want to escalate the outfit or just not ruin it, get rid of that belt and cut off those little strings, it is not going to damage the dress. Just don't cut it so close that you put a hole in the fabric.

FINDING YOUR WAIST

Those little strings are really just there to hold the belt in place during transit. Some say it's a guide to help you determine where your waist is. You know where your waist is, and that dress is actually going to look better on you if you put the belt of your choice where your actual waist is and not where the designer has decided it should be.

So it's a great idea to invest or not even invest, because it doesn't have to be expensive, but just get a nicely made, thinner, neutral or nude colored belt. It'll take you a lot of places. If you want to go crazy, you can add a black belt or a brown belt as well. I'm talking about a belt. Now, yes, I realize this is Gucci, but once you've bought it, you're never going to buy another one.

THE RIGHT WIDTH

Something about this width and this general color that is made to go around your waist. I'm not talking about a belt that also works in your jeans. Because those usually ride lower on your hips. Make sure that it can go around your waist and there's not a lot of extra at the end flapping around, although you could always tuck it in, like kind of loop it around.

Very cute option. Something like this. Another one that I love and have used for years. This is a black option. This is an adjustable skinny belt with a really cute little clasp. You can buy these individually or in sets of two or three. I found this one on Amazon. What I love about this one is it's adjustable in the back, so you can make it as long or as short as you want so it can work no matter where you are.

Let's say in the holiday season. And thin is always the safest option, but sometimes a fun, wider belt. I have been reaching for and wearing these stretchy belts from Amazon. These came in a pack of three and then year round. These faux leather ones also happen to be from Amazon. Again, I have them in a pack of three. So it came with a black, a neutral, and more of this brown color. But it's a way to elevate the outfit and dare I say, not ruin it by swapping out the belt that came with it to something of your own.

8. MATCHY-MATCHY JEWELRY

As we get to number eight, I'm getting especially picky, but let's just go for it. So, number eight, you may have the most beautiful outfit put together and then you ruin it. And by you, I mean we, ruin it by accessorizing it with a fully matching set. I'm talking about earrings, necklace, bracelet. That it's all the same piece.

I love a good piece of costume jewelry. I just don't believe that the same piece should be mirrored in all three places on your body. Pick one of them. If you're going to do a fun statement necklace, then pair it with something a little more dainty and

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understated.

You can never go wrong with some basic gold hoops. You choose the size, anything from huggies to just maybe a little bit bigger, and then maybe just keep it to some generally neutral bracelets stacked with your watch.

Or if you're going for the big statement earrings, then pair it with maybe a daintier necklace. Pick one, not all three. That is the best way to elevate an outfit and definitely not ruin it.

9. TOO TIGHT OR TOO OVERSIZED

Now, tip number nine is honestly something that I have struggled with for a very long time, and that is wearing clothes that are either too small and tight or too big and loose.

Now, there is a trend for oversized clothing. I am a fan, but when you're wearing it as a trend, the general rule of thumb is one piece of oversized clothing paired with the rest of it being rather fitted to balance everything out.

ABOUT ACCEPTANCE

But when I'm talking about wearing clothing that, say, is too tight or too big, it's because we don't want to accept the size that is on the label of clothing that we should be wearing. So I can't tell you how many years I have shoved myself into pieces of clothing, especially pants that are too tight, because I do not want to accept that I need a size larger than what it says on the label.

But all it does is emphasize the rolls and the bulges, and it shows the cellulite, and it's not doing me any favors. Took me a really long time to just ignore the size on the label and just go for how it fits.

But the same could be said about being uncomfortable and embarrassed about how your body looks. If it's gotten bigger than what you're used to and you cover it all up in oversized clothing, you are fooling nobody. Everybody knows what's going on underneath that oversized shirt and baggy pants.
LOOKING GOOD

So my recommendation is go with what fits you best. I have learned that when I size up one in a lot of things, I actually look thinner than I really am. Not to the point where it's oversized, just to the point where it's not squeezing me super tight. I can't tell you in how many videos people have said, oh my gosh, have you lost weight? It's like, no, I'm just wearing properly fitted clothing for a change. So give that a try.

10. WEARING UNCOMFORTABLE CLOTHES

And then the last tip that I have for you, things to avoid, stop doing this because you're ruining your outfit is wearing a piece of clothing, pair of shoes, or maybe it's the whole outfit that you are not comfortable in for whatever reason.

Maybe the tag's itchy or it's a little more provocative than you're used to, or it's too conservative for your taste, or it just isn't laying right. Whatever the reason is, you're not comfortable in it. It doesn't matter how beautiful it is or how it looks to the viewer, it's what's going on in here.

If you aren't happy about it, you're going to ruin that outfit. It's going to ruin your day. Put it back on the hanger and find

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something else. You know what makes you feel best, better than anybody else. So listen to your own heart and wear what makes you happy.

KEEP IN TOUCH

So those are ten tips that I have for you on how to not ruin your outfit. I hope that this is helpful and helped you walk out of the house confident and happy in what you have chosen. And if you liked this video, please check out my YouTube channel, also known as Miss Gold Girl, also on Instagram, Miss Gold Girl. I would love to see you over there as well.

And if you do, please make sure that you say hey and let me know that you came from this conference.

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Zone Cleaning 101: Developing a Plan To Keep Your Home Sparkly Clean

MARQUITA CUMMINGS • TRANSCRIPT

Hey guys, what's up? Welcome to today's video. So my name is Marquita Cummings, I'm a mom of two and a wife of almost 20 years and I live in the metro Atlanta area. And I love to share all things organization, keeping a clean home. Also how you can use your planner to be the most productive you. And I also love to share some shopping finds that have been helped fool to me in my life.

So in today's video I'm going to be talking about zone cleaning. This is going to be a Zone Cleaning 101 video. So I'm going to share with you how you can develop a plan for zone cleaning so that you can make sure you're tackling every part of your home.

GATHER SUPPLIES

So let's get started. So here are some supplies that you're going to need to be able to map out your zone cleaning plan. You're going to need some markers. So these happen to be the Tombow dual tip markers. I love them because there's a tip here for some fine tuning. And then there's also the brush tip here to highlight and brush letter. So grab about seven of those. It all just depends on how many zones that you're going to have. I'm going to have seven, so I have seven different colors.

You're also going to need a pencil. So I have a mechanical pencil here with an eraser. And I also have this sharpie pen here so that way I can go ahead and draw over the pencil lines to darken that line and then I can erase the pencil line. And then lastly, you're going to need a regular old pen. So I have here one of my favorite pens which is the Muji pen in 0.7. And so this is going to be perfect for writing in those plans.

USE PLANNER INSERTS

So now that we have all of our supplies, I'm going to walk you through the inserts that you're going to need, which by the way are available at fancyplansco.com. Just type in Zone Cleaning Inserts or Zone Cleaning Bundle and you'll find these exact inserts there. So that way you can grab them and you can develop your zone cleaning plan because that is the first step in the process. We have to have a plan and then that way we'll know how to execute this whole zone cleaning thing.

All right, so now let's take a look at those inserts here. This is my planner by the way. All of these items are available at Fancy Plans Co., if you're wondering.

So I'm going to turn to my home section of my planner because that's where I keep all things home related. And there are the zone cleaning inserts. Okay. So I'm going to pull them out because we're going to want to work with them outside of the planner because we're going to need to move around and be able to really get in there in terms of getting this planned out. And we're going to need to be able to have lots of space to work with. Okay, so I'm going to share with you exactly how they look so you'll know what we're working with.

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LOOKING AT THE INSERTS

Okay, so the first page is for your home zones. This is where you're going to outline and map out your house. And then you're going to determine what your zones are and break it down into what rooms go into that zone.

And then next we have our daily cleaning tasks. So these are things that you're going to do on a daily basis. Then we have our home zone breakdown. So we're going to break down each floor of the home. So you've got several pages of those depending on how many floors you have. You shouldn't have any more than four, unless you live in a mansion, which you may, but I think that that should be more than enough.

And then we have our zone checklist. So this is where we're going to create our weekly plan for getting all the things done within those zones. All right. And then finally we have our cleaning checklist. So every day of the week, what are we doing to make sure that we are tackling all of those cleaning assignments? So you've got a few pages of those and then it ends with the notes page so you can reflect if you need to.

USED FOR REFERENCE

But the way we're going to do this is going to be to where you can keep these. You don't have to redo these every single time. Now you may want to do the cleaning checklist over again because you're dating it. So you could easily just pull these out and then add in new ones. But other than that, everything else is just a one-time thing. So don't think all that I'm going to share with you in this video is going to be something that you'll have to do every single day. You won't. Okay. You'll just do it one time once you're done with that, and then you'll store it in your planner and then you'll have it to reference going forward. Okay?

MAPPING OUT MAIN PLAN PAGE

So let's go ahead and get started with the process. All right, so we're going to go ahead and get started with first, we're going to map out our home. So I'm going to fit all three floors here. Then we're going to come down here. We're going to number each zone. We're going to color coordinate each zone, and then we're going to identify what is within that zone.

Okay, so I've got this all mapped out in pencil. So now I'm going to go in with my sharpie pen and I'm going to make those lines a little more visible. And then I'm going to label what each room is. Okay, so I've got it all drawn in. I could go in if I want and erase those pencil lines. If you just want to clean it up a little bit, you can because remember, we're keeping this. So this is just a one-time thing, so make it look good. It doesn't have to be perfect. This is just for your eyes only. But if you just want to clean it up and make it look more presentable. As you can see, all of my lines aren't straight. I just did the best that I could and mapped it out as close to my house as possible. Okay.

COLOR CODING

And so now I'm going to go in, and some of this is just optional. It's just what I do. But I do go in and I color code these different parts of my house based on the zone. So I'm going to share that with you guys next. In this section, that's where we're going to color coordinate, and we're going to number all of our zones so that we know which zones are which. And then we'll go back up here and we'll color code them based on

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what we've identified the zones to be down here. I should let go. We are done with this page.

So at the top here, we have all of our floors. Floor one, floor two, and floor three. And then at the bottom here, we've identified all of the zones. We've numbered them, we've colored them so that we can identify them on this visual here and everywhere else in this workbook. So we'll know pink is always going to represent this and so on and so forth.

AN EXTRA ZONE

I also have a prep zone down here at the bottom, and that's just where I update my planner during the week, and I do my menu planning and grocery shopping. So that's not technically a zone, but I do like to have that outlined here as well because I do plan for that here in the home zones workbook as well. Okay, so that looks visually appealing, right? I love to color coordinate it because it just draws my eye in.

REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

When you're breaking down your zones, you want to make sure that you're realistic about what you can do. And that's why I love the color coordinating process as well, because you'll see, everything in pink is something that you're going to do on one day. Realistically, based on what that room is, is that going to overwhelm me? Will that be too much for me? Am I going to be able to do that in a reasonable amount of time? So you want to break your home up in a way to where you can tackle those things reasonably in a reasonable amount of time.

You also want to make sure that the zones are somewhat near each other. As you can see, all of the rooms in my house, of course, are near each other. All of the food zone, I'm doing all of that in one day. So I try to stay near the vicinity of where the next project is, and that just really helps so that you're not moving all over the house.

Okay, so this page is done. This is our main plan.

ZONE BREAKDOWN PAGES

And so now we're going to move on to breaking things down further. Now this is optional because basically what we're going to do is we're going to do the same thing that we did here, and we're going to have it all on one page. So this is just like a snippet. And then this is where you can break it down even further.

If you were very vague here, you maybe just drew a rectangle. You weren't as detailed. And you want to get more detailed, you can come here and be a little bit more detailed, or you could just stick with that. Okay, so that's what this page is for. So I'll draw one out just so you can see an example of what I mean. And then we're going to move on it. Okay, so you see, that was super easy.

IT'S YOUR CHOICE

And this is just going to further break down things. And again, this is just an optional page. If you don't want to do these pages, you could just remove them from the inserts and that'll put you right at the zone checklist.

And you'll just have this and then the zone checklist, and then you'll have the cleaning checklist. So it's up to you with how you want to do this all. I love having all of this here, especially again, since it's just a one-time thing. And so this will just help you again visually to be able to see, okay, I know

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I'm doing these two things together. Is that realistic?

And it just kind of because it's color coded, it gets ingrained in your mind that these are the tasks that you're doing on whatever day that we're going to assign it to, which we are going to be doing soon, okay? So this is just one floor. Again, you have several pages in here for you to be able to do each floor. So this would be for this one, and then on the back would be for the third floor here. Okay, but for the sake of time, I think you get the point of what I'm trying to show you. And so we're going to move on.

DAILY CLEANING TASKS

All right, so now that we've completed this, we are going to move on to daily cleaning tasks. Now these are tasks that you're going to do on a daily basis. We're still going to color code it so that we know where it fits. And so we're going to start to outline some of those things and we're going to put it by the zone.

Okay, so remember here we have all of the zones outlined. So we have food zone, entry zone, splash zone, dream zone, family zone, business zone, prep zone. And so like, for instance, food zone is the kitchen and dining room. Entry zone is the foyer, garage, porch deck. Splash zone is the bathroom and laundry room, dream zone is the bedroom and the closet, family zone, living room, stairs, hall's, basement. Business zone is my craft room, my office, which is what we're in now, and our fulfillment room for our store, our online store. And then the prep zone again, is for me to update my plan.

Okay, so here in the zone section, you want to know where this task falls. So in the dream zone, which is zone number, what zone y'all? The dream zone is zone number four. So we want to put zone four. Okay. And that is going to be just to make the beds. So as you can see, it's not really a task where you're going to do whenever you do your major cleaning for the day. It's something that you still have to do, but you want to outline it under this section so that you know it's something that you do on a daily basis. And you may not have anything for any other zones, it may just be that.

But you want to go ahead and put whatever the zone name is, like the business zone, okay. And then whatever number that is, zone six. And then you want to put whatever task that is that's done on a daily basis. So for this one, it's to empty the trash. So I think you get what I'm trying to say. Okay.

And then let's say the splash zone. So the splash zone is zone number three. And you could do these in order. Some people like to be 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, whatever. Okay. It's to each a zone. So let's say in the splash zone, I want to load the laundry, all right? And then you want to color code it. So the dream zone is here, all right. And then the splash zone is pink and the business zone is brown. Okay. Just so you can keep that color coordinated, just so you can keep that eye drawn to those colors and get it ingrained in your mind that that's what the zones are, okay?

You know that in the splash zone, in addition to these things that you have to do, you also have to do a load of laundry every day and put away the laundry, okay? So this is going to be just like a real in depth cleaning workbook that you can refer to. Okay. So you'll do the other daily tasks here based on the zone. And again, it might be a lot more than what you see here. You'll just do whatever works for you.

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ZONE CHECKLIST

And now we're going to go ahead and move into the zone checklist. Okay. And this is great for reference, so I kind of keep it nearby so I can use it for reference. And it really helps me be able to fill all these pages in.

Okay, so on the zone checklist is where you are about to get real deep, okay? What you're going to do is you're going to outline all the tasks associated with that zone. And then you're going to check off when you do those tasks.

So as you can see here on the side, you've got a spot here for the zone breakdown. So whatever the zone is. And then you have place for all of the tasks associated with that zone. And then you also have a place here for whether the task is done daily, monthly, two times a week, weekly, two times a month, monthly, seasonally, two times a year, yearly, or as needed.

Okay, so this is going to help you to get really deep to be able to see what those tasks are that are associated with that zone. And then when we come to the cleaning checklist, we're going to start to divvy up those tasks throughout the week. Okay? So I'm going to go ahead and fill this out.

ALL TASKS FOR THAT ZONE

I'm just going to do it for one zone because you can just use that as a model to complete the rest of the zones and then we'll move on to the final part of this process. All right, so I have written in each and every task that is associated with the food zone. So remember for me, for the food zone, that involves the kitchen and the dining room. So you want to think about all of the tasks associated with those two rooms or whatever rooms that you identify as being in that particular zone, okay?

So again, we know that the food zone is this color. So I'm going to go in and just, again color code it because it just helps me visually to be able to see what the color is of that particular zone. Not going to color code everything, so I just color code that and then I'll color code inside the boxes.

HOW OFTEN TO BE DONE

Okay, so I've identified everything and when that particular task is to be done. So I know, for instance, I'm doing the fridge and freezer. That's to be done daily. And you can check off another one, and weekly, or you could do just two times a week, whatever, but I decided to do it daily and then I like to check in weekly.

Okay, now daily, I'm just kind of just looking at it, making sure I'm wiping down any stains, anything like that. Okay. The cabinets need to be done, cleaning, the stove and oven. The garbage can needs to be cleaned out. Windows, bar, stools, vacuum and mop. The pantry, the microwave, the sink, the coffee station, which is in our dining room. The dishes, of course, the table, both in the kitchen and in the dining room, both need to be wiped down.

Okay, so that's how that would look. And then you will come down here and you would do the next one, which would be the entry zone. So it would be this color. So of course, that's why it's important to differentiate the colors so that you can see. Again, it just all helps your muscle memory to be able to remember these zones. And it just starts to become second nature for you. Okay, so that's just an example of how that would look when you're coming to

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break down those zones.

CLEANING CHECKLIST

So now let's move on to the final part of the process, which is the checklist. This is the most important part, just because you're divvying everything up throughout the week. And this is where you're going to come and refer to to see what you need to be doing on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday.

Okay, so this is what you're going to reference. So we've built this, you see the work up to it. We've built this page off of everything we've done so far. So we've been really intentional. So this right here is going to work for us because we've evaluated every single step of the process.

Okay, so let's go ahead and work on this cleaning checklist again. We'll just do one just so you can see an example of how you would fill the rest of it in. Okay, so now what you first want to consider is the zones. Okay, so we're doing a zone a day.

A ZONE A DAY

So we want to first come up to the top here, and we want to highlight the zones on that day of the week that we want to complete that zone, okay? So for instance, Monday we're going to do the food zone. The food zone is pink, so you want to come here at the top. You want to color that pink so that, you know, Monday, you're doing . . . you see how it all just kind of flows together now that you have it color coded. You see that? Monday, you're doing the food zone.

You can see the colors here so that you know that those are the rooms that you're doing in that zone. You can come here easily and identify all of the tasks associated with that. And so it just makes it easier when it's more visually appealing like this. Okay? Because on this page, we're not going to write all of this in. We're just going to color coordinate it here at the top so we know Monday, this is what we're doing. Okay. Monday, this is what we're doing. You see what I mean? You see how it kind of all flows together.

COLOR CODING AGAIN

All right, so all we're going to do is just color code it so that we know that we're doing this zone on that day. Okay. And then we're also going to write in our daily task so that way we know and we have it right in front of us. We don't necessarily have to come over here, although you could. I haven't written anything for this particular zone. I would typically, but just, again, for the sake of time so this video doesn't get too lengthy, I've kind of showed you a few examples.

Okay. So I'm going to come here really quickly and just show you one week because it goes by week of. As you can see, each one of these are a week. That's why I say you will probably want to change these out, unless it doesn't change for you on a weekly basis. Again, you can use all of this as a reference.

KEEPING FOR REFERENCE

And so if you're going to use it all for reference, I definitely wouldn't write anything in the week of. I would just leave it blank. That's what I typically do. And that way you'll have these indefinitely. Unless you move or something changes, this stays standard and you have it as a reference. You can share it with others, hubby, kids or whoever, and that way everyone's on the same page. I'm all about everybody being united and knowing what needs to be done as a family.

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Okay, so I'm going to go ahead and finish color coding this, and then I'm going to write everything in. And then we'll go through everything we just discussed and kind of round everything out and we'll close this thing out.

All right, you guys, so that is it, as you can see. Short, sweet, to the point. Remember, we're not writing every single task in. We just want to know on what day of the week are we doing what tasks.

And then I also like to write in the daily task, so that way I see in a daily basis so I can come here. I know Monday I'm doing the food zone, everything associated with the food zone, and I'm also doing these daily tasks, which would also be here, so you could reference here as well. Remember, we do have this page as well, and so that's kind of how things flow.

A QUICK REVIEW

So you'll come here. This is the first page. And remember, we have outlined all of the zones or all of the floors in our home. We know from top to bottom what floors are what. We know what rooms are in each floor, and we've identified what those zones are, what's included in the zones. We have color coordinated them, so that way it's visually appealing, easy to identify, and it all kind of flows with everything.

And then the second page, we've outlined our daily cleaning tasks, so we know on a daily basis these are the things that we are doing. So that all depends on you and your household. And then on this page, remember, we've broken down all of our zones. We need to write in what floor that is. So this is floor number one. And this is just kind of the same page as this, but just a little bit more detailed if you weren't that detailed here. And it just really helps it because it's larger, more visually appealing to the eye, and it just helps further ingrain those zones in your head.

Okay, you have more pages of those and then we get to the zone checklist. This is an important part of the process because you want to write in every single thing that you do in that zone. You want to be mindful of how many places or spots in your home are included in that zone. So again, food prep zone includes the dining room and kitchen. So I want to think of everything that I need to do within those two rooms. And you're going to write that all here.

Then you're going to identify if it's daily, weekly, two times a week, weekly, two times a month, monthly, just seasonally, two times a year, yearly, or just as needed. And you want to outline that there because this is where you're going to come when you start to clean to see what rooms are included, to see what tasks are included in that zone. Okay.

And then we get to the cleaning checklist and this is just going to tell us every single day what we're supposed to be doing. Okay? And that's all based on everything that we just did. So we know Monday is the food zone and we know all of the tasks that are associated with that particular zone. So really these two pages are probably most important. Everything else is just kind of a reference.

USED TO DEVELOP YOUR PLAN

But once you get it in your head again, you won't need this. It's just to kind of develop the plan of it all. If you're wondering how this whole zone cleaning thing works, this is what I do. But I still do keep these inserts in my planner just because I love to have them

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for reference. And then if anyone else needs to know anything, I can have them come here and they can look and see what my plan is. Okay?

So the only thing that would change on this is if I move or something happens with my zones, I know this works. So I don't see myself changing anything with how the zones function. It just may be a situation where something has changed in my head and I feel like it would be a better flow to change things up. But since I've tested it, I don't see that as being the case.

So once you develop this plan, it's pretty much going to stay this way. Okay? And so that is how I develop a plan for zone cleaning. You're going to take this and you're going to start to tackle those tasks.

So I really hope that this helped you to visually see how you can break your home up into zones. In my opinion, this is the most effective way to clean because again, you're doing little things every single day as opposed to trying to clean this whole floor in one day or trying to clean the whole house in one day.

As you can see, I pretty much did two to three, maybe four rooms and I tried to be really intentional with how I structured things. Okay, so that's it.

STAY IN TOUCH

Y'all, I really hope you enjoyed this video. Again, my name is Marquita. I know that you guys are just meeting me for the first time, but I really hope that this has helped you. You can also follow me on social media. I am a YouTuber, so I do have a YouTube channel, At home with Quita and I'm all over socials as well. So you can check in with me there if you want to see any more tips and tricks on how I use my planner, how I keep my house clean and organized, and little things I found along the way that have really helped me.

So thanks again for watching. I hope to see you guys again real soon, in which case, see you then.

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Home Office Overhaul

MAYRA GONZALEZ • TRANSCRIPT

Hi, everyone. I am so excited to be here with you with Get Organized HQ event. Today, I am very thrilled to share my experience with the home office organization as it combines my love for interior design and organization.

A CHALLENGING SITUATION

I recently undertook a project to transform a space in my home into a productive home office. And I want to share my experience with you. My room, the previous room, was very orange. It was the gym, and it was not very practical. And we do share two closets in here, and it's our boiler room. So I cannot really do anything. I cannot store anything just to keep that safe.

So to keep my appearance consistent, I painted my walls, as you can see, a baby blue shade that complements the white and the blue essence of my Cricut, my Mac, so all my tech.

ASSESSING YOUR SPACE

The first thing that I did was to assess my space. So this is very important, is to determine what we need. This is a step that you cannot overlook when planning your workspace. You must ensure it addresses your needs.

And to do this, you must consider the following: the size and shape of the space, how much natural light is available, what type of furniture do you need for storage and work, what kind of equipment or supplies you'll need to store? Is there any other special features?

BUILDING THE DESK

It made more sense for me to build my own desk. So keeping in mind the colors of my office, I decided that white would be ideal for my desk to make my space look bigger. And after looking into purchasing my desk from a store, I decided to design my own and have a friend build it. This allowed me to customize the size and the shape of my desk according to exact needs.

I had a desk customized with cubes, and that's for storing my planners and materials. So my materials will be right there, and right here would be the space for my Cricut and my printer. Cricut and printer. And then right here would be for my podcast computer. So it's very workable for me.

It made more sense for me to build my own desk. So keeping in mind the colors of my office, I decided that white would be ideal for my desk to make my space look bigger. And after looking into purchasing my desk from y store, I decided to design my own and have a friend build it.

ADVICE FOR HOME OFFICE SPACES

I had a great experience working on this project that I feel accomplished. Here are

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some tips and advice that could be useful for anyone looking to remodel or reorganize their office space.

ASSESS YOUR NEEDS

So the first thing I would say is to assess your needs. Start by assessing the needs of your space you want to transform. Think about the primary functions of the space. Will it be a workspace, a study room, a creative studio or just a personal office? Once you have a clear understanding of the functions of the room, you can make a better decision regarding the layout, the design, the storage, or the organization.

CONSIDER NATURAL LIGHT

So the other thing would be natural lighting. As much as possible, try to position your work area with good access to natural light. If you can, try to work by a window. However, if you don't have a window with natural light, consider investing in good lighting that stimulates daylight.

THE CHAIR IS IMPORTANT

Invest in a good chair and desk. A comfortable and ergonomic chair is essential to keep your posture and overall health in check. Additionally, ensure that you have a sufficient desk space that can accommodate your items that you use regularly as well as space for future needs.

UTILIZE WALL SPACE

Then, utilizing wall space, utilize every inch of space you have, particularly on the walls. Use shelves, bookcases or pegboards to store and organize items. This helps keep your desk and workspace clear. Make sure that everything you need is within reach.

PERSONAL TOUCHES

Add personal touches. Add items that add personal touch, such as photographs, art quotes that inspire you. A plant will help as well to improve the air quality and your workspace.

ORGANIZATION

Keep it organized. Always keep an organizational system in place. This helps you maintain a clean and clutter-free workspace, which translates in higher predictability. Make sure all items that you use regularly are within reach and that everything has a home. Again, everything has a home. Additionally, keep your papers and documents in file cabinets or storage boxes to make it easier for you to find what you need.

ESTABLISH A ROUTINE

And lastly, I did want to talk about having an established routine. Having a daily structure helps you keep motivated, productive and on task. Create a daily or weekly plan consistent of tasks that you want to accomplish for the day, as well as time for the rest of leisure and activities. Tracking and completing tasks will give you a sense of accomplishments while also helping you with motivation and focus.

A SECOND HOME

Creating an inspired home office space is all about making it personalized for you and your individual needs. From choosing the right pieces of furniture to accenting with a unique decor that reflects your personality and interest, it's very important

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for you to make sure that your space feels like your own. With a little bit of creativity and planning, you can create a home office environment that will enhance your productivity and help you reach success in whatever you do.

Remember, your space should be a space you look forward to spending time in a while also being functional at the same time. This would be your second home, so it's very important for you to have it in a way that will make you proud and also you just want to be in your office for a very long time.

So thank you so much for joining me on this home office journey today. I hope my process has motivated you and inspired you to create your own workspace. Follow me on social media mgtouchofmagicllc to see my results in the upcoming weeks. Until then, keep creating and stay motivated. Bye.

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How to Konmari Craft Supplies | Decluttering Your Craft Stash When Everything "Sparks Joy"

MEGAN DUESTERHAUS • TRANSCRIPT

MEET MEGAN

Hello, friends from Get Organized HQ. Welcome to my class how to KonMari Craft Supplies: Decluttering Your Craft Stash When Everything Sparks Joy. My name is Megan Duesterhaus, and I'm the blogger at thehomesihavemade.com. I am a military spouse and a mom to three busy boys, but I'm also an avid creator. I love to decorate my home, and I love to make craft projects and play with my Cricut machine.

But I also love to have an organized, tidy space. So everything I share on my blog is in these three categories, crafts, or organization, and today's class is how I make sense of both of those at the same time.

LOOKING AHEAD

In this class, there will be four different modules. The first module will be why to declutter your craft supplies. Presumably, you are taking this class because you might have a pretty large craft stash, or your craft room is a little out of control. Decluttering and purging out craft supplies is hard and emotionally taxing. And so to make it a little easier, you have to get really firm on why you're doing it, and I'm going to share some strategies to help you figure out your why.

Next, I'm going to give a brief overview of what the KonMari method is, as outlined in Marie Kondo's book The Life Changing Magic of Tidying Up. And then the third module, which is the main bulk of this class, I'm going to teach you how to take the lessons she teaches in her book and apply them to craft supplies, which she actually doesn't cover in her book.

And then finally, I'm going to talk a lot about what to do with your decluttered supplies. I've learned that one of the biggest barriers for crafters getting rid of their supplies is making sure that their usefulness is carried forward wherever they go. I'm going to give you some real strategies that can help you let go of really good supplies.

Before we move on, I want to point you to the free download that accompanies this class. You can grab it at the link below. This class, I'm going to share some challenging and some potentially difficult ideas in this class, and I don't want you to feel like you have to be scribbling notes or rewatching over and over again to hear some of the concepts I'm teaching today. A lot of the big AHA moments or thought provoking questions are all in this four page download, and you are welcome to download it and use it to work through your own craft decluttering process.

WHY DECLUTTER CRAFT SUPPLIES?

Okay, let's start at the beginning about why declutter craft supplies. As a crafter, I know that craft supplies are precious, and gathering them and holding onto them is thrilling. And it's even more thrilling to be

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able to create something out of items from your stash, right, instead of having to run to the store.

But I have also seen firsthand that craft stashes can get a little out of control. And so I want to start this module with a little bit of a story. This is my mother about ten years ago. We lost her unexpectedly and she was the ultimate craftswoman and the most creative and talented woman I've ever met. She did it all. She quilted, she knit, she sewed, she painted, she did stamp scrapbooking, and she was phenomenal at all of it. And as we moved out of the house, and as she got into more and more hobbies, more and more stuff came in.

And when we lost her unexpectedly, we were left with a house that was quite literally filled top to bottom with craft supplies. This is just a few pictures of the three day craft estate sale we held to get rid of the fabric and yarn and embroidery thread and ribbon and everything else you can think of that was stashed under beds and in closets. It seemed to be coming out of the walls at times. But to give you a sense, my mother was able to create amazing things, but was never really able to get rid of all those amazing supplies.

And it ultimately became a significant problem to deal with. And while it did not hamper her creativity, it certainly became overwhelming in our house and certainly became overwhelming to deal with after her passing. So that is obviously an extreme scenario of a craft gone awry.

WHAT'S YOUR WHY?

But I think it's really important that you begin with understanding what's your why here, why do you need to declutter your craft supplies? Everyone's going to have their own reason. And whether you have a small craft stash that's a little out of control, or a house similar to my mom's where the craft supplies are really getting out of control, understanding why you want and need to declutter them is going to be central to moving forward.

Throughout some of the difficult decisions that come with trying to get rid of beautiful, wonderful, valuable, useful craft supplies, there's lots of different whys, but I'm going to go through some of the biggest ones that maybe come to mind.

FINDING THINGS

I think one of the biggest reasons to declutter and tidy up and organize your craft stash is so that you can find exactly what you need when you need it. Nothing is more frustrating than knowing you have a specific notion or a specific tool to do a certain job and you just can't find it when you're mid-project.

FUNCTIONAL WORK SPACE

Another reason is to create a functional and inspiring workspace. Some people, my mother being one of them, could thrive in a messy workspace, but I think there are others who the clutter and the overwhelm can be detracting for your creative process. And so being able to get your craft stash down to a manageable level and organize it so that you have a space that is life giving and exciting to be in, will ultimately feed your creativity rather than detract from it.

USE WHAT YOU HAVE

This is a big one for a lot of us, I think. How many of us have gone to the store to buy something for a project. It stays in its bag, it gets put on a table, and then

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something else gets put on top of that bag and something else gets put on top of that thing. And the stack and the stack and the stack. And you go to make the project and you can't find the supplies you bought. So you go back to the store and you buy them again. And then someday down the road, you find the supplies. And now you've got lots, right? So not knowing what you have and where it all is ultimately leads us to buy duplicates and buy things that we don't need because we already have them. This results in wasted space and this results in wasted money.

YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU

And then not to circle back around to a hard subject, necessarily, but craft supplies are not something you can take with you. And if you are one who tends to just accumulate and accumulate and accumulate because craft supplies have so much potential, you can potentially be leaving a big problem for your family or your friends to deal with. Because craft supplies can be challenging to get rid of in a way that preserves their usefulness and gets some of your money recouped. So dealing with it now and learning how to manage the craft clutter that maybe you've accumulated will not only bring some joy back into your own crafting, but can pay it forward to your family.

So just to kind of summarize the why a little bit is decluttering your craft supplies can help you increase your productivity and your project completion. It can reduce fresh and stress and frustration while you're working on projects, which increases your overall enjoyment of being in your craft space or working on craft projects. Decluttering can certainly save you money and space, and it can reduce that family or household burden in the situation where your craft supplies have really gotten out of control.

THE KONMARI METHOD

So moving on to the next module, I want to talk about what is the KonMari method? Hopefully, if you're in this class, you've maybe at least heard of the book The Life Changing Magic of Tidying Up, written by Marie Kondo. This book really kind of stormed onto the scene about, I don't know, maybe eight or so years ago. And it's an incredibly popular, no nonsense method for decluttering and tidying up your home once and for all.

It is a fairly dramatic process that she outlines. She's kind of got a no emotion, no excuse approach to decluttering your home, and it can be very effective. But what I think is really interesting is there are certain areas of the home that she never covers, craft supplies being one of them.

So before I teach you how to apply her method to craft supplies, I just want to give kind of a top level overview of the KonMari method. If you are not familiar with the process, I do recommend reading her book and then you can apply her lessons even more to some of the auxiliary concepts that I'm introducing today.

So in general, she is very much against the little by little method that is quite popular now and even preached by a lot of bloggers and a lot of self-help people, doing a drawer here, in a closet there.

EMPTY THE SPACE

She's we're doing it all, pull everything out, do it all, make a big dramatic change. One of the big things, we're going to talk about this more later is she's very much whatever room you're working on or whatever

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category you're working on, you empty it out. Completely, totally empty the room. You don't just kind of move stuff around and look around and make decisions that way. You completely empty the space so that you can see an empty space and reload it back in with the things that you love.

WORK BY CATEGORY

She's a big proponent of sorting and working by category and not by space. She also recommends working from the easy items to the harder, which I think is all very sound, especially if decluttering is not your strong suit. And so the biggest thing is, as you empty the space and you categorize everything before you bring items back in, the big concept that's so groundbreaking in this book is that you are to hold each and every single item and evaluate it to keep or to toss against one single criteria.

DOES IT SPARK JOY?

And this single criteria is, does this item spark joy? And I went back and reread her book to see if she even elaborated on what spark joy means. And she doesn't much because it's such an intuitive concept. Does this item warm your heart? It has a cohesive feeling that this is an item that belongs in your house. Does it spark joy for you in some way? And that's the only barometer.

It removes the emotion. It removes the do you need it? Do you use it? Do you love it? It removes the who gave it to you? It removes the why you bought it, all of it. Does it spark joy? Does it move you? Is it something you want to keep in your house for whatever reason? And in her mind, the items that spark joy are to be kept and anything that doesn't spark joy should be discarded, no questions asked.

And when I first read it, I was a little apprehensive. And then when I actually tried it. I think that spark joy barometer is actually quite effective because as you go, item by item, you can sense which items you have a response to and which ones you don't. And it becomes very clear which items you feel compelled to keep and which ones you don't really care about.

CRAFT SUPPLIES SPARK JOY

And so I think when your whole book is built around this premise . . .I don't know if she left craft supplies out by accident or if crafting is not a huge part of the Japanese culture, I'm not entirely sure. But she does not cover craft supplies at all in her book.

And so I can't help but think because craft supplies, by their very nature, spark joy for us, right? No matter what hobby you're into, no matter what type of craft, the supply itself and the idea of the project spark joy.

QUALITY

To dive into that concept of joy and craft supplies a little bit more, I think we are brought joy by the items we buy for our hobbies in two different ways. One is their quality. How many times have you been drawn to a piece of fabric or a pad of scrapbook paper or a certain set of stickers or whatever the case may be that you're into? And have you said, I have no idea what I'm going to do with this, but I have to buy it? I have been there. I have bins of fabric that I was so drawn to because it sparked joy in me, but I had no concrete project for it.

EXPECTATION

The other piece, I think, of joy and craft supplies is that expectation, that hope

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of that project that you could make with this product, right? There's an excitement, there's a joy there.

So using that barometer of does it spark joy to declutter our craft supplies is inherently problematic because really, every craft supply that you have in your possession probably on some level, sparks joy.

KONMARI YOUR CRAFT SUPPLIES

So if the KonMari method is so effective at decluttering your home, it's only natural to want to apply it to craft supplies. And after going through my closet and some other areas of my home using the KonMari method, I turned my attention to my craft supplies, and I found that with some adaptation and some extension of her initial concepts, you can indeed KonMari or craft supplies. But I want to give you a few pointers to help you along the way.

EMPTY THE SPACE

I will say her suggestion or her demand that you empty your craft space, I think is spot on. And I'll tell you a little story. When I first did this, I was not planning on emptying my craft room, and I was just going to kind of open a bin, peek inside, see what's in there. Oh, yeah, I don't need that. I can pull that out, and I don't need this, and I do want to keep that.

And then we had a flood in our house, and we had to empty the entire downstairs into the garage to get the carpet replaced. And I was completely taken aback at how much craft supplies there were. It is amazing how much you can tuck into drawers, into closets, into cabinets, into the cubby shelves. They can hold a lot.

But when you start to pull everything out and you see it stacked on the floor, stacked on tables, it has this profound and lasting impression on you. When you see it all, when you see everything you have pulled out, it gives you this impression and that mental image will keep you motivated and moving through this process when it gets hard.

It also provides a very clean, blank slate in your craft space to then build from scratch. So as much as you may resist and as much as even just the idea of emptying out your craft room might be enough to turn you off, I do suggest that it's one of the most important things that you do.

Set up some tables in the garage, carve out a spare bedroom, even just tables down a hallway, whatever you need to do to get everything out of your craft space.

Once you have everything out of your craft space and generally categorized, remember she advocates working category by category. And so in the craft world, that would be craft by craft, probably, or supply by supply, you then are supposed to take it and ask if it sparks joy.

And that's where it gets complicated for us. So from here, here are some follow on questions, tough questions for you to consider as you hold these beautiful, valuable, useful craft supplies that have so much potential.

WHAT CRAFTS DO YOU ACTUALLY DO?

What crafts do you actually do? Raise your hand if you think you're going to go all in on Cricut and your machine is still in the box under your table and all the accessories haven't been unpackaged because you

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bought it on a Black Friday deal and you've come to determine it's just not your thing. I use Cricut as an example there, but I think those of us that are in this craft space know that you go all in on something only to find that it's not something you're into.

Or kind of like my mom, you dabble into something for a while, even for years at a time, and then you eventually move on. But then all those supplies remain when you are decluttering.

Get very real about the crafts you do and the crafts you don't do and the crafts you won't do. When my mom passed away, I inherited almost all of her embroidery machine materials. All of it. The hoops, the fabric, the liners, the threads, all of it. It took me about eight years to come to a point that this was just never something I was going to get into and I finally started being able to get rid of it. When you're trying to get rid of your craft supplies, you may want to be really into something, but you may realistically never get to it. Being able to get rid of the things for the crafts you don't do will free up the space, the time, and the energy for the ones that you really do.

WHAT PROJECTS WILL GET DONE?

Raise your hand if you have a whole slew of work in progress sitting in your craft room right now in various stages of done. Right. We all have them. We all have projects that we were full of joyful energy to take on, and then, for whatever reason, life got busy, or you couldn't find those supplies that you bought, or it's not working out the way you want it, or whatever the case may be, you are never able to finish a project.

And whether it's days, weeks, months, or years later, when you come back to that project, you just don't have it in you to work on it. It's okay. You don't need to keep it. You don't need to keep the supplies. If the joyful spark of a project is gone, it's okay to get rid of it. Not only do you get rid of the stuff, but you will get rid of the guilt that comes with the project that maybe is staring you in the face.

DISCARD EXTRAS & ENOUGHS

Very rarely do you complete a project with the exact right amount of supplies. Right? There is always extra, whether it's six extra inches of elastic. Or all of my quilters love their scraps, right? There is always extra.

But I would challenge you to take a pause and think about how often you can use those scraps. Odds and ends very rarely are the exact amount that you need, right, but are quite frequently exactly what's cluttering up our space. Discarding all of those extras, that one extra button, that six inches of elastic, whatever the case may be, that half a skein of yarn that, yes, could maybe be knit into a single baby booty.

The reality is you will either need to buy more in order to be able to use it, or you won't be able to use it at all. So get rid of those extras and anything that you have more than enough of.

COST OF KEEPING VS. REPLACING

Marie Kondo talks a lot about the cost of keeping versus the cost of replacing an item. And I mentioned earlier, I'm a military spouse, and we move every one to three years. And so this one hits a little closer to home for me than it might for you, depending on your life circumstances.

But I think this concept can certainly apply

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no matter what your living situation is. But I know when I look at my craft stash, every one to three years, every single spool of thread, yard of fabric, bead, zipper, stack of scrapbook paper is pulled out of my shelves and out of my drawers, loaded into boxes. Those boxes are loaded onto a moving truck. That moving truck is driven across the country, and it's all unloaded all over again. And so I'm very acutely aware of how much it costs and how much energy is required to maintain a certain level of craft supplies.

And even if you don't relocate nearly as much as I do, craft supplies take up space. Craft supplies take up energy. And even just the heating and cooling of your room or the efficiency of your space? How much can you save just by getting rid of it?

And if you ever, on the off chance needed to buy it, how much would it cost to replace it? Marie Kondo suggests, and I think when it comes to craft supplies, it's true as well, the cost of replacing it is often cheaper than the cost of keeping it. And if you give yourself the permission to buy it, if you need it, it might be just the little kick you need to go ahead and get rid of it, because in all likelihood, you probably won't need to replace it after all.

IS THERE USEFULNESS?

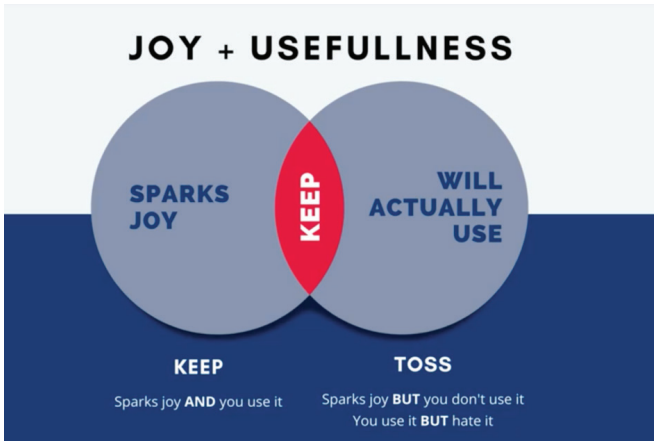
Is there usefulness in this item? Us crafters are notorious for buying every cool new gadget, right? And every awesome tool that's going to make our project or our task easier, right? Any hacks we can get our hands on. But at the end of the day, as you're going item by item, you know precisely which tools, supplies, notions, whatever it may be, are useful, are reliable, are quality, and have purpose.

Is there a pair of scissors that you reach for every single time because they fit well in your hands, they're perfectly sharp, and you know exactly how to maneuver them? And are they lying next to four other pairs of scissors that you never touch? Every single time? Those four pair of scissors can go. Keep the one good, useful pair of scissors that you have.

As you go, item by item, think about how useful your tools are, if you use them. Not for the someday or it would sure be nice to have this when I ever get to that whatever project. Are they useful? Do they serve you well in the projects that you do?

DOES IT STILL SPARK JOY?

And then to circle back around, does that item still spark joy? Most likely whenever you purchase that item, it sparked joy for you for whatever reason, whether it was just the product itself or if it was the project as a whole. But it is just a reality that that fire can die down. And if you just don't have the spark for that item or for that project, it's time to let it go, even if the items are still good and useful and have potential.



So this is my diagram that I think is really helpful in kind of whittling this all down. It comes down to joy and usefulness. And I have items that spark joy on the left

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because there are going to be lots of things in your craft room that spark joy. But then the other half of the circle is items that you will actually use. And it is that center area where the item both sparks joy and you will actually use it for projects that you are absolutely going to do, that you should keep those items.

And then you'll notice down the bottom. I kind of have two different criterias for things that are good candidates for tossing. If it sparks joy, but you legitimately don't use it, won't use it. It's okay to let it go, even if it's brand new, if it can be turned into ten different projects, whatever the case may be, if you're not going to use it, it's okay to get rid of it.

And then I also want to put a caveat in here that the opposite is true. If you use it but hate it, it's okay to get rid of that too, and save up or plan to buy a version of that tool or that notion that does spark joy. Our goal is to have a craft room filled with things that spark joy and light that creative fire in us, but that we will actually use to bring our projects to life.

I have tried to help my mom, my sister, and countless blog readers and myself declutter craft supplies over and over again throughout the years. And I've become pretty sensitive to the fact that one of the main barriers to getting rid of craft supplies lies in their usefulness.

But it could be used for blank, and that blank could be a big, fancy project, or it could be a science fair diorama. It is very, very hard for us to get rid of items that could be turned into something someday, right? And so even if you go through all of these ideas and you hold things in your hand and do they spark joy and you know you're not going to use it, it can still be very, very hard to get rid of it if you don't have a good place for it to go.

WHAT TO DO WITH DECLUTTERED SUPPLIES

And so I'm going to just kind of round out this concept with offering some suggestions on what to do with your very good, still very usable craft supplies that you potentially still very much love, but have gotten real and understood that you're just never going to use them.

CRAFT SALE

So the first is what we did in our family is to hold a craft specific sale. If you have a sizable amount of craft supplies that you want to get rid of and want to recoup some cost of, I do recommend holding a specific craft sale. Advertise it as a craft sale, put it out to local crafters, local quilt groups. It's a lot of work. You need to really plan ahead. But it is a great way to make sure that really high quality supplies get into the hands of people who know their quality and know how to use them.

LIST ONLINE WITH SPECIALTY GROUPS

If a large craft sale is maybe not necessary or not realistic for you, we have also had very good luck listing items on Facebook and an eBay, quite specifically specialty groups. So you can find a group for anything. I mentioned before my mom's embroidery supplies. So my mom was a Husqvarna machine user, and I inherited every Husqvarna embroidery hoop they probably ever made.

And that is not something I was able to successfully sell in our local Buy Sell Trade

Facebook pages. But when I joined some Husqvarna groups and listed what I had, these crafters scooped them up right away. So if you have something that's very niche, very specific, you can probably find a group that will be willing or be very interested in buying what you have to sell.

DONATE TO NON-PROFITS

There are lots and lots of organizations and nonprofits that will take your good craft supplies classrooms, home ec classrooms, things like that, Scout troops for different merit badges. These days. There are lots of nonprofits who knit booties for hospital babies or make quilts for veterans or finish projects for family members who have died. So these are great places to donate fabric and yarn and large bulk sets of items like that.

GIVE TO NEW CRAFTERS

And then I think there's a lot of value in giving good quality supplies to newer young crafters and open their eyes to hobbies that maybe they weren't aware of. This obviously doesn't recoup your cost, and they may never get used in this way either. But you also might have the opportunity to open up a new craft or a new hobby for a new generation.

ONE MORE THING

There is one more thing that Marie Kondo suggests in her book that I think maybe doesn't quite apply to the craft realm, and that comes down to how often you need to do this. She advocates that if you follow her method, you will never have to declutter again, ever. Your house will be tidy once and for all, and that is just not the case when it comes to craft rooms.

This is a picture of my craft room, or my last craft room - we just moved. But I can look at this picture of this perfectly organized space, and I can easily see a handful of things, you don't know they're there, but in those drawers and in those cabinets and on those shelves, that I don't use because I have not gone through my craft supplies in a long time.

And I have learned that time changes a lot of things. There were things the last time I KonMaried my craft supplies that I was not ready to get rid of, and I am ready to get rid of it now. There are hobbies that I have moved on from, there are hobbies that I have finally accepted that I'm just not going to get into, and I'm ready to get rid of that stuff.

BUILD IN REEVALUATION

If you are a creative soul and you are drawn to the next thing and new pursuits and new hobbies, you likely will never be done decluttering your craft space. So just keep in mind that I think you need to build in an expectation that with each new hobby or every couple of years, you're going to need to relook at your room or your space or your closet or your she shed or whatever it is you have. You're going to need to reevaluate it and make sure that as new hobbies are coming in, you're effectively dealing with the stuff that you're no longer using.

Crafts do go bad, fabric styles go out of style, not everything will last forever, and it is okay to move those supplies out to better homes as you move on to new hobbies.

KEEP UP WITH MEGAN

I love to craft. I hope that's become clear in this class. And I do very much love having an organized, tidy home, and I love sharing

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those ideas with my readers and how to make those two things make sense.

And so as you begin on your decluttering journey, and if you get stuck, and if you need help or if you need ideas, I invite you to come check out my site. I've got lots and lots of stuff to share, everything ranging from rental décor to Cricut projects and everything in between. But I do have quite a few specific craft supply organization solutions as well. So if you need extra motivation about how to declutter, or if you need a certain solution for your ribbon or your wrapping paper or your fabric or whatever the case may be, I am here to help.

So don't ever hesitate to reach out. Follow me on all my channels, The Homes I Have Made on most handles, to include some others that you don't see here. You're also always welcome to drop me an email or just leave a comment on the blog.

I really hope this class has given you a new way to think about your craft supplies, and I really hope that it gives you some motivation and encouragement to deal with them if they're something that have become quite a burden.

Thank you for your time today and I look forward to meeting you around the blog sometime soon.

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Integrating Faith into Your Kid's Routine

MEGAN JENKINS • TRANSCRIPT

TASHA: Well, please join me in welcoming Megan from His Kids Company. Megan and I are going to be discussing today how to incorporate your faith and the Bible and Bible stories into the time that you're spending with your kids and into their daily routines. So thank you so much for joining us today, Megan.

MEGAN: Yes, thank you so much for having me.

HOW MEGAN GOT STARTED

TASHA: Of course. So, as we kind of get started on this topic, can you just tell us what really got you thinking about this whole idea of incorporating the Bible into time with your kids? What really got you started with His Kids company?

MEGAN: Well, I'm a first generation Christian, so I wasn't raised in a Christian home. I really had no experience being taught any of the biblical values that are important to me.

So when my son was just a couple of years old, actually he was a year old when I got saved and I realized, oh, my goodness, I have all of these things to learn. I want to know the Bible, I want to know God's will for my life, and I also want to pass this on to my children.

So I just became really passionate about learning alongside him and making it really fun and incorporating it into everything we do, from getting dressed to eating breakfast to going out into the world. I just really wanted to take the gospel with me in everything.

TASHA: I absolutely love that. And I love how you are kind of on this journey alongside your son, even though obviously at very different life stages, but being able to learn together.

And so I just wanted to talk through some of the ideas that you've had, maybe some of the things that have worked for you at different times of day that pretty much everyone's kids have.

You've got mealtime and bedtime and playtime and all of that. So I was thinking we could just kind of go through maybe let's start with, like, meal times.

What are some things that you have found that can just help incorporate these biblical values into meal times with your kids?

INCORPORATING BIBLICAL VALUES INTO MEAL TIME

MEGAN: Well, I actually created a line of silicone place mats that have Bible story illustrations or Bible verses printed on them.

And the idea came to me because sitting down for snack time or sitting down for meal times were times where we would practice our memory verse for the week. And it was just a fun way to practice.

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So it was kind of while mom is preparing the snack or preparing the meal, we would recite back and forth, and I would memorize the verses, or I will I still do memorize the verses alongside my kids because, like I said, I was learning with them, and I didn't want it to be something like I think my kids actually appreciate that. Hey, mom doesn't have this verse memorized either.

So we're going to learn it together. Whether we have to practice 20 times or 100 times, we're going to do it together.

TASHA: I love that and I love how it takes the pressure off. Right. It's not that you are coming at it as like, I know all these things and I'm going to impart all of this, but it kind of helped everyone work together and grow together.

And I would guess that in this you've had times where, yeah, you're memorizing it a lot better and there's probably times your kids have like, completely beat you to it.

MEGAN: Absolutely. Or sometimes I'll stumble on a word and my kids will correct me in a respectful manner, but it's been fun.

And I think that's really why my kids have grasped or I guess they've become fond of it because it's always been a natural, organic, loving thing that we're doing together.

TASHA: Yeah. And I think doing it at a meal time is so helpful with that because there's something else that you're doing, right?

Like, your hands are kind of busy, your mouth is busy half the time, and it's something that's going to happen every day.

It's really that concept of I mean, we've called it habit stacking. Like, take something you're already doing and add something else to it.

So it's not even like you had to carve out, like, okay, from 3:00 to 3:15 every day we're going to have our scripture memorization, reciting time. It's just we're already doing this, so let's just add on this pretty easy thing that we can do while we're having our meal time.

TIME IN THE CAR

MEGAN: Another way that we used to do it, we used to live kind of far away from my kids schools and activity. We really lived far away from everything.

And so it became a habit to where we would get in the car and everybody would get buckled up and then we would practice our verse a few times.

Oftentimes I would have like, a song that went along with the verse ready to play in the car. We also used to listen to a different kids Bible story podcast in the car. They were like seven to ten minutes long and just creating those rhythms.

My kids expected it and they looked forward to it, what's today's story going to be about. And that was a fun, easy way to incorporate some more Bible time into our day.

TASHA: Yeah, I love it. So I know kids, they really have a tendency to learn through play, right?

I mean, you take a toddler and they learn shapes because they're playing with shapes, or they learn colors because they're playing with something that matches colors.

And so have you found ways to help your kids learn these Bible stories but through

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playtime?

LEARNING THROUGH PLAYTIME

MEGAN: Absolutely. We originally created the silicone placements for the Bible verses, but then my kids would color on it with washable markers and I realized, oh my goodness, these wash away. It's not ruining them.

So I had our manufacturers send me some white ones and I realized I could put the Bible story illustrations on them. They can color them, wipe them away, and do it again and again like they're reusable.

So we actually created an entire line of kids Bible story coloring mats that you can color while you're while sometimes I'll read the story to my kids, or we'll pop on, like, a YouTube video that reviews the story, or we'll simply read the scriptures from the Bible while they're coloring.

It gives them something to do with their hands, and I think they remember better.

TASHA: Yeah. And kids are so observant about things in pictures, is what I have found. They're going to point out the details of like, oh, here's Abraham and Isaac, and there's the ram over there we might have overlooked. Yes, definitely.

So another time of day that I think is pretty consistent for kids, obviously, bedtime. And that's a time when we already have probably some sort of routine going, brushing teeth, taking baths, getting our pajamas on.

So what are some things you found work well to try to incorporate into that bedtime routine?

BEDTIME ROUTINE

MEGAN: Every night we read a different story. And this took a little bit of so I have two girls and I have a boy, and so my girls share a room, and my son's in another room. And I would try to read the girls a book, and then my son a book. And it just felt like there was some separation.

So we decided to start bringing the books down to the living room before we go up for bedtime, bath time, all of that. And it has been really sweet to read a different Bible story or a book that just teaches Christian values every single night.

And it's with younger kids, I had to just kind of say, this isn't going to be perfect. We're not all going to sit here and listen to the book every night. There's wiggles, but we do it. My kids know to expect it, and they're used to that rhythm now.

And so that's just been a really sweet thing to do, is read every single night a different story. And sometimes we'll go through longer books that we won't finish it in a night, but we go through this rotation and then when we get back to a book we've already read, then they can tell me the story of us, say, I know what's coming next. Can I tell you? Can I tell you? And just been a sweet way to teach them these truths.

TASHA: Yeah, and you mentioned the wiggling and I mean, if you're at mealtime and you're reciting Bible verses, there's going to be the food falling on the floor and dropping, your working, getting distracted.

But that is part of kids life already and everything they're learning to do, they're learning to walk, they're learning to talk, they're learning to fix the grammar in their sentences, like all of these things.

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And they're learning in the middle of all the things happening. And so they can totally learn. They're hearing probably more than we think that they're hearing. Even when they're wiggling and squirming.

PRAYER TIME

MEGAN: Yes. And then another thing that we've done in the evening time is we'll take turns.

So, like, some nights Mommy will pray, some nights Daddy will pray. But then each of my kids like to take turns, and they'll remember who prayed the night before, when is my turn next?

And that's been a special way to help them develop their prayer life, is to do it all together and take turns each night leading the family in prayer.

TASHA: Yeah. And hearing their siblings pray. They're at a similar level, their vocabularies and the things that are happening in their day.

And so being able to hear that from each other can maybe kind of spark their creativity, even in how they're praying.

MEGAN: Yeah. And being a first generation Christian, these things didn't always come naturally to me.

I had to be very intentional, and sometimes I would be nervous, but I just had to realize that being intentional and just doing it and taking that next step and saying that prayer out loud would just build, and my faith would get stronger, and I would get better at it.

TASHA: Yeah. And my guess is that as you've done this over the years, it's become a more natural part of your rhythm.

MEGAN: Absolutely. But I do remember when it wasn't natural and it was something I wanted to incorporate into our family, but it just took a little intentionality and some courage.

TASHA: Yes. And I guess that begs the question, too. Is this something did you make a lot of changes at once? Did you add in lots of things? Or was it kind of like one at a time?

INCORPORATE A LITTLE AT A TIME

MEGAN: No, just one at a time a little bit, until it became part of our natural rhythm.

And then if I learned about something that I wanted to add in or I decided, hey, I think these three or four sentence long Bible verses, they're picking them up really quickly. Let's go see if we can memorize a whole chapter or just build on it as they get old.

TASHA: Yeah. And all of these the stakes so low. I mean, you're in your own home. You're trying things.

I mean, we've probably all tried, like, pinterest activities that didn't quite work out. So if you try something and it doesn't work for your family, it doesn't mean that the next thing won't work or that it was a total waste of time to even try. You're just learning what works with the natural rhythm of your own family.

MEGAN: Exactly.

TASHA: So what are some other just ideas or ways that you've found to just incorporate this into your kids days?

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ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

MEGAN: Well, we also want to mention my kids love coloring, and there's lots of coloring books, there's lots of coloring things. But it's hard to find Christian resources.

You can find Disney resources you can find generic resources, but Christian resources are a little harder.

So we designed an entire line of free coloring principles. So there's different verses that they can color, there's different Bible stories that they can color.

My son actually designed slap bracelets with memory verses on them. So one side has the verse and the other side has the reference. And he'll quiz his sisters, give them out to friends.

So just obviously finding ways to incorporate scripture into all of the things we already use and already do.

So like clothing, like our t shirts have Bible verses on them.

Buying my kids their own Bible this year was really special and it's kind of been a treasure for them. And they're more eager to go look up the verse that we're memorizing because they want to flip through their own pages and mark it and highlight it on their own. Just little things like that.

TASHA: Yeah, and it's probably worth asking too. So what are the rough ages of your kids that you're like? Because I guess we didn't start with that, but what rough age range are we talking?

MEGAN: My youngest is five and my oldest is nine.

TASHA: Okay. Yeah. Because obviously just activities and things are going to shift when you have toddlers versus if you are preteen or teenagers, even the different things that you can do.

MEGAN: I think all benefits are school age. We are growing and learning. Obviously I'm incorporating other things for my son that my youngest can't do, but we're building.

TASHA: Yeah. So we've been talking kind of about incorporating faith Biblical values into just the day to day routine, like the things that are already happening, which I think is awesome.

Do you have a structured, like, this is our family sit down and read the Bible time or is it all just kind of diffused through your day?

STRUCTURED TIME

MEGAN: Well, we try to really be intentional every night about reading a book and then reading a part of scripture. So we'll work our way through a book or like a book of the Bible after our story time.

We make sure every day to have family prayer time. That changes. Sometimes it's in the morning. We try to always do it when my husband's home too. So it's the whole family unit, but just definitely opening the Bible every single day.

I think I went through a season of my faith journey where I thought, well, I'm saved. I know all, I love Jesus, I talk to Jesus every day, but I wasn't actually opening my Bible every day.

And when I realized there was a lack there and then I got back into the Word every day, it's really just important and it's really changed my life and I think it's also changed

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my kids life to see, hey, Mommy.

Actually, I have my own personal quiet time in the morning. I try to do it before they wake up, but oftentimes they wake up and see me doing it. But that has been key in helping me lead my kids, just having that my own special time in the Word every day.

TASHA: Yeah. And I can hear your own passion and excitement for this.

And I think in so much of this, if we start, if we're excited about it, if we think, hey, this is a great idea, and this is going to be awesome, and we're going to do it together, our kids are going to pick up on that, right? They're going to see that and follow suit.

MEGAN: They do. I think there have been days where maybe my heart just isn't in it. And I think those days I have to just push through.

If you're just having a bad day or you're wrestling with God over something, when you push through on those days and they see you, that you're really committed to this, I think they learn a lot from that too.

TASHA: Yeah, absolutely. So do you have any tips or just like, action steps that people could take if they're like, okay, I want to start, but I'm not really sure what to do first. Where would you start with just trying to incorporate this into your kids lives?

TIPS FOR STARTING

MEGAN: I would probably start with trying to find time or making the time I shouldn't even say trying make the time every day to just do one thing for the Lord.

Like whether it's pray out loud with your kids or learn a new Bible verse with your kids, or switch a TV show from something secular to something that will teach them something from the word just start with one thing and that'll build and his light will shine in and it'll make you want more.

TASHA: Yeah. And I know I can be a little bit of an all or nothing personality sometimes.

There's always great ideas. It's like, well, if I can't do the mealtime and the bedtime and the playtime and the getting ready in the morning, what's the point of doing any of it?

But there is point, even if it's a small amount of time. And I have found if you start with something you can actually do, you're more likely to do it. It would be better to spend ten minutes every day opening the Bible or reading a Bible story than to try to plan to spend an hour every day, but to never actually get to it.

MEGAN: And I think it's important to remember that the Lord sees your heart and he blesses that. If you truly are just trying to bring Him into your family life, he'll bless that whether it's five minutes, ten minutes, or you do it all.

TASHA: Yes. Absolutely. There's a lot of grace. There's a lot of if one day it doesn't look exactly like the perfect day or the day before, that is okay. Not every day has to be the same, and you can always just start again tomorrow.

MEGAN: Absolutely.

TASHA: Yeah. So as we kind of wrap up here. Are there any just, like, last thoughts or anything you want to leave us with?

MEGAN: Just start.

TASHA: Yeah, that's a good thought. So you

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said that you have all these products that you created. Where can people go to find those, to shop for those, and where can people go to learn more about you or what you share about online?

MEGAN: Yeah, well, I have an Instagram page where I share tons of the behind the scenes and my personal faith journey. We also share about our products there. It's called his kids company on Instagram. Our website is hiskidscompany.com. There's tons of free resources. There's tons of blogs. There's free Bible studies. Kind of like bite size Bible studies. Just to start. There's a lot of resources on the website.

TASHA: Yeah. Awesome. Well, we'll leave links to all that down below so everyone can go check it out. Definitely want to link to the coloring pages that you mentioned too, so people can go find those. And thank you so much for your time today, Megan.

MEGAN: Thank you.

TASHA: Absolutely.

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Amazon Craft Room Organization

MELANIE FERGUSON • TRANSCRIPT

Hey hey, my friend! My name is Melanie Ferguson, and I write the blog southerncrushathome.com and today I'm super excited to be part of the Get Organized Headquarters event. We are going to try to get organized here in my crafting area, my crafting garage, using all Amazon products. So sit back, relax, watch the video, get inspired, get some ideas of some different ways that you could get organized, too.

LAZY SUSAN

Okay, let's get started. This is just a basket on top of a lazy Susan, where I store all of my wrapping paper, contact paper, things of that nature. And again, I've linked everything in my Amazon shop below. These are just plate racks. I put all sorts of blanks and frames and things like that into these. It was very handy.

MASON JARS

And then Mason jars, of course, as usual, are super convenient to store a variety of things. And of course, I put all of my buttons and glitter and things that otherwise would be scattered into Mason jars. And I absolutely love the way that they double as decor in my crafting area.

Now, this is one of my other ideas, to use the Mason jars for is for spools of thread. Now, I don't always do sewing projects, but it looks cute anyway. Now, I grabbed these off of Amazon. Again, they're in my shop.

LABELED STACKABLE DRAWERS

And I use these stackable drawers. They're individually sold, so you can stack as many or as few as you like. And I kind of labeled each one using a label maker so that I knew what was in them. Even though they're clear, they're super crowded, so I really needed to know what was in each of them. But the first one was wood. That second one was everything that remotely resembles metal. And then this one's, all my stickers and pipe cleaners and pompoms, things like that. I'd made a drawer for Velcro and anything sticky, so I've got just random things in this one. Banners. I don't know why. I just collect a whole lot of banners. I found myself just hoarding banners, so I put all of those in a drawer and labeled it Banners.

Are you the same? Do you hoard crafting supplies? Sometimes it's more fun to go buy them than it is even to actually use them. This drawer I labeled miscellaneous, because who doesn't need a miscellaneous drawer? This has got all of my fairy lights, sea glass, little things that I really couldn't categorize any other way. This one has chalkboard things, stamps, tags, all sorts of fun things for crafting. Straws and obviously beads and foil, things that you can craft with in this drawer as well. I just wanted to show you what was an idea for labeling all of these things.

This drawer has plastic items in it. This one got a little bit overstuffed. I probably need to grab a few more of these drawers

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in future because they're getting a little bit full. But you can kind of see how they stack and look good there.

WREATHS AND FLORALS

Now, this was kind of creative. I grabbed one of these accordion racks. Again, it's linked in my Amazon shop here, and I used it to hang all of my wreath frames from Dollar Tree.

And then this is just an idea. You do not have to use this one, but it is where you take a Christmas tree. And this is how I stored all of my florals. So I put it in color coordinated sections, greenery at the top, and it's just really easy to see everything at a glance and grab the florals that I need for any project at any time. And yes, it's a Christmas tree.

BINS

Now, these huge storage bins are super convenient to use for all sorts of projects, I mean, products. And then I use these little round ones for yarn. I could probably poke a hole at the top to pull the yarn out, too. I thought that would be great.

HOOKS

Now, these hooks are used to hold all of my wood bead garlands, all of my banners, things that I hang on my mantle. These are such fun pieces and I love to be able to see them. And I don't like them to get tangled. And isn't that one cute, y'all? I can't stand it. And so I like those hooks just for that.

ROLLS

Now, this is a Buffalo check magazine holder. You can grab these anywhere. I have linked some really cute ones below, but I use these to hold all of my vinyl and leather things for my Cricut. You can kind of see and I even have rolls of foil and things that I put in there as well.

WASHI TAPE

Now, this is a small little mini tower. I have it holding all of my washi tape. Do you collect washi tape like me? I absolutely can't handle it. I love all the washi tapes. And so this was just a really fun way to keep it organized by season. And I can still see that from the outside.

Again, here's my totes. These are all decoupage napkins. I can see them at a glance, so I really like that.

TOWERS AND RACKS

Now, these are genius. They are on wheels. This is my paint tower, as I call it. And it's just these individual little plastic containers. I believe they're originally for scrapbook paper. But I hold all of my paints in each one of them. So I've got the acrylic paints here. I've got the larger acrylic paints here. I've got the glues and the resin and molds in one of the drawers. And again, watercolors down at the bottom, but you can of course, stack it with whatever you want.

Now, this is actually a shoe rack, my friend. This shoe rack is what I use to hold all of my ribbons. I did color coordinate them because of course, I like to be able to see them at a glance.

Now, this is another tower. I call it my fabric tower. I have two of them, and they're a little bit overstuffed. I know. I know that I hoard a lot of things, but fabric is definitely one of them. And so each drawer has its own section of fabrics. Got bandanas all in

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one drawer over here on the other side, it's color coordinated, and it's all of my scrap pieces of fabric so that I can know, oh, okay, I need this color. I need a doily. I need this color. So you can, of course, coordinate it however you like. This is just what works for me.

These are just supposed to be inspirational ideas for you to get organized in your craft room. And I absolutely adore these towers. Now, you don't have to use them for fabric, but I thought that they were the perfect solution so that I could know where all my fabric was at a glance. I do make a messy bow, and it takes scrap fabric, so that is kind of where my hoarding started.

ODDS AND ENDS

Now, these are little wall pockets. You can get all sorts of wall pockets. I tagged a few below, but I hold all of my tools in them, labeled, of course, and they are just super convenient.

And this was a genius little idea someone came up with. I use it to hold my twine, but you can use it to hold your ribbon, or you can use it to hold your deco mesh. It really helps keep it in place. And I just love that you can pull off whatever amount you need at a time. And it is where you can see it all at a glance, of course.

And then this is a Hocking jar. It is just I have the lid over here, but I put all of my paint sticks in it. Now, these little turntables are awesome. I actually grabbed two of these, and all the little compartments are perfect for holding all of those little bitty craft supply items that you need. And I love again, as usual, you can see everything at a glance.

Thank you so much, my friend, for watching my video. I hope it inspired you. And don't forget to stay creative.

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Making Progress with Hoarding Disorder

MELANIE RENEE • TRANSCRIPT

TASHA: Today we have Melanie from A Hoarder's Heart with us. She's spoken to us a few years now, and she is back again this year. And we are going to be talking about hoarding disorder. And specifically, we really want to dive into the mental aspect, what's behind this, what's driving this type of hoarding disorder. And so, Melanie, thanks so much for being with us today and discussing this with us.

MELANIE: Oh, thank you so much for having me. I'm really excited to be here again. I just love Get Organized HQ. Just thank you for allowing me to be part of the family each year. Oh, yes.

DEFINING HOARDING DISORDER

TASHA: Okay, so let's just start right at the beginning with the basics. Can you give us a working definition for this conversation of what is hoarding disorder?

MELANIE: Absolutely. So hoarding disorder is a mental disorder. Our brains are wired a little differently, and we have difficulty letting go of stuff we tend to save because it has a special meaning to us. So, because we have this mindset and the way our brain is wired that we need to hold on to stuff to survive, to thrive. So, we have a very hard time letting go and decluttering because the items make us feel safe.

So, we're almost kind of stuck because it's alongside anxiety and PTSD and depression and OCD. It's alongside these other mental disorders, and it's just, simultaneously they work together where the hoard self-soothes me when I'm anxious. And the hoard makes me feel safe when I'm sad or depressed. So, they kind of work alongside each other. Yeah.

MELANIE'S STORY

TASHA: And this is something you have personal experience with, right?

MELANIE: Yes, I've had it since childhood. Yeah.

TASHA: So, what were some of the signs that you noticed that you had, like, when you were realizing you had hoarding disorder? What were some of the indications of that?

MELANIE: So, I had it my entire life. I didn't recognize until adulthood that I was on the spectrum, but I saw the signs as a child. I was always overly attached to my toys because I had a wonderful imagination, and I would play for hours upon hours with My Little Ponies and Rainbow Bright and my Cabbage Patch Kids. But I had humanized them. They were real in my childhood.

And if my mother was like, "hey, you're getting old enough, let's let this go," I would freak out. Like, Toy Story to me was real, right? Like, I can't throw Jesse out. Jesse's going to cry alone. You know what I mean? But I was already attaching and humanizing these toys, these physical items. There was

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already a bond and a connection.

And as I got older, not realizing it, the bond just grew stronger and stronger, because when I
was in middle school, I was horribly bullied. And to cope with that, I came home to my room, to where all my stuff was my plushies, my drawing, my creativity, everything that brought me comfort. I'm safe from those kids.

The items, the Cabbage Patch Doll or whatever is not going to hurt me, call me bad names. I want to be a space of happiness where I can be free to create, be myself, be in love, be my authentic self.

As an eleven year old girl, it was a form of escapism and also how I dealt with it, because I never told anybody. Yeah.

EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENTS

TASHA: And I want to dive into what you're saying that emotional attachment, the humanizing of the items. And so that's something I mean, that happens when you're young. You're talking about with your toys that you don't want to part with. But then also, I think that's something that can carry over and grow, maybe manifest slightly differently, but still manifest in adulthood with our items.

And so, is that what you would say drives the difficulty behind decluttering? Is it the emotional attachment there, or is it something else?

MELANIE: Yes. For a hoarder, every item and depends on the spectrum, because there is a spectrum, but every item, there's an emotional story attached to it. That's why you'll see some hoarders hold on to trash. Because I've held on to trash, right? Because I saw the potential in it, but I added such an elevated value to it that it was difficult for me to let it go because of these emotional values that I'm like, no, I can't let this go for this reason.

So, I'm going to hold on to it, to self soothe my nervous system so that I can feel safe and so that I can be productive and so I can handle the stresses in life. It's just from that point, it's like it's just elevated up. Right? There's no boundary. There's no distinction between this is a sentimental item, this is for logical purposes, like temporarily, I need to use it for this purpose. And now this is trash.

All those boundaries and categorizations are gone because everything has a value. Yeah.

SELF-SOOTHING

TASHA: So, what have you done? What has helped you to be able to bring those categories back into focus, even? What has helped you to begin to declutter while everything has emotional value?

MELANIE: So, I had to do the self-work first, right? I couldn't look at the clutter in a logical process. I couldn't be like, I haven't used this in ten years. I know I haven't used it in ten years. And I'm not saving it because of those reasons. I'm saving the pair of shoes from 2012 because it's representing a moment in time that I was happy.

So, for me, I had to start with, well, what's triggering that need to hold on? Why am I holding on to this feeling of happiness that I can't let go? Oh, that's right. It's self-soothing. I'll just use an instance. It's self-soothing. That time that I felt less than, that I felt hurt. And now I am physically using these shoes as a representation of

that happiness so that I don't have to feel that hurt.

FINDING THE TRIGGER

So, what I had to do was tell myself that I'm not a bad person. That person can't hurt you anymore. That person probably doesn't even realize how badly your feelings were hurt, how you internalize it. I'm a good person. I can do this. I can let go of that emotion so that I can let go of these shoes. I don't need these shoes to self soothe me.

I really had to dive deep into what is triggering this behavior.

And is it a lot of work? Yeah. But the freedom of it is amazing, because when you figure out why you're hurting and then you work through it and release it out, you just feel so good. And I found that once I released whatever emotion I attached to it, it was gone. That energetic connection to those shoes are now gone, and I can finally look at it logically, like, wow, I haven't used these shoes in ten years, and now I can let this go. I can't let this go freely. Yeah.

EMOTIONS NOT ITEMS

TASHA: So, it sounds like it's a lot more of a process of understanding the emotions rather than understanding the item.

MELANIE: Yes. Hoarding disorder, it's all based on the emotion, all based on the feelings, the emotions, the traumas. PTSD is a big one, side by side with hoarding disorder. I do have PTSD where I was very badly abused in a relationship when I was 17 and 18 and coming out, like, 19. And it was that situation that catapulted my hoarding disorder into survival. That is how I dealt with that trauma.

So, a lot of times when I'm decluttering, I already know where to look. I already know that it's rooted from that trauma to be like, okay, why am I holding on to this thing that's 20 years old? Oh, that's right. Because it reminded me that I was beautiful. Right where the gentleman, you know what I mean, was constantly shooting negative at, you're ugly, you're disgusting, you're all this stuff.

DETACHING THE TRAUMA

And that item said, no, I'm beautiful. See, I'm special. I'm a person. I'm someone. But he doesn't hurt me anymore. So, I'm working through that root trauma. Like, he's not around. He can't hurt me, and I'm none of those things. I am beautiful. I am a good person. I am happy. I am joyful.

And as I build myself up internally, I am now detaching that trauma from not only my body, but now this item. And now I don't need it anymore. So, when I'm decluttering, a lot of that is coming from that root, from those traumas that I never processed, because I never processed it. I never told a soul never told a soul about that trauma, and it was bad.

And again, that was my supporting was my survival. That was how it catapulted to I need this so that I can feel whole within myself, because he has beaten me down so badly.

TASHA: So, it sounds to me like a very heavy process, much more so. There are some people who can go and declutter, open up the kitchen drawer, pull everything out and be like, okay, I move on with my life after 30 minutes of standing here deciding and whatnot.

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This is going to take a lot more emotional energy. It's not just the physical energy, which I think, first of all, it's just important to acknowledge when things take emotional energy, because if we don't acknowledge that, it's going to be like, why am I worn out? I worked on half of a drawer or something along that . . .

IT TAKES LONGER

MELANIE: Yes. And for somebody with hoarding disorder, my advice is yes, you need to start very small and where you are and what you can handle. And to me, I've always said that if you get rid of one paper clip, I know that could have been like, I know it's a victory because it could have taken you ten mental battles to get rid of that one paper clip. But it's okay.

It's okay if it takes us longer. We are working through it because each step forward, you start to see the spaces open up. I can start with a section in the drawer, and then maybe two days later, I'll do a little more of the drawer, and then maybe over the weekend, I'll tackle the rest of the drawer. Just giving yourself grace doing it because it's a lot, right? It is, but in a positive way.

A SPECTRUM OF LEVELS

And there's also a spectrum of hoarding. Right? There's a spectrum. So, you got your level one hoarder all the way up to the level five. When I'm speaking, I'm speaking from the level five, the extreme. It is what you see on the shows. Right. Because I was a level four, so I know what it feels like to be very elevated over there.

But there's also level one hoarders and level two hoarders, where their processes they have to work through the emotions, but it's not as deep rooted. They have clutter, they have messes and stuff. And yes, they're not going to knock it out in one day, but they're going to move along the process a lot faster. Versus a level five. Yeah.

TASHA: So, do you have any advice for a situation?

INSPIRING BUT SCARY

MELANIE: I feel like there can be two sides of the stressor here. So even with an event like Get Organized HQ Virtual, it can be really inspiring, exciting. You start to see the benefit of decluttering and organizing. You know that it's going to help your health, your mental health.

But that can add its own level of stress, because seeing the divide from where you are to where you want to be now, you have all of the things that have these emotions tied into them to sort through, and then you also have this pressure because you know what, you want to do a good thing. You want to declutter, but it's adding to the pressure, if that makes sense.

TASHA: So, do you have any advice for working through that effectively?

MELANIE: Yes. For someone with hoarding disorder, and where we are especially, I'm going to speak from when I was a level four. When I was a level four, decluttering was scary. It was I'm not going to sugarcoat that. It was scary. But now that I've done the work and I've recovered to I'm between a one and a two right now, I can tell you that it's so much better.

It is so much freer. Your heart, your soul, your home is so much happier and lighter and peaceful, and it's worth it.

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BUILDING CONFIDENCE

Is it scary? At first? Sure it is. Because it's the unknown. You don't know. The hoard was predictable. The hoard was something that you knew. But when you start to take those little changes forward, you're going to start to see that, oh, this isn't so bad. I can get to this. I can do this. I am stronger.

And as those thoughts and those patterns become more common because it's not scary anymore, you started with the five things in the drawer, and then I'm going to continue with another five things, and then I'm going to continue with another. It's not scary anymore. It's not the unknown, it's not fearful.

And I'm building this inner confidence that I can do this. Now, some things are going to be really easy. Some things are going to be really easy to let go of, and some things you might get stuck in.

And something that has really, truly helped me that I would like to really talk about is emotional decluttering. Emotional decluttering is how I got this far. It's how I recovered. Because when you are working with someone with hoarding disorder, a logical process isn't going to work.

TASHA: Can you dive into that a little more and explain?

THE EMOTIONAL SCALE

MELANIE: This is something that I was doing and I wasn't aware of until more recently, where I became very self-aware of. This is how I'm decluttering within myself. So, as I picked an item up, I noticed that internally, I had this emotional scale from one to ten. One being that I don't feel anything, there's no story that I attach to this. I feel disconnected to this item. I can freely let this go in a logical manner. I can see that this is trash.

Anything that's a ten. I know that there's so much deep rooted emotional attachment to it that if I let this go, I'm going to trigger a panic attack. I'm going to freak out. I am not going to be able to function for the rest of my day until I go out into that trash and bring it back so that I can self soothe those emotions.

So, when I was decluttering anything that registered from a one to a three, I knew I could freely let it go. I knew that, okay, I got this. I'm going to let this go. I'm going to give thanks to it. We're going to immediately let it go.

Anything that was an eight or a ten that had this strong rooted emotion, I wasn't even going to consider letting it go. I'm going to keep it longer. I still have to do more internal work, but I don't have to make a decision today. I can put it in a labeled categorized bin so I know where that item is. It's safe. I can continue decluttering. I'm not forcing myself to do anything, I'm not ready to let go of anything in that.

Middle, between that four and that seven, I am going to take that moment to be like, I can go either way with this item. I feel like I can let it go, but something within myself is feeling a little unsure. So, I'm going to dive in to be like, well, why am I feeling like that? Why am I feeling scared to let this go? Oh, okay. It's coming from this situation, from my past. And at that point, I can either make the decision that I feel strong enough to be like, if it's like a seven, I'm like, you know what? I still need a little more time with that, and that's okay, let me put it in my labeled bin for now.

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Or if it's a four, I can be like, you know what? I really got over that, and I'm okay, I can really let this go. And a lot of times when it's a four or five and it's a tangible item, what really helps me is it's something that my kids outgrow. I'll give it to another mama, right? I call it transferring the joy to be like, you know, I'm so grateful that I had this for when my child was three, but there's a mama in my neighborhood who has a three year old looking for clothes. Let me transfer the joy so that she can have clothes for her three year old and the item that I've humanized can be worn and loved again.

AVOIDING THE PANIC

TASHA: Yes, absolutely. So, in that process, you talked about the times when you've gotten rid of something, but then that triggers that panic. And I wonder if we could go back to that as well, because that is probably walking into decluttering, that is the situation we're afraid of, right?

It's getting rid of something that we weren't ready to part with. And so, what is your advice for working through that?

I mean, in a situation where you've got rid of something that you can't get back, and now you're feeling panicked because it's in the trash, gone, gone. Or in a situation where you're having the internal battle of like, okay, I can go dig it out of the trash, but then I feel like I'm not making progress because I already decided. But that was this morning when it was sunny and bright, and now it's like, for me, everything pours at night.

MELANIE: Okay. Yes. When your mind resets and you kind of review the day and you're like, whoa.

TASHA: So how do you work through that?

MELANIE: So, I work through that because I'm honoring that emotional scale. Right. That eight, nine, and ten. I'm not forcing myself. I'm not. And that's how I've prevented myself from really regression, because I've honored that that moment where I was like, I don't feel comfortable, I'm not ready, and I'm going to hold on to it.

HONORING WHERE YOU ARE

And I've never regretted. I've decluttered thousands of things, but because I honored that emotion that I was in, I haven't missed anything because I honored where I was. And since you're doing . . . and let me give you a glimpse of hope, too, in the sense that being in that moment and I've honored who I was, where I was. I can tell you that three months later when I found the number eight, because I've worked through it, all of a sudden it's not an eight anymore.

Now it's a four. And I'm like, oh, I can let this go. I'm not feeling what I used to feel, and now I can lovingly let it go. For me, it's lovingly let it go. Not a fear based in the sense that it's like when I'm letting it go, it's in a space of gratitude. I'm thankful that I had it. It served its purpose while I was here, and now I can share it with somebody else or I can recycle it.

Whatever story I'm attaching at that moment, I'm not letting anything go in fear because it's just going to be a continuous cycle of me freaking out. So again, it's just honoring the emotions that I'm in.

HELPING LOVED ONES

TASHA: So, what can you say for those who are watching this, wanting to help loved ones through this process?

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So, I feel like there is like, we love these people. We want to help them. We want them to have this freedom. We want their houses to be places where they're less stressed and they have these awesome results, but we also aren't them.

I can't tell you if it's a five or eight, I'm removed from that if I'm the one helping them. And so how can we, those of us in the position of helping someone who is struggling with hoarding disorder, how can we be helpful? How can we help them honestly assess where something is on that scale for themselves?

MELANIE: Yes. So, to help someone with hoarding disorder, we have to understand the mindset. Right.

If you were going to help somebody who was an alcoholic, you have to understand the mindset. Right. So, with hoarding disorder, this is why I want to humanize it.

With hoarding disorder, our disorder is so misunderstood, and we feel so judged, and we hide it, and we feel isolated, and we feel like we're the only person struggling with this. So, since we're coming from this mindset of isolation. There's something wrong with us. Why can't we do it?

A SAFE SPACE

For someone to come into us, we need empathy. We need understanding. We need that loving support. Because that's what fueled me on the channel, is when I was vulnerable with those emotions, people came to me with understanding, like, oh, I understand you now, and now we can meet, and now I feel safe with you. And now I can open up those emotions to be like, I'm holding on to this because of this reason.

And then you can come in and be like, I understand how you feel. I know that that must have hurt you. How can I help you work through that? Just being a safe space, just being a support person. Because you need to address the mental health before we tackle the physical stuff.

Because once you start working through the mental, the emotional I don't know how to say it other than it's magic. Because once I've worked through it, the items no longer had that sentiment and I could release it. But I feel like from someone, if you're a loved one, just ask them, how do you feel? I'm here to support you. I'm here to understand you. I want to help you in a loving way without any judgment. I am a safe space to you.

I think that's most key. I am a safe space for you to be open and vulnerable.

DOES IT GET EASIER?

TASHA: So, in what you're describing, a question that's come to mind a couple of times in my own mind. Have you found that whenever you worked through, like, done the emotional work of something, was it a situation where one or two items, you were like, okay, each item I pick up, I have to do this emotional work?

Or did you find situations where, I've worked through this, I am in a better place personally, mentally, emotionally, and now this entire category of items just got way easier to deal with.

MELANIE: Oh, great question. So, I'm kind of coming into that, right? Where with somebody with hoarding disorder, there's no categories. Right. Everything is jumbled. Right?

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So, with the hoarding disorder, it's kind of like I take a small section at a time. I start with the easiest thing that I can declutter first. Where's the one? Where's the two? So, I can get that decluttering momentum going. Right.

But now that I'm getting into categories right, we've decluttered thousands of things. I'm creating these categories for these eights and these tens, right? So, circling back around, the answer is yes in the sense that a certain category is getting easier.

Let's say arts and crafts, right? Arts and crafts is a category for me because I am creative, I am artistic. So that's how I feel self-worth within myself. The craft supplies is how I feel self-worth when I am having negative talk or I don't feel like I'm good enough. Right.

I'm ADHD too. So sometimes I have a lot of that negative talk. So, as I am building myself up, as I'm saying, no, you are a good person, I can do this, I'm strong enough. As I'm doing that internal work through myself, I no longer need this category to support me. I don't need this category anymore to self soothe me anymore because I've worked through those emotions and I'm building myself back up. So, the answer is yes.

As you do that emotional work, you're going to see certain categories not have that deep rooted attachment anymore, where now you can be like, oh, this is really cool. And it was actually cool. This is something that probably most people don't feel. But for me to hold a physical item and be like, there's not a story to this. I don't have to hold on to this. This is crazy.

To me, I've never felt like that everything had a story, but you can get there. You can actually feel like, oh, cool, I don't need this. I could really let this go. And look, everybody has an emotional attachment to something. I'm hoarding disorder. I'm on the extreme side of the pendulum. Right?

But even on the side of minimalism, you still have some things, just less than I do, some things that you're so emotionally attached to and the story that you gave that I can't let this go. I just can't let this go. So, it just depends on where on that pendulum you are, right?

So now I'm finally swinging a little down. I'm getting back. Yeah.

BABY STEPS

TASHA: Well, have you in your time of going through this decluttering, have you found ways to maybe more helpful ways to make your space and your things still feel safe? Because the goal, of course, is not to create a space that you don't feel safe in.

We want our homes to be even better, like even more of a safe space. And you talked about at the beginning how sometimes the stuff, the room being full, that alone can feel safe. And so how do you make that adjustment to walking in and being like it feels empty and even if there's no specific thing that you're missing, it just feels off.

MELANIE: So that is so spot on. I'm so glad that you said that. For someone with hoarding disorder, it has to be baby steps. It just has to.

Because to us, this stuff, we've created this world and our nervous system is registering that all of this stuff is keeping me safe. So, when you clean sweep a room, like if you

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were to change a hoarder's room straight to minimalism, we would freak out. It's too much of a change. It's too much.

And with me, when I see bare walls and stuff, it feels like scarcity, lack, loneliness, poverty. That's what's registering with my emotions. So that's why the greatest advice I can give to someone helping someone with hoarding disorder, you can't clean sweep it out. They're going to regress. It's too big of a change.

KEEPING YOUR PEACE

As humans, we have these daily behaviors and thoughts and patterns, and to just go from one spectrum to the opposite, it's too shocking. Our body can't handle it, right? You can even flip it around. Somebody who's a minimalist, and now you're going to throw a bunch of stuff into their house. They're going to freak out. They're going to be like, no, this is stressful. You know what I mean? I'm freaking out. This is taking away my peace.

Same is on the opposite to us. To empty it out that quickly, it's too much of a change.

And that's why I say it's baby step decluttering. It's taking those steps forward. It's reconditioning your nervous system that I'm still safe if I declutter, I'm still safe if I don't have this. I'm still safe if I have this open space. I'm still safe if I have a room that I can walk into. That's what we're trying to change.

TASHA: Well, thank you so much for just diving into all this today and discussing this. So, before we wrap up, is there any last closing thoughts that you want to leave us with?

POSITIVE ALTERNATIVES

MELANIE: Yes, there actually is, because this is also very important with hoarding disorder, in any vice that you're going through, it doesn't have to be hoarding disorder. It could be anything that you're struggling with that you want to improve and change a habit is that your body right? Your emotions.

You're going to still need something to self soothe, right? You can't eliminate something and then just be like, I want to use my willpower to get through this. No, you still need something else to cope, to self soothe with, to process.

So, for me, what I have done is I journal a lot. I do a lot of prayer, meditation time. It's important to also talk with a therapist because depending where you are on that spectrum, you're going to need that person to really talk through.

And look, it can even be a friend. It can just be that companion where you can just be open to where you are just expressing it. I want you to find healthier coping mechanisms, whether it's taking a walk, gardening, something that is healthy and lifting you up as you're doing this process, because as you're decluttering, you're still going to need that kind of like, well, what's making me feel safe now?

I'm not feeling safe. Oh, I feel safe when I'm taking a walk. I feel happy. The sun's hitting me. I love gardening. I'm passionate about gardening or drawing. I'm going to take this time to draw, to create, to write, whatever that passion is. You still need something your body is still going to look for something to self soothe as you're lessening the need to hoard and hold on.

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TASHA: Yeah, I think that's a really good point. I'm glad you brought that up. That the goal is not to take away anything that's self-soothing. It's to find healthier, more ways to self soothe.

MELANIE: Yes, absolutely. For sure.

FOLLOWING MELANIE

TASHA: Okay, so where can people go to learn more? Where can they find you, follow you on socials, all of that?

MELANIE: So, you could definitely find me on my YouTube channel, a Hoarder's Heart. That's where I really show the messes and I really share my heart and my messages and what helps. And we're just building this loving community where it's safe to have hoarding disorder and it's safe to encourage each other. It's safe to root your rise and everyone else's rise. It's just a wonderful support group. I also have an Instagram that I do post weekly, and we are building our TikTok and our Facebook as we speak.

TASHA: Okay, great. Well, we'll leave links to your socials down below so people can go check out your channel. All right.

MELANIE: Thank you so much for having me. This is wonderful. Thank you

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Holiday-Ready Home: Simple Steps to Unleash the Peace and Joy of an Organized Holiday

MELISSA JAMES • TRANSCRIPT

Hey there. Welcome to Holiday-Ready Home. Now, I realize it's September, and depending on where you are in the world, you may be feeling more like this. But before you know it, you're gonna be thinking about something like this. A little pumpkin spice latte or picking out the ugly sweater you're going to wear to an upcoming holiday party.

Before you know it, the holidays will be here. They have this crazy way of sneaking up on us. But today I'm going to give you simple steps to unleash peace and joy of an organized holiday. So stick with me to learn some things you can do to get your home and life organized this holiday season.

Thank you so much, Laura, for having me back on Get Organized HQ Virtual for the fifth year. I am thrilled to be here and I'm so excited to share practical tips that you can use right away to bring more peace and less chaos to your home this holiday season.

FREE GUIDE

Before we get started, I want to make sure that you have a chance to download the free guide that accompanies this session. You can go to ourhappyhive.com/gohq or just scan the QR code right there and it'll take you where you can sign up and download that guide for you.

MELISSA'S MISSION

And if we haven't met, I'm Melissa James.

I vlog at Our Happy Hive, where I write about home organization, decluttering, and time management. I really am thrilled to be here with you and share practical tips that you can start using this week. For the past six years, I've broken down steps to decluttering and home organization, and I've helped thousands of people get organized through my blog and products.

In addition to being a wife and mom, I'm also a business leadership consultant. For 25 years, I've worked for a variety of companies, creating systems and helping people accomplish goals, get organized, and be efficient. And I found that the same principles businesses use to streamline their work and accomplish goals can be customized for your life and your needs as well.

As an organizing expert, I have made it my mission to organize my home inside and out and to share the process with others. I love breaking down projects into small, doable tasks that take 30 minutes or less. My mission is to help you organize your home life through tiny tasks that create quick wins and motivational momentum so you're in the right places.

TWELVE PLUS FOUR

You want to get organized for the holidays. You want to have more peace and less chaos this holiday season. So what are we going to talk about today? We're going to talk about twelve tiny tasks to help you organize your home. And at the end,

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I'm going to share with you four secret strategies to help you organize your time and your life during this crazy holiday season.

MELISSA'S STORY

Now let me tell you about my personal tipping point for the holiday season for us. Like many families, the holidays is one of the craziest times of the year. Now, I am American, but I live in Canada and that often means that we have two Thanksgivings, one in October and one in November.

In addition to that, we also have three birthdays. Then there are usually one or two trips to go and visit family or have the family come and visit us. I also have this annual Christmas cookie exchange party that I'm kind of fond of. And then there's all the shopping and gift exchange and making time for our faith.

While I love the season and it truly is like my favorite season of the year, I knew that something was very wrong when I actually thought about changing the date of my daughter's birthday. Let me explain. Her birthday is the final birthday of our holiday season flurry. It falls just after New Year's. We were exhausted from travel, but I wanted to make it extra special for her.

As another person who has a birthday during the holidays, I know that it's not ideal to try and blend birthday and Christmas together. So I wanted to make this fourth birthday extra special. It was the first time she was inviting friends over for her birthday. I wanted to take down all the holiday stuff and put up the birthday things and just do all the things to make it a memorable event for her the next day.

WAIT, WHAT?

We had a great time. The day of her birthday, we had a great time. It was a Pancake and Pajama theme party. We had relay races, we had crafts. But I recall this moment standing in my dining room exhausted and thinking, I am never doing this again. Why did I do something so silly to plan a party right after the holidays? This will not happen next year.

And then it was like a record, a needle scratching across the record. Wait, what did I just say? Did I actually think about changing the day my daughter was born? Something is really wrong. And this was a moment that I realized something had to change and it wasn't my daughter's birthday.

RESEARCH SAYS

So why am I telling you all of this? Because I know that I am not alone. In fact, recent research shows that 88% of Americans feel stressed while celebrating the holidays. And then I hear from readers all the time that feel overwhelmed or like they bit off more than they can chew. They don't have enough time or energy to do all the things and they're ready to quit and never have people over again. Or like in my case, change their firstborn's birthday.

According to research, now, this will not surprise you, but according to research, some of the top holiday stressors include things like where to spend the holidays, how much money to spend on gifts, prepping your house for holiday gifts, or preparing before and after those gatherings.

REMOVING STRESSORS

But here's the good news we are going to

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remove some of those stressors. Today I'm going to give you a plan that will help you unleash the peace and joy of an organized holiday. After my big AHA moment, when I realized that I couldn't, I mean, wouldn't change my daughter's birthday, I had to change.

So instead of shifting when I did things, I had to shift how I did them. And that's been true for every area of my home, including organization, decluttering, and life management. Since having a family and a career, I had to figure out ways to work in the margins of my life so that I don't get overwhelmed and quit.

And today I'm going to share with you those tips and secrets and how you can get organized for the holiday ahead of time. And here's what I know. There are big benefits to getting organized. It decreases stress. It can save you time and money, and making progress on your goals gives you a sense of accomplishment. Who doesn't want that?

So I'm here today to show you that there's another way, an easier way and a simpler way. So biting off more than you can chew and leaving things until the last minute are big mistakes when it comes to holiday stress. Trying to organize every space in your home instead of prioritizing areas can lead to overwhelm and burnout. It adds to stress, and it steals your holiday joy.

P.S.

But I'm going to share with you how to prioritize and simplify in order to get your home holiday ready. Write those words down. P.S. Prioritize and simplify. This is going to be our mantra through this presentation and through the holiday season. Just put a little P.S. there, and it will be a reminder for you of prioritizing and simplifying things.

So let's go ahead and get started. All right?

BEGIN WITH A VISION

As with any big project, I always love to encourage you to begin with a vision. What do you want from your holiday season this year? Think about Thanksgiving, Christmas, Hanukkah, whatever holidays you celebrate between October, for my Canadian friends, November and December for my American and other parts of the world friends. Think about what you want to experience this year.

In your workbook I have a few questions there to help you develop your vision, but think about things like how do you want to feel on December 31 after all of it's over? What do you want to start this holiday season that you haven't done before? Or maybe there are things that you've done that were just too much. You want to stop those things.

Or maybe you have some special holiday traditions that you want to continue. Take a minute and write those things down. You'll see that after every section of this presentation, I'm going to give you a take action so that you know exactly what to do after this presentation and that you can actually take the things we talk about and apply it to your life.

So take a minute and jot down a few of your thoughts for your vision in your workbook. Okay?

TINY TASKS

So now let's talk about the home. We're going to cover twelve tiny tasks to help you get your home holiday ready. Now, let me

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explain what tiny tasks are. Tiny tasks are bite size. They usually take 30 minutes or less. They are easy wins. They make a space more functional, and
they're done one at a time.

This falls in line with Simplify. I talked about our P.S. mantra, Prioritize and Simplify. These are ways that you simplify your tasks and make them go from overwhelming to easy or easier. Tiny tasks do not tackle an entire room at once. They don't require a lot of emotional energy.

They don't feel overwhelming. In fact, if they feel overwhelming, they're too big. I'm going to encourage you to break it down smaller and do even a smaller portion of it. They don't leave you confused about where to start. And they encourage these quick, frequent wins. They reinforce to yourself that you can do this and they create a positive momentum.

TINY TASK #1: ORGANIZE HOLIDAY DECOR

So we're going to dive into those twelve tiny tasks for the home, and we're going to start in the area of holiday decor. Now, one of the reasons this is great to talk about right now is because if you're like me, it is very easy to put holiday decor away and not think about it until after the holiday season. And at that point, you're too tired often to even deal with it.

So starting to think about it in September or October is a great time to think about and get your holiday decor organized. So we're going to start with decluttering your holiday decorations. Take out those ceramic pumpkins, stuffed turkeys, cotton wreaths, or broken nutcrackers. Discard any items that are worn out.

And next, if you have decorations that are in good condition but haven't been used in years because they no longer go with your color scheme, or you're just not into that style anymore, put them in a donate or sell box.

Again, timing is important here because you can actually donate or sell holiday decorations earlier in the year. By earlier I mean September or October. However, if you do this after the holidays, in January, no one's looking to buy or wants donated holiday decorations at that point.

TINY TASK #2: DECLUTTER ORNAMENTS AND LIGHTS

The next thing I will encourage you to do is to declutter your ornaments and your lights. So this is, again, it's in that holiday decoration, but I put it in a different bucket because often we have so many ornaments or Christmas lights. You pull out that strand of Christmas lights and they're broken. So this is a great time of the year to go ahead and go through your things, see which ones you don't use, which ones no longer match your color scheme, or that you've just changed style.

Find the lights that don't work and that you don't have the extra bulb to put in them and go ahead and discard those items that are broken and are no longer functional. The other thing is, again, you can donate or sell.
TINY TASK #3:

Tiny task idea number three is to declutter your holiday dishes. So this is if you . . . I have a Santa mug collection. You might have other dishes that you've collected over the years. Some of those you use, some of those you don't use. Think about not only mugs, but serving dishes. Things that you maybe put out just for decoration, again,

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that are dishes.

Like, we have a tea set that we put out at the holidays. So think about those items and again, use the same filter. Is it broken? Do I actually put it out? Does it still match my color scheme or style? If not, what else do I want to do with those? Is this something that I need to pass on, discard, donate, or sell?

TINY TASK #4: ORGANIZE YOUR BAKING INGREDIENTS

Okay, so now we're going to move into the kitchen. Often in the holidays, we are busy cooking or baking. So we're going to talk through a few areas that you can do to get your home holiday ready in your kitchen space. We all bake over the holidays, so getting our spices and dry ingredients in order is a must.

This is a great time to discard things that are expired or extremely old. Now, here's the thing. Spices don't actually expire, but they do lose their flavor. So if you have something that is many years old, you may consider replacing it.

You want to consider how and where you use these ingredients. I'm talking dry ingredients like flour, sugar, et cetera. Baking soda, and then also, again, all of your spices. Does it make sense to keep your spices in the pantry? Or do you have a drawer maybe closer to where you use them, that you would want to store them for easy access that would be more practical and more convenient?

EXTRA ORGANIZATION

If you want to go extra in how you get this space organized, not only is it the decluttering the things or removing the items that are expired or too old, but you can also make them visually appealing. So you can get similar containers for your baking ingredients, the dry ingredient.

You can get clear containers and label them for your spices, you can get small jars and label them as well. If you want an inexpensive route, I encourage small Mason jars. Or Ikea has some affordable jars. You can label them with sticky labels, or you can even take a marker, like a permanent marker or paint pen and write directly onto the jars. Arrange them in alphabetical order so that they're easy to find which spice you're looking for.

And then if you have backstock or extra spices, put them in a bin and arrange them again in alphabetical order. I like to keep my extra spices at the bottom of our pantry so that they're out of sight, but I know where they are when I need them.

CHECK SUPPLIES

Finally, as you go through your spices and dry ingredients, this is also a great time to make a note of anything that's missing or that you're running low on. You may look at even some of the special recipes you like to use over the holiday season that have a unique ingredient and see if you have it on stock and again if it's not expired. So for me, an example is we make Nanaimo bars in Canada and it calls for a custard powder. Well, I only use that custard powder at Christmas, and I typically don't use the entire can of it. So that's one of the things that's kind of on my mental list that I need to check if I'm planning on making that this holiday season.

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TINY TASK #5: ORGANIZE BAKING EQUIPMENT

All right, in the same vein, we're going to talk about baking equipment. So you may use tools for the holidays that you never use the rest of the year. Things like a carving knife or a special cake pan for that one dessert that you only do at Christmas. For me, we use these tiny one inch little cookie cutters when we make Nanny's shortbread cookies.

To organize the space, you first want to clear out the drawer or cabinet. Then you want to wipe it down. You want to insert bins and dividers if necessary. This is a good time also to get rid of any duplicates that you have. Or sometimes we like to have multiple spatulas, but if you have ten spatulas, it's time to get rid of some of those. Or it's also good to get rid of things you haven't used in the last twelve to 18 months.

You want to group like things and store like things with like things. So put all your spatulas together, your whisk together, your measuring cups together. Put frequently used items in the top drawers or where they are easily accessible. Place your less frequently used items like that specialty waffle tongue, or the lime zester, or the egg hooker in the lower drawers.

TINY TASK #6: ORGANIZE PANTRY

The next tiny task that we're going to talk about is the pantry. Now, this is important. If you're having guests over and others will be cooking in your kitchen, this is a good idea to organize the entire pantry and not just the baking goods, the baking, the dry ingredients.

So I make the pantry . . . it could be an overwhelming project. I make it into a tiny task by breaking the zones into smaller subsections. So I would encourage you to do like one shelf at a time. Or in my case, we have baskets or bins, taking out one bin and doing it at a time. This allows me to do it in the margins of my day, so I could do one bin right after the kids leave for school or right after they get to bed. I don't have to dedicate a whole lot of time to it. I can just use it kind of here and there, do it here and there as I have time.

So the process is the same. You want to take things off of the shelf or out of the bin or basket. You want to wipe it down. Look for any expired items and discard those. And then group your like things and again, store them either in the bin or basket or in the same place on the shelf.

Here are a few practical tips as to where to store things in your pantry. I encourage you to place items that you don't use too often on the top. Maybe the healthy things that you want to eat, or you want to encourage your family members to eat places in the middle. And then any heavy and bulky items, you can place those at the bottom.

TINY TASK #7:

Okay, our last tiny task for the kitchen area is to organize your freezer or refrigerator and to take inventory of what you have. So this is a great way to use what you have on hand and to save some money. It'll also make room for things that you need to freeze over the holidays.

One of the things I love to do to encourage organization and being able to find things easily, especially in places like the freezer, is vertical filing. So this allows you to see what you have on hand. You can see on

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the picture in the slide, I'm looking down in my drawer, in my freezer drawer, and I have things going from the front of the drawer to the back of the drawer. The bags are stacked from the front to the back. The boxes are stacked from the front to the back. Instead of filing them or stacking them top to bottom, where I then have to look remove everything to see what's on the bottom. So vertical filing is a great way if you have a drawer to organize things in there.

You can also do it if you have a shelf, you would just do it from left to right. You would place each thing next to each other again, so you can look at it in one picture and see what it is that you have on hand.

While you're decluttering and organizing your freezer or refrigerator, make a note of the things that you have. Do an inventory to help you not only plan some meals over the holidays, but also help to save money at the grocery store so you're not buying duplicates of the things you already have. This is especially important for the pantry, I mean, I'm sorry, for the pantry, for the freezer, if you don't go there too often. This year I updated my freezer inventory and I was able to save $60 by crossing things off that I already had on hand.

Okay, so when you apply the same thing to your refrigerator, typically our refrigerator portion of the space is bigger than the freezer section of the space. So you make it a tiny task by doing compartments within the refrigerator. So you just do the left side door one time, and you do the right side door another time. Or you just do the top shelf once and then the middle shelf another time. Again breaking it into those 15 to 30 minutes tasks that don't feel overwhelming, but yet you get to see progress. You get to say, like, I actually completed what I set out to do, and you reconfirm to yourself that you're in this and you're getting it done, and it is doable.

TINY TASK #8: EDIT THE COAT CLOSET

Okay, so let's go on to the third section for making our home holiday ready. And this is welcoming spaces. These are the places where we entertain others or we have guests who stay when they come and visit us.

So if you live in a cool climate and you're like I do, and you have coats coming into your house when people guests come in, you want to prep your coat closet. This is a great time to declutter coats where maybe the zipper is broken or buttons have been torn off or that your kids have outgrown. You want to make space for the guests' coats when they come in your home.

I also encourage you to add empty hangers so that you have easily accessible, sorry, you have them easily accessible.

TINY TASK #9: ORGANIZE GUEST SLEEPING SPACE

When welcoming your guests into your holiday ready home, tiny task idea number nine is to organize your guest sleeping space. Now, if you're having overnight guests, you'll definitely want to prep some sleeping space for them.

Step one is to identify where the guests are going to sleep. Maybe you do have a spare bedroom, guest bedroom for them, or a couch, or even a blow up mattress on the floor. After COVID, my entire family wanted to gather together because we hadn't seen each other in like two and a half years

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being in Canada and the US. And so we had somewhere between 15 and 18 people come to my parents' house, and we used every horizontal surface you could think of. We had people in all the bedrooms. We had air mattresses on the floor in bedrooms. We were using couches.

The thing is, it doesn't have to be a fancy space. Anything will do. But getting it organized is important. So the way you get it organized or get it ready is you want to tidy the area. You want to make space for your guests' belongings, like a suitcase or putting spare hangers in the closet for them to hang their clothes.

Some of the potential tiny tasks in this area could be things like declutter the shelves or the top of dressers or even the drawers. If you're going to have them use a drawer to store some of their clothing, just remember to take it one section at a time and not to try and do it all at once.

TINY TASK #10: ORGANIZE GUEST LINENS

Tiny task idea number ten is to organize your guest linen. So this is another thing you want to do if you have guests spending the night with you. Locate any fresh linens that you can put on their bed. Discard any worn out linens. I don't know about you, but linens is one of the things that's easy for me to overlook. I will tend to hang on to them for a long time.

So this is a great opportunity, having guests over to discard things that have holes in them or that have stains on them. And by discard, I should say I use that term in a very general way. Discard could mean donating. I've heard people donating them to an animal shelter and those types of things. So I'm not saying throw them in the trash. I'm just saying get them out of your home.

You want to prepare some fresh towels and make sure you have enough pillows that aren't too lumpy. Again, you make this a tiny task by focusing on one thing at a time. So maybe you're just going to focus on sheets at first, pillows another time, towels, and washcloth another time.

Again, these are all things that can be done in the margins of your day. And remember, if it feels overwhelming that it's not a timing task.

TINY TASK #11: ORGANIZE BATHROOMS

Okay, tiny task number eleven. Again, thinking about welcoming spaces. You want to organize a bathroom space for guests. If you're just having people come over and entertaining for a meal, you can just put out some fresh handcloths and fresh soap.

But if you have someone spending the night, you want to make sure that you have things like a clean cup for their toothbrush and there's fresh towels out for them. If you have drawers in your bathroom, it's a good time to declutter those and organize those. Discard any toiletries that are over a year old or corroded, wipe down the inside of the drawers too.

One other thing that you can do to help those drawers look neat and tidy is to create zones within the drawers. And those can be either done often those are done with plastic bins to help keep your combs in one place, hairbands in another place, toothpaste in another place, et cetera.

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TINY TASK #12: PREP LIVING SPACE

Okay, and the last thing I'm going to talk about is the living room. It is a favorite place to gather for coffee or play games with holiday guests. You can prep this space by decluttering any flat surfaces, including things like the coffee or end table, bookshelves or mantles.

Like many other spaces in your home, your horizontal surfaces are susceptible to becoming clutter traps. You want to make sure that you assign homes for things that often land in the living room. Things like magazines, remote controls, games, or game pieces.

If you have a bunch of blankets in your living room, this is a great time to wash those. Another option you can do is vacuuming under the cushions of the couch just to get that space in tip shop, tip top shape.

The last tip I'll have for the living room is putting a tray on the table or on an ottoman to contain your things that just help it to look neat and tidy.

PRIORITIZE

Okay, so let's prioritize. Remember the P.S., Prioritize and Simplify? We just went through twelve tiny tasks to get your home organized and holiday ready. Some things I shared may not apply to your space, and you may have other things that apply to your space that I didn't share.

So I'm going to talk to you now about an approach for Prioritizing and Simplifying and how you can customize this list for your needs and the things that are the most important to you.

STEP ONE: MAKE A LIST

So the first thing I want you to do is make down the list of the things in the rooms, the spaces that you want or need to organize in your home before the holidays. You can see I've listed a few on the screen.

STEP TWO: USE THE MATRIX

Next, we're going to place those spaces in the simple two by two matrix. This is where you're going to start to prioritize things.

So you can see in the matrix on the left hand side, it says High Holiday Use. And then lower, it says Low Holiday Use. And then you can see, going across the bottom, Lots of Clutter and a Little Clutter. So as you look at your spaces, we're going to put them in each of these quadrants.

Within this two by two matrix, you can see I use some of the spaces I had and I placed them in each of the quadrants. So we'll take the kitchen as an example. It's an area that's going to be High Holiday Use and it also has Lots of Clutter. And by that for me, I mean there's a lot of different spaces that I need to organize in that room.

Guest bedroom, on the other hand, will also be used for High Holiday Use, but it doesn't have a Lot of Clutter. So I put that in the other, the blue shaded box. So you'll take each of your spaces and put them in this two by two matrix, and I'm going to tell you what to do with that after this.

So your top priority areas, I always encourage you to start with a low level clutter first, and the reason is it gives you a quick win. It helps to boost your confidence. You start to cross things off through your list. So the things that are in the top left hand side, the blue quadrant with

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the number one, that's your first area to declutter and to get organized. The things that are in the second top quadrant, the yellow quadrant, have a number two. That's your second area to focus on as you work towards getting your home holiday ready.

Then the things that are on the bottom, I would say do not focus on the low holiday use areas. So your garage or your storage closet, areas where guests aren't going to really be going during the holiday time. That's not going to be your focus as you get your home holiday ready.

STEP THREE: TAKE ACTION

All right, so take action. Write down your list, then use the two by two matrix to help you prioritize it and create your holiday home organization plan.

FOUR SECRET STRATEGIES

Okay, so now we're going to move on to those four secret strategies that I mentioned earlier. These will help you to be intentional and prioritize how you spend your time and simplify the things that you do this holiday season.
STRATEGY ONE: A LIST OF NO

So holiday tip number one is to make a list of the things that you're going to say no to. This is a secret strategy. We don't need to do all the things on the holiday. Say no to cooking all the things or say no to buying new decorations. Say no to crazy sales shopping that increases your anxiety. I'm talking about Black Friday or crowded malls.

You also want to think about things like mindsets. What are the mindsets that come in that are not helpful? Say no to things like comparison or guilt or perfectionism, regret and drama. We're going to be intentional about how we think about the holidays and what are the things that we let come into our mind.

SECRET STRATEGY #2: ID AREAS TO SIMPLIFY

Holiday life secret strategy number two is identifying where we can simplify. So if you think about the things that you have to do over the holidays, start to question, does it really make a difference? Will your neighbor actually care if you buy salsa from a local store versus making it yourself? Does your family care if you choose to use gift bags this year instead of wrapping everything in a box and putting a bow on it?

Maybe instead of buying things for your extended family, you guys decide to do a gift exchange and then you just have to buy a gift for one person. Do you need to make everything for a party? Or could you do a potluck or buy a side from a local restaurant or a local small business?

Taking steps like this to simplify can actually give you back hours of time. In all of these situations, you want to ask yourself, what is the goal behind these actions? Well, what is the simplest way for me to get to that goal and then take that route?

SECRET STRATEGY #3: PLAN AHEAD

Holiday Life organization tip number three. Secret strategy number three is to plan ahead. Planning ahead will help you to avoid holiday stress. Making a wish list of these things you want to do, begin to pencil them out on the calendar. And then think about like, is it really reasonable to do all of the things that you have planned in one week? Or should you take some things off of your

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list? Or should you space them out more?

By planning ahead and writing things down, you'll be able to focus on what's important each week and keep the details straight. The reason you feel rushed typically isn't because of how long activities take, but because of when you're doing them and just kind of waiting until the last minute. So planning ahead can alleviate a lot of stress.

SECRET STRATEGY #4: START EARLY

And my final tip for holiday life organizations, final secret strategy is to start early. This works for things like gift buying, budget planning, cooking, and getting your home organized.

You can do things like prep cookie dough and then freeze it. Then you don't have to do it all that last week before Thanksgiving or Christmas. You can make casseroles ahead and freeze them. Then you don't have to cook when your family or your guests are in town.

You don't have to do all of your present shopping before Thanksgiving. But starting early when it comes to holiday plans can have enormous benefits.

TAKE ACTION

All right, so your take action for this one. Number one, make your no list. What are the things you're not going to do this year? Number two, write down three things you want to simplify this year. And number three, decide when you're going to start getting into holiday prep mode. Now, at this point in the year, you do have the gift of time. You can use the four secret strategies we just discussed to be holiday ready with little added stress.

MONTHLY FOCUS

I've provided you here with a monthly focus for October, November, December to help you prepare.

In October, you want to finalize your holiday plan, the one that you've started today. Then begin to get your home organized through the custom list that you used on the two by two matrix that you created on the two by two matrix.

In November, finish your guest space organization items and begin shopping and cooking if you haven't already.

Then finally in December, finish any remaining items, and especially in early December if possible. And then enjoy your holiday season.

Thank you so much for your time today. I hope you get your home holiday ready and you get to enjoy the most of the upcoming season. I would love to help you as you work to get organized, be efficient, and be inspired again. If you haven't already, be sure to download that free guide that I have for you. Again, the website is ourhappyhive.com/gohq, or you can just scan the QR code.

I'd also love to have you follow me on Instagram @ourhaphyhive_melissa. And that is all for our time today. Thank you so much for joining me, and I hope to see you around. Bye.

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Teach Your Child the Life Skill of Organizing

MICHAELE TOCCO • TRANSCRIPT

Hi, my name is Michaele Tocco and I am the owner and founder of Michaele's Precise Planning. I am so excited that you've decided to join me today as we discuss the topic of teaching your child the life skill of organizing.

I am a proud parent of two. I have a daughter that's twelve and my son is nine. And I can say from personal experience that throughout the years I've had to revamp, or tweak, so to speak, their organizing systems and the ways in which they keep their spaces organized.

ONE SIZE DOESN'T FIT ALL

With them growing, their needs change. The amount of toys, the size of the toys changes, the amount of clothing, arts and crafts, just their individual needs, as they grow, begin to change. So there's not a one size fits all when it comes to organizing for children throughout the years. Again, we've had to change their systems a few times.

So I'm excited to share my personal experience as a parent on things that have worked in my own home, but also as an organizer when I organize for my tiny human clients, learning the ways that they organize and the ways that work for them, as opposed to us as a parent and the way we see things as being streamlined and orderly as opposed to a child and how it works for them.

LIFE SKILLS

So just really excited to be able to share some of these tips that I've learned over the years, again, as a parent and as an organizer, to be able to help you to better teach your children, again, this life skill of organizing. And I say life skill because they can take it with them into adulthood. So I'm excited to teach you these tips and tricks. So let's get right into it.

MEET MICHAELE

As I mentioned, my name is Michaele Tocco and I am a professional organizer, the owner and founder of Michaele's Precise Planning. I'm the host of Chaos to Calm on Aspire TV. I've been featured in Redfin, the Detroit News, Michigan Chronicle, Organize Me Radio, which is a podcast, and I was also a featured speaker for NAPO Get Organized month for residential home organizing. And it is my pleasure to be here sharing with you all of the tips and tricks to teach your child the life skill of organizing.

I am married with two children. As I mentioned, my daughter is twelve, my son is nine, and it's a process, guys. It's a process as they grow and everything changes. So let's get into all the goods so that I can help you help your child to stay organized.

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IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE OVERWHELMING

So let's teach your child the life skill of organizing. We're going to dive into some of the reasons that it can feel like a task for children and why it can also feel overwhelming as a parent to teach your child how to stay organized and neat. But it doesn't have to be overwhelming, right? It doesn't have to feel like a task. So we're going to dive into the reasons and as a parent, what you can do to help your child and help yourself to learn this life skill of organizing.

IS THIS YOUR LIFE?

Okay, so before we begin, let's just look at this picture and how many of you feel like this is your life? Maybe not to this extreme or maybe it is, but how many of you? You walk into your child's room and it's just not organized. There's chaos everywhere, right? Looks like a tornado or a cyclone hit their room.

You ask them to do their homework. Look at that desk. They have no clue where their homework is. Or like the little girl up top, she's hilarious. That face, right, where all of her toys, all of her clothing, everything is just out. She has no idea where to put it. She probably has places where she can put it.

But kids, they go in their room and they go crazy. They live their best life. And this is the outcome. If you have a teenager like the kid here who's very comfortable on his electronics in the cluttered room, nothing organized, no attempts being made.

So if this is your life, like I said, it may be to this extreme or it may not be. But if there's some variation of this in your life dealing with your child of any age, this is why we are going to dive into some of the reasons why systems fall apart and what we can do as parents to maintain them.

WHY DO KIDS' SYSTEMS FAIL?

So why do children's systems fall apart? As you look at this question, I want you to think about some of the reasons that you feel your children's systems have fallen apart and why they seem to be difficult to maintain. So I want you to take a second and actually just think about that question before I present you with some of the answers of why children's systems fall apart.

And it may not be what you're thinking. So just take a second and think about that question. Jot down whatever answer you think it may be, again to be able to kind of take some notes and compare the information that you're going to be presented. Because again, I think you'll be surprised at some of the reasons that the systems do fall apart.

THERE IS NO SYSTEM

So let's think about that question. So as you can see, there are various reasons why your child system could fall apart. One of the reasons could be that there's no real system in place. So if you just randomly place items here and there with no real system, basically, and no real method of keeping things in order, then that's not a system. So of course it would fall apart because there's no system in place.

NOT DECLUTTERING OFTEN ENOUGH

Another reason would be that your spaces are that their spaces are not being

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decluttered often enough. So as children, like I mentioned before, as they grow, they grow into toys, they grow into clothing. If we are not decluttering those items often enough to make sure that we are only leaving space for what they need, then that's another reason that the space would fall apart, because you are exceeding the limits of the space.

Or your child is not wanting to maintain things that they no longer play with or clothing that they can no longer fit. So not decluttering those spaces often enough is a contributor to why spaces fall apart.

NO HELP FROM THEM

Another reason could be that your child is not helping to maintain the system, right? So sometimes we have that child that's always on board and wants to help and wants to do all the things. And then we all have that child. If you have more than one, we all have that child that's just not with it, right?

Especially once again to that preteen age, or you're looking at your teenager, they're like not into maintaining a system, right? They've kind of outgrown the whole, hey, I want to keep my room clean and keep my arts and crafts looking cool. They're kind of past that.

So sometimes you may have a system in place that could be working, but your child is not helping to maintain that system.

HAVEN'T BEEN TAUGHT

And then lastly, if your child hasn't been taught how to maintain the system, as parents, sometimes we implement things around our homes that we feel will work for everybody and that everybody will be able to catch on to, and it'll be easy peasy lemon squeezy, right? And that's just not always the case.

Children have to be taught just like anything else, that we teach them how to do or teach them different things. We have to also teach them to maintain their system, right? So you may have put it in place and felt like, oh, this is awesome, I have it color coded, I have a few labels on here. They're going to get it, this is easy, no explanation needed. They'll see it, they'll get it. But again, that's not always the case. The child has to be taught to maintain the system. We can't assume that it's going to click and they're going to see the pretty colors and the pretty labels and voila, they just have this amazing organized space.

So as you can see, again, there are various reasons why a system can fall apart. I want you to think about some of the reasons that you listed for why your systems haven't been able to be maintained, or why you feel that they've fallen apart. If one of these is what you picked, then awesome.

HOW WE'VE TRIED TO FIX IT

So we're going to dive into how we can fix all of these, how we can help your child to maintain it, and get you a system in place, and how to make sure you're decluttering often enough, right? So let's get into how, as a parent, we can combat and keep these systems from falling apart. So what can you do as a parent to help your child maintain their system.

So this is another thinking opportunity, right? I want you to think about this question. Think about methods that you have used in the past that maybe didn't work or that you thought, like, this was the best way to go about doing it.

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Did you yell at your child? Did you threaten to ground them if they don't do it? Just think about some of the ways you went about trying to teach your child and help your child to maintain their system. Did you just do it for them and hope that they would catch on?

So again, this is a moment of reflection for us as parents to think about things that we've done in the past that has brought us to the moment here of trying to figure out why the system is falling apart. So take a minute to reflect on that, and we will get into what you can do as a parent to help your child to maintain their system.

CHAT WITH YOUR CHILD

What did you come up with? What did you think as a parent you could do to help your child to maintain their system? It's pretty simple. Chat with them. Chat with your child, have a conversation with them. Discuss with your child all of the benefits that come with organizing their belongings and making sure that everything has a home.

You know, obviously, by attempting to create a system for your child, you see that there is a need and a benefit to them maintaining their system. So discussing this with your child is what will help them to gain that appreciation for, okay, this is why my belongings need a home. This is why it helps to be able to find things that I'm looking for, right?

Because as a parent, you know that the major benefit to organizing our belongings is so that we can find them. So you don't have your child, where's my left sneaker? Or where's my favorite Lego guy? If you have a little one, where's my favorite Lego guy? Or your daughter for dance practice? Where's my tutu? Where's my leotard? All the things that if they had a system and those things had a home, it would make it so much easier for your child to be able to find their belongings.

The weekly, where's my homework? We ask our child, did you finish your homework? Is it ready? And they're like, I don't know where it is. And they don't even remember if they finished all of it or not.

Or it's in my son's case, usually balled up and wrinkled down into his backpack, and we have to have him take it out and lay it flat. And it's like, hey, we can't turn in homework this way. So we had to create a folder for him to start leaving his homework in to keep it neat until it's ready to turn it in. So just those simple things that honestly, some days can cause so much stress as a parent because we have so many other things going on, right?

START EARLY

And I think our children think, like, what else are we doing besides being their mom and dad? We're not busy, we don't have lives, right? And they just don't get it sometimes. So it is our job as a parent to be able to help them to see that, hey, there are benefits to knowing what your things are, and you can start that at any age.

We started with our children when they were toddlers, just under two, like, helping them find fun in putting their toys back. And everybody knows the cleanup song. It's annoying, but it works. Your child gets excited and they sing the cleanup song and they put their toys away. So you can start this at such a young age with helping your child gain that appreciation for putting their belongings where they go and helping them to have a home.

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KEEP IT SIMPLE

So again, very simple. Just chat with your child. Have a conversation, maybe do it at a time when it would be fun for them, as opposed to, like, sitting them down and, hey, let's talk. They're not listening. They're thinking about how long you're going to take to get this discussion over with.

So find, maybe outside hanging out or going for a bike ride or whatever, but find a great opportunity to just chat with your child about the benefits and, hey, this is what I think we should work on.

FOCUS ON 2 OR 3 THINGS

So the next thing after you have that conversation with your child, obviously, is you want to make a plan, right? So you can't just have the conversation and it's like, oh, that went really well. They're going to start being organized, not so much. So you want to make a plan either when you have the discussion or sometimes shortly after having a discussion, kind of meeting up again and saying, hey, let's revisit what we discussed the other day about being organized and how beneficial it is for our belongings to have a home. And then you come up with a plan.

START WITH ISSUES

Come up with two or three areas to focus on. If there's already a particular chore that's an issue, then I would say start there. So if they're already not putting their sports gear away when they come home and they're just throwing it somewhere, like, that's a good place to start because that is considered a chore. Hey, when you get home, put your stuff where it goes. So you could start there. If homework is an issue already, you can start there. Otherwise, again, just come up with two or three areas to focus on.

LET THEM PICK

You want to allow your child to pick where they start, right? We know that as a parent, if we tell them they'll just do the opposite, right, and that causes more frustration for us, more overwhelm, and then the child is just doing it kind of reluctantly, and we don't want them to be reluctant about it because again, we're trying to teach them a life skill.

Learning how to organize can go with them all the way into adulthood, into their careers, when they get their own homes, when they have their own children. So this is a skill that we're helping them to have, not just now as toddlers, elementary, teenagers, preteens. This is not something that's just going to be for right now while they're our child in our home, living under our roof, but our child as an adult living out in the world and again, maintaining a career and just being responsible.

So allow your child to pick which area that they start on. Again, unless it's a chore that's already an issue, let them pick where they start because then they will try harder if it's something that they also have interest in doing.

ASSIST BUT DON'T DO IT FOR THEM

And then keep in mind that throughout the process you want to assist them, but you don't want to do it for them. As parents, it's natural for us to want to jump in, right? Jump in and do it.

I'm guilty of it. I'm still guilty of it. Even with my own systems in place for my children, I'm still guilty sometimes of just wanting to

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do it for them to either get it over quicker, to be done with it, or sometimes as a parent, we hate to see them struggle to try to figure something out. But again, all of that is a part of the process.

MISTAKES LEAD TO GROWTH

We can't expect them to learn and to get it and grasp this skill if we are always doing it for them and not allowing them to make the mistakes. Mistakes are a part of growing. So we want to be there to assist them if they need help or if they have questions or hey, I've been trying to figure out the best place to store my sports gear. Or Mom, I've been trying to find a better place in my closet or in my room to put my dance clothing, my dance attire.

ASK QUESTIONS INSTEAD OF GIVING ANSWERS

So listening to them, okay, like, hey, what have you tried already? Or what did you think about doing already? So kind of asking questions as opposed to giving too many answers. We want to talk to them and see where their thought process is and their mindset.

So those are all great ways in assisting. Sometimes just asking those questions to draw out what they've already done or if they've even thought about it. Sometimes you have those kids that just don't even think about it. It's just like, yeah, I'm trying to figure this out, tell me what to do. They just haven't given it any thought. We have to kind of put that and instill that in them to actually kind of think through the process. And it's the same with organizing their space and finding a way to make it all work.

So again, just asking those questions or if it is the act of actually doing something, maybe showing them a little bit. But you want your child to actually get in that practice and make the effort and help them try. Even as a toddler when they're putting away their toys, as I mentioned with our kids, we would watch them kind of try to put the toys in the little individual bins and then if they would have that perplexed look on their face, then we would kind of jump in like, okay, hey, what does this look like? So where do you think it will go? And it's like, oh, it goes here with these other blocks.

Again, those are all ways that you can assist even your toddler to assist them with the process of learning how to get organized instead of being the superhero parent and jumping in all the time.

MORE OF WHAT ASSISTING THEM LOOKS LIKE

Assisting your child can also look like introducing checklists, right? Giving them chores that involve sorting, establishing homework routines, again, assisting them while their habits are being formed.

INTRODUCE CHECKLISTS

So again, checklist. Who doesn't love a good checklist? Maybe it's just me because I'm an organizer, but who doesn't love a good checklist? Even for your younger ones, you can make them colorful and fun looking. So maybe checklists for their morning routine or a checklist for what they do to prepare for school or when they come home to prepare for bed.

So again, introducing checklists, same thing. Like I've been mentioning with sports, I know a lot of older children are in sports, like my children are in different after school activities. So even making sure they have a checklist for what they need in order

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to go to practice, what do you need to take with you? So them actually checking it off, making sure they have everything, again, creating that independence and taking it off of you as a parent.

Because again, like I said, parents, sometimes we want to do all the things, but it's just not always sustainable when we have other household responsibilities that we're taking care of along with our own lives, our own careers. So this helps them to be independent and helps you as a parent to create that independence in your child.

So yeah, like I said, if they know that they're going to play hockey, a checklist either in their room or on the fridge, that they can look and make sure they have everything that's on that list and they're not running to you, where is this, where is that? It should be in a space, right? It should have a home, it should be somewhere where they can easily find it. But then it's their responsibility to check off and make sure they have all the things

SORTING CHORES

And again, giving them chores that involve sorting. This is great for younger children who are learning to develop those habits. So laundry, for instance, my children, like we do laundry, but they have to fold their own clothes. So before we even put the laundry in, they have to sort the dirty clothes, so sort their colors, their brights, and then if it's socks. Once everything comes out of the dryer, then they're sorting, putting socks in one pile and shirts in another, and pants and pajamas and so on and so forth.

So that as they're folding, they're even folding in a way so that when they go and put it away, it's already all together. So that's a chore that you can give them that involves sorting.

ESTABLISH HOMEWORK ROUTINES

And then of course, like I said, homework. As they get older, it just becomes more and more difficult to know where the homework is and to uncover whether or not they've completed it or if they even still have it in their possession. So establishing those homework routines.

So, I know when I was growing up in our house, we had to do our homework as soon as we came home. So we would have a quick snack after school and then it was straight to homework. We couldn't go outside and play, we couldn't watch any TV, like straight to homework before anything else.

I'm the same with my children. When they get home, they have a snack if they haven't eaten one in the car already, and then yet they have any homework or anything from school. Maybe it wasn't homework, but it was an assignment they didn't get to finish. But it needs to be completed, then technically it's homework, so they have to do that stuff first.

So just establishing homework routines and even an area where they do the homework, whether it's at a designated homework station or if it's in their room at the desk. But this is what all of that can look like as you try to establish these organizing routines for your child.

QUICK RECAP

So, we've discussed a lot so far in this presentation, so let's just take a quick recap. So we've discussed some of the reasons that children's organizing systems fall apart. We've discussed you talking with

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your child and agreeing on areas in which becoming more organized will be a benefit to your child. We've discussed making a plan to get organized in one area at a time and starting with any area that currently needs improvement. Ways that as a parent, you can assist your child as they develop these new habits.

And also setting firm but realistic expectations. I didn't touch on it too much, I kind of hinted around throughout the presentation. But in that discussion with your child, you want to be firm about it. Again, as I mentioned, maybe yelling about it or threatening to ground them may not be the best way to go about it because again, you don't want the child to push back. This is a process that we want them to actually embrace and enjoy. But having that conversation and being firm like, hey, this is the plan, this is what I want you to do, I'm here to help assist you in any way that I can but this is what we're going to do. So setting a firm but again, realistic expectation, we don't want to give them a ton of things that now they need to start organizing or keeping together if they haven't been doing it.

Okay, so keeping that in mind too. And then of course as a parent, which I'm sure you're already doing, but encouraging your child as they become more organized while we resist the urge to do it for them. So again, that urge to just jump in and be a superhero parent is hard. It really is. Like I said, I'm so guilty of it still. And I have to catch myself. My husband and I both were so guilty of it. But it is going to be to their benefit.

I've noticed just how much my children have grown so much over the years from us just letting them do things right. And again, just being there to assist because then they figure it out. And I love when my son goes, oh, that's how I was supposed to do that. That makes sense. Like you want that light bulb moment, you want that for your child to just be excited about it, right? Because then it makes them want to do it, makes it all worth it. Like the entire process, it makes it all worth it.

And when as a parent, you can start getting any sort of freedom because you're creating independence with your child, that's always a win. Again, just recapping and going over what we discussed and keeping these things in mind as you start your process of helping your child to become more organized and developing this awesome life skill.

RESULTS: MORE FUN!

And of course the end result to organizing and to anything that is such an awesome life skill like organizing, is more family fun, right? Who doesn't want to have more family fun? It beats being in the house because everybody has skipped out on their chores or there's stuff everywhere. And now we have to spend our time away from school and work in the house, cleaning all the time, right? Or straightening and organizing things. That is something that should be done throughout the week, like throughout our process, but not something that we have to take time away from doing the fun things to organize, right?

As much as I love organizing, even myself, I like to step away and just have some fun. So let's try to get to that end result of having more fun, less frustration at home from your child and yourself as you learn how to organize. Think about that end result and it is definitely having more family fun.

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QUESTIONS FOR MICHAELE?

I am so thankful for you listening to the presentation. Feel free to send any questions to my email at contact@michaelesspresiceplanning.com. If you are on social media, be sure to follow me on Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn at michaelespreciseplanning.

Okay, so we just touched on a lot here today. I hope that you found all of these tips and tricks helpful and that you're able to implement them in your own home as you help your children learn that life skill of organizing. I hope as a parent, it also has eased any overwhelming frustration that you have been feeling as you try to come up with a plan that will actually stick.

In helping your children to become organized, keep in mind that it's an ongoing process. As they grow and as their needs change, their interests change, the amount of stuff that they have, it's all going to change. So it's not a one-time fix, it is an ongoing process.

But if you stuck it out through the entire video, I'm sure you can handle this. So again, I'm so happy you were able to join me in learning these very useful tips to pass on to your children, and I hope you have a great day.

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Get Out of Your Own Head and Make Progress Towards Your Goals

MICHELLE BROOKS • TRANSCRIPT

MEET MICHELLE

Hey, y'all. My name is Michelle, and today I'm really excited to share with you some tips and tricks for how you can get out of your own head and start making progress towards your big goals and dreams that I know you have.

Like I said, my name is Michelle and I own the business My Designs in the Chaos. That name alone should tell you that my life can be a little chaotic at times. I'm a wife and a mom of four kids, and I design digital SVG files for Cricut and Silhouette crafters. Today, I'm really excited to share with you the personal process that I use to get out of my own head, get unstuck, and move towards the direction of my goals.

LIKE A PUZZLE

Now, today I want to share this process with you and I'm going to use a little bit of an analogy. In my free time, I absolutely love to work on puzzles. And so here's the thing though. With puzzles, they can feel really super overwhelming when you first start them, right? You dump them out on the table and it just looks like a scattered mess. Everything is everywhere. It looks like nothing fits together. And the end result feels so far away. The puzzle itself actually even takes up more space when it's not put together. So it feels like it's not even achievable.

And, y'all, sometimes life feels exactly the same way. It feels scattered, it feels messy, it feels like nothing fits. And in those moments is when I get stuck in my head the most. So today I'm going to give you a four part framework, four steps, using this process of putting a puzzle together as our guide. And it's going to help you to get out of your own head and make progress towards your goals.

STEP ONE: DREAM BIG

So the first thing that we're going to do here is we're going to dream big. We've got to acknowledge where we want to go. So back to my puzzle analogy. So when I'm deciding what type of puzzle I want to do next, I can look anywhere, right? I need to browse and I need to decide what do I want the puzzle to look like?

Do I want it to be big or small? How many pieces do I want it to be? Do I want it to be colorful? Do I want it to be realistic? Do I want to get it from Walmart or Hobby Lobby or my library? Do I want to borrow it from a friend? So when I'm deciding the puzzle, I have so many different options and I have to narrow that down a little bit so that I know what type of puzzle I'm trying to achieve.

And the same thing goes with your goals. So for your goals, I want you to dream big here. Think about the big picture. Where do you want to go?

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ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR DREAMS

Okay, once you have your dreams, which my guess is, if you get quiet for just a little bit, you probably already have those dreams inside your heart, inside your head. That little bitty voice that's saying, can I do that? I don't know.

My guess is they've already even been there for a while. You probably already know what they are, but you might be a little bit scared to acknowledge them. I'm here to tell you, though, if you don't acknowledge those dreams, you can never actually achieve them. So it's time to get brave, dream big, and acknowledge what those dreams are.

WRITE IT DOWN

Then comes the even harder part. Write them down. I know it's one thing having it up here in your brain, but when you write it down, that encourages you to actually begin to make progress towards that goal. So number one, acknowledge where you want to go. Number two, you've got to write it down.

Now, I'm not going to be able to do that puzzle unless I actually take it home with me, right? I can go pick out a whole bunch of cute puzzles at the store, but unless I actually take it home to open it up, I'm never going to be able to achieve it.

And the same thing goes with your dreams. I can think about it all day long, but until I write it down and I come up with a plan of how I'm going to tackle that, nothing is ever going to happen towards making it come to life.

So call it a vision board, call it goal writing, whatever you want to call it, but get it out on paper. All those big, scary thoughts need to go from your brain into real life. Just like in a puzzle, once you have it picked out, you've got to take it home and get it open.

STEP TWO: IDENTIFY WHERE YOU ARE

So now that you've got your dreams all listed out, you've got them out on paper, we've got our puzzle, we've got it home, we're ready to bust it open.

What's the next step? The next step is you need to identify where you currently are in life. So how does this relate to the puzzle? Well, when I tackle a puzzle, the very first thing that I do is I get all the pieces flipped over and I group them by color.

ORGANIZING

So remember how I said it feels so messy and scattered, nothing fits together.
So step one is I've got to start kind of organizing things a little bit. If I'm trying to fit the red pieces into the green and I didn't see this one because it was flipped over backwards, it's never going to work. I need to know what section is it that I'm currently at?

And the same goes in our lives. We have all these really big goals and dreams, but when we're trying to get unstuck, we need to know where are we currently? What section are we currently in in our life? What is your current stage of life? Are you wanting to start a family? Are you a mom of little ones? Maybe you're an empty nester. Maybe you're taking care of aging parents. Maybe you've just finished a huge move across the country or you're experiencing a career change.

There are some things in our lives that we can't change and we need to acknowledge

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those seasons. But there are some things in our lives that we choose not to change. And you've got to know the difference between them.

NO PERFECT TIME

Now hear me when I tell you things will never feel like it's the perfect time to start that scary step towards those big goals. So don't use where you are as an excuse. But there are some times in our lives that our focus does need to be elsewhere. And so I want to encourage you to use your wisdom to know the difference between those and remember where you are in life.

This is going to change over time. You go through different seasons, so it's important to always kind of be reevaluating this. So once you've picked your puzzle out, once you've dreamed really big and then you start getting your pieces flipped over, you identify where you are. What is your current stage of life. You want to sort it out by color.

Okay, so now we've got our group. So we know what our goals are. We've identified how does this fit in with where we currently are in life?

STEP THREE: GET TO WORK

The next step is we've got to get to work. It's time to start putting the pieces of our puzzle together. So we've got to pick a section or a goal and get going on it. What I want to encourage you to do is every single day you should do at least one thing towards your goal.

ONE THING A DAY

One thing. Not 20, not 100, not 50, not nothing, but one thing. Now if there are some days you're probably going to do way more than one thing, and that's incredible and amazing, but there are some days where that one thing is going to feel really hard and that's okay. Do it anyway.

Don't get so consumed in all the minutiae of your day to day, depending on what season you're in, that you let days and weeks and months and even years go by without doing something towards that big goal that you wrote down.

DON'T MOVE BACKWARD

If you're not moving forward, you're actually moving backward. Remember, don't get down by how long it's going to take you to reach that goal. The time is going to pass anyway, y'all. So get to work at least one thing a day. Start working on that section of the puzzle.

STEP FOUR: CELEBRATE

Now once you've completed that section of the puzzle and you've completed that one thing, the next thing that's so important to do is you've got to celebrate. Celebrate every single win. And then you go back and you repeat. You do another thing and you celebrate. Okay, celebrate and take a break. When you finish every section of the puzzle, even when I put my puzzle pieces together. Woohoo, I got a piece. Woohoo, I got another piece.

It's the same when you're working towards your goal. Literally every single win should be celebrated, obviously by varying degrees. But give yourself all kinds of rewards. This is your life. You've got to make it fun.

It can be everything from a ten minute walk outside to maybe an extra scoop of ice cream. Or maybe it's something a little bit bigger, like you're buying yourself that cute

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pair of shoes. Figure out what motivates you and make it fun as you make progress.

Maybe it's, I'm going to do this one thing, and then I'm going to give myself 10 minutes of social media time, whatever it is. Create some fun rewards that you can work into this process.

DON'T GET DISCOURAGED

If you don't celebrate as you go, it's really easy to get discouraged and to forget all those things that you've been doing on a daily basis. It's really easy to forget how far you've actually come. So every section of the puzzle that you end up completing, take a break, let your brain reset for the next section and celebrate.

And before you know it, the puzzle is going to be completed.

RECAPPING

So let's recap for a second, okay? Because before you know it, there's the whole puzzle. You've got it completed. And the same goes with your goals. You've worked through your goals. You're making progress towards the bigger picture and the big dream in your life. So as a quick recap, what are the four things that you can do to get out of your own head and to get unstuck and make progress towards your goal?

Number one, you've got to dream big. Number two, you got to identify where you currently are. Number three, you've got to get to work. And number four, don't forget to celebrate and you will be on your way to a finished puzzle and accomplishing your goals in no time.

Thank you so much for hanging out with me today. And remember, you don't have to see the entire staircase to take the very first or next step. I would love to connect with you a little bit further. So I'm going to invite you to come hang out with me on my site and my socials.
You can find me at mydesignsinthechaos.com and you can connect with me on every social at mydesignsinthechaos.

I look forward to getting to know you a little bit more and seeing your completed puzzles. See you soon, guys. Bye.

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Make Habit Tracking Planner Stickers

MIM JENKINSON • TRANSCRIPT

Hi everyone. It's Mim Jenkinson, and I'm so excited to be at Laura's Get Organized HQ Summit. So, thank you so much for having me, Laura, and I'm so excited to be here teaching this class today.

CREATIVITY!

So, my name is Mim and I'm obsessed with planner stickers, with making stickers, with using stickers, particularly in my paper planners. I absolutely love to use stickers, not just to be organized, which of course is an amazing product of it, but to use this as a really fun, creative time.

It's my creative outlet. Every week I really enjoy the 15 to 20 minutes I spend planning on a Friday afternoon for the following week, choosing the stickers, deciding on the theme or the layout, putting the stickers down, and of course, just becoming much more organized.

And I want to spread some of this planner sticker joy with you today and I hope that you love this class. Now, I'm going to be teaching you how to make three different types of stickers. We're going to be making habit tracker stickers, and I'm going to be using some really basic shapes so that you can see how just with a few different shapes and using two of my favorite softwares, you can create a wealth of planner stickers. So, I hope that this inspires you to think about other kinds of stickers that you can also make.

TWO FAVORITE SOFTWARE PROGRAMS

So, the two favorite softwares that I'm going to be teaching you today are Cricut Design Space and Silhouette Studio. Now, if you already have a cutting machine, let's say a Cricut cutting machine, I recommend that you watch the Cricut portion of the class. And if you already have a Silhouette or if you don't have a cutting machine, then I definitely recommend that you follow that one because you actually don't need to have a cutting machine to use either of these two softwares. There's an amazing free version of both of them and I highly recommend that you download them and check them out and have a little play around.

I hope after this class you're inspired to know that anyone can design stickers. You don't need to be an artist, you don't need to be a designer, you don't need to be a graphic designer. Anyone can get going with this.

GOODIES AT THE END

Make sure you stay until the end because I have a little goodie bag for you that includes the templates of the stickers that we're making today. So, you can make stickers in minutes. And you're going to get access to another free class just from me, too, in that template kit, as well as some recommendations of the planner sticker tools, equipment, and resources that I love

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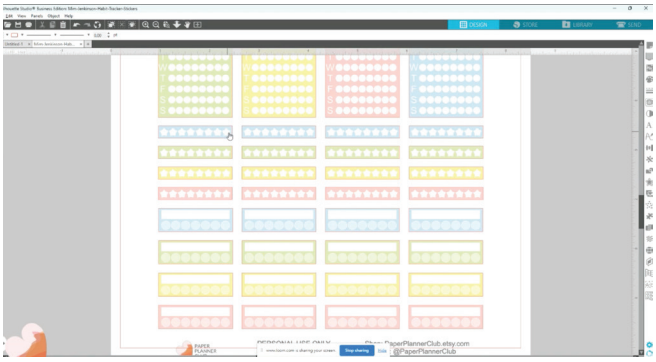
and recommend. So, do make sure you stay till the end of this class.

I can't wait to share this with you now, so I'm going to flip my screen over so you can follow along over my shoulder. So here are the habit tracker stickers. We are going to be making today, I'll be showing you how to make these three different stickers in Silhouette Studio and in Cricut Design Space. So, I really hope you enjoyed this lesson.

SILHOUETTE STUDIO

Let's get started. Okay, let's get started in Silhouette Studio, first of all. So, we are going to design these three different habit trackers. So, let me zoom in. We have a full box habit tracker here where you can track anything. It could be water consumption. It could be exercise. It could be doing clearing out your inbox, literally anything that you want. And of course, you can rearrange this.

But I've got my days of the week down the side, and then I've got eight different circles. And then I've got these header kind of habit trackers with stars. Again, maybe this could be tracking your water consumption or exercise or doing any kind of habit that you would do either daily or weekly, ideally. And then at the end, I've got these weekly habit trackers. Again, in the white box, you can write what you're tracking, and then you can check off the circles below.



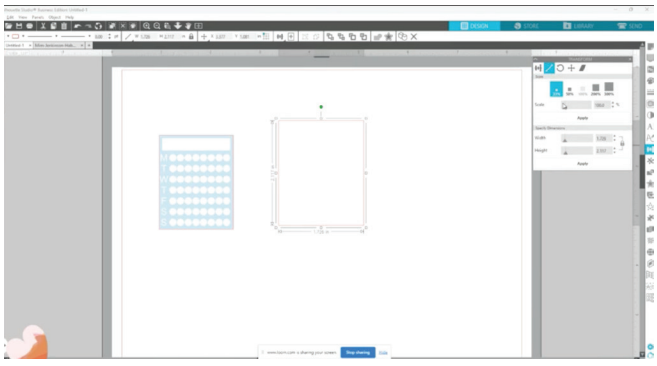
So, we're going to get started. The first thing I'm going to do is just go to my new canvas here, and I'm going to zoom in and scroll to the top. And we're going to design each sticker in turn.

MONDAY THROUGH SUNDAY STICKERS

So, let's just copy and paste the first sticker that we're going to design. And it's this one here.

Okay, so I'm using a universal planner box size. This kind of sticker could fit in an Erin Condrin vertical. A classic Happy Planner, lots and lots of different universal planners. But feel free to change the sizing to suit your planner. So, on the left hand side here, I'm going to click to draw a rectangle. So, drawing tools. Then draw a rectangle and just draw a basic rectangle shape. There it is.

Now we're going to click on it and change the size. So, on the right hand side, go to the transform panel, the second tab, and let's unlock the lock. Make the width 1.5 and the height 1.9 and choose Apply.



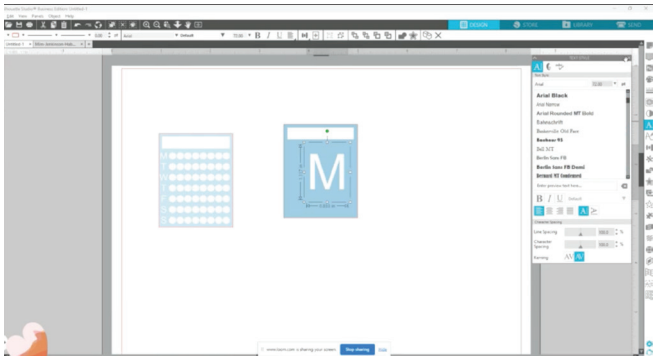
And we're going to give this a color. So, on the right hand side, again, click to open the fill panel. And we're going to choose a color. So, let's go with the color blue here. I'll make it slightly darker. Okay, then.

Now the next thing I'm going to do is draw another rectangle for this rectangle at the top. So, rectangle draw the rough size. There we go. Maybe I'll make it a little bit less high. And then we've got the fill panel open. Let's make it white.

Now open the line style panel, the second tab, and make the line of this transparent because anywhere you see a red line, this is going to tell Silhouette Studio when you use your Silhouette to cut it's going to say, cut that line out. And we don't want to. If you are just printing this and cutting by hand. Don't worry about changing the lines, though. They're not going to come up when you print.

Okay, the next thing we'll do is do our Monday to Sunday down the side. So, on the left hand side, we're going to click on the text button, then just click anywhere you can see. Now the cursor flashing. And I'm going to just type in the letter M. Here's my M.

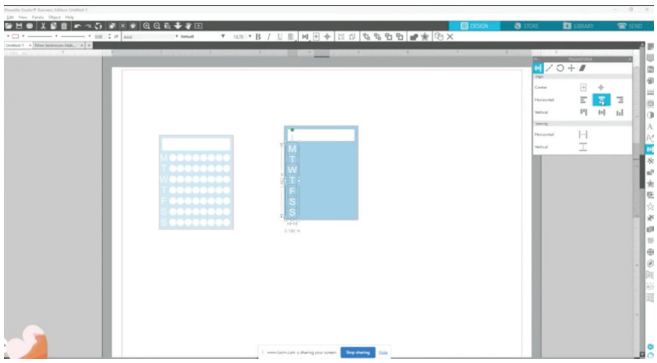
Okay, we've got the red cut line. It's transparent right now. So, I'm going to go to let's just pop it on top of the box so we can see. We've got the line style panel box open still. So, make the line transparent and make the fill white. And you can change the font here just by on the right hand side, going here to open the text style panel. And you can change it to any font you like. You can change the size and so on.



But I'm just going to keep with this font here and drag the corner, can you see, to make it smaller. Okay, let's position it here. And I'm going to now copy and paste this. So, I've got one for every day of the week. So, I can just click on it, right click and copy and paste or duplicate. Or if you're using a keyboard, I'm just going to click on it and then hold down my control key and do the right arrow at the same time.

I can keep on pressing the right arrow sorry, the down arrow. I can keep pressing the down arrow until I have enough of those. Now I'm going to double click on them and change them to the right days of the week. So, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Okay.

Now I want to centralize those letters. So, I'm just going to click on the top one, hold down the shift key, and then click on each of the others until I have them all selected. Okay, I'm going to open the transform panel again and choose to horizontally align them. Perfect. There we go.



And the next thing I want to do is draw all of my white circles. So back over to drawing tools. Click on draw an ellipse, and let's do this. Now, look, it's going to be an oval unless we hold down the shift key at the same time. And that's now going to make it a perfect circle. So, when you've got the shape and the size, you're happy with, let go. Lovely.

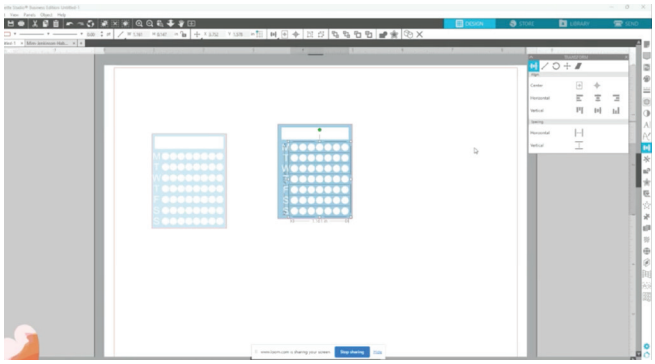
Okay, now again, I'm going to go to the line style panel, make the line transparent, go to the fill panel and make the fill white. And we're going to roughly position this here. Now I'm going to copy this again until I've got eight or seven or however many you want. So, let's see how many we can fit here. So, click on it, hold down the control key and we're going to press the right arrow until we have as many as we want. I might just do seven for this one.

Now I'm going to align this end one with this white box. So first of all, I'm just going to click on the white box and then click on the right hand side white circle. Open the transform panel again and align them horizontally to the right.

Now I'm going to click on all of my different circles until each of them are selected. And that one. And I'm going to horizontally space them. Now I'm going to right click and group them together and group okay, let's duplicate those same way, hold down control and then use your down arrow until I have one for each day of the week. Perfect.

Okay, now what I can do is align the bottom one to this bottom S for some day. So, click on the S, hold down the shift key and click on the bottom row of circles. And then I'm going to vertically align them to the bottom. And then I'm going to vertically align them to the middle. Perfect.

I'm going to do now I'm just going to click on all of my circles so I can do this. But then you can see I've also selected the sticker at the back and I don't want to do that. So, I can hold down shift, click on the sticker anywhere and that's unselected it or deselected it. And now I've got all of my circle rows selected and I can vertically space them. Perfect. And that sticker is done.



So, the last thing I'll do is select everything right click and I will group them together. Okay, all done.

SIMPLE SHAPE STICKER

Let's move on to the next one. I'll delete that one, move you here and let's create some more space. Okay, the next one we're going to do is this super simple header.

So, we're going to start with our rectangle. So, draw a rectangle, draw the rough shape. Let's just zoom in one more. Click on the rectangle. We've got the transform panel open. Click on the second tab, make sure the lock is unlocked. And again, we're using a universal size, so I recommend 1.5 wide by 00:25 high. Choose Apply.

Okay, let's open the fill panel and we'll give this the color pink this time. Now we're going to do these stars. Now you can do stars, you can do circles, you can do rectangles, whatever shapes you have. So, if you have this version of Silhouette Studio, you'll be able to select one of these shapes here. So, the star is here. I can then draw a rough star. Okay. then I would click on it, make sure it has a white fill, and I can make sure that the line is transparent. There's my star.

Now you can see it's on a slight quirky angle, which I actually think is really fun. But

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if you want to change this so it's straight, just click on the green circle and then position it, drag it round. There we go. So, we can do stars again, duplicating them in the same way and then arranging them neatly. Or you can choose a different shape. So, I'm actually going to just delete those and go with I'll just do a rectangle because you might have the version of Silhouette Studio that doesn't have these flexi shapes.

So, let's do a rectangle with rounded corners. Let's make it a square. So, I'll hold down shift. There we go. So, here's my square. Let's make the line transparent and the fill white. And then I'm going to duplicate it until I have eight of these in a row. There's eight.

Now I'm going to show you how you can align them neatly. So, let's just take this last one and drag it over here. And maybe I'll use my arrow key to nudge it over. There we go. Now let's select all of those different squares. I'm holding down my shift key and clicking on them each in turn. Let's go to the transform panel and horizontally space them. Now, the white squares are still highlighted and selected, so right click and group them together. There we go.

The last thing I'm going to do is select everything in that sticker and I'm going to choose to centrally align them, then right click and group them. And that one's done, too.

So, remember, if you have this version of Silhouette, I've got the business edition. You can use any of these shapes here or create others. You might want to do a teardrop shape. And this could be a water tracker. Or you've got the free version. Just use the shapes that you have. Okay, that one is done.

WEEKLY TRACKER STICKER

Let's move that up there and do our last sticker. So, the last one is here and this is a weekly tracker. So, I'm going to copy it and paste it here. I love this one. You can use this for so many different things. So, we're going to start with our rectangle. Again, draw a rough rectangle. There we go. And let's have a look. What size did we use? Okay, so let's click on this. Go to scale, change the width to 1.5 and the height to 00:45 and choose apply this color. This time we'll make it green.

And now we want to do this white rectangle here. So, another rectangle just over halfway up, so not too big. There we go. Make the fill white. Make the line transparent. And now we're going to do our circles. So over here, draw an ellipse again, hold down shift to make it a perfect circle. There we go. So, we're going to give this a white fill. So, fill white.

But we're actually going to make this slightly transparent because I think that looks really nice. So, where it says transparency, let's change that to 50%. And now you can see the other one has a white line. So, this time we're not going to make the line transparent. We're going to make it white. But on the first tab here on the line style panel, we're going to change the thickness to one. Perfect.

And now let's duplicate this one. So, we'll do seven this time. Lovely. Now I want to align this circle here on the right with the right hand side of the white rectangle. So, we're going to select the white rectangle, hold down shift and select the circle. Go to the transform panel and horizontally align them to the right. There we go. Same again with this one on the end.

This time we're horizontally aligning it to the left. Now we're going to select all of our circles together, holding down the shift key, and we're going to space them horizontally. So, while they're still selected, just make sure that they're spaced horizontally, that they are vertically aligned in the center, and then hold down shift and also click on that white rectangle, right click and group them together.

And the last step, let's just select everything there and centrally align them. And again, group everything together. Okay, our sticker sheet is done.

PRINTING IN SILHOUETTE

Now you can print this sheet. You can save it as a PDF. You can print it anytime and reuse it over and over again as a template. And when you've printed it, if you have a cutting machine, a Silhouette one, you can choose send and then send your sticker sheet to print.

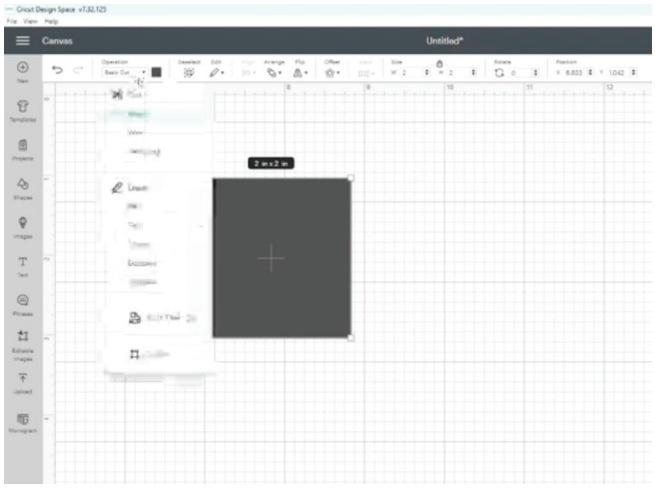
So here we've just selected the red line, so we're going to make sure we only cut around those stickers. I hope you enjoyed creating these three different habit tracking stickers in Silhouette Studio.

CRICUT DESIGN SPACE

Okay, let's get started. So, I'm going to, first of all, choose shapes. And I'm going to choose to draw a square. Here's my square. Now I think we'll zoom in a bit. So, let's zoom in here. Okay, here's my square.

MONDAY THROUGH SUNDAY STICKER

So, I'm going to, first of all, change it from basic cut to print then cut, and let's change the color.



Let's just choose any color here. Now I want to change the size of this square. So, at the top here, where it says size, click the lock so it's unlocked. And we're going to go with a universal size. So, 1.5 inches wide by 1.9 inches high and press enter.

Now, this size sticker is very standard. It will fit many universal planners, such as the Erin Condrin vertical or the classic Happy Planner. But of course, you can change the size to fit your planner.

The next thing I'm going to do is draw another rectangle. So, what I can do is just right click and duplicate this one. But this time I want this one to be white. So, change it to white.

And this is going to be the header in our sticker. So, let's roughly position it where we want it to go. Now unlock the lock so we can now change the size of this and I've just grabbed the corner and I'm going to roughly position it where I want that to be. There we go.

What we can also do is just select both of those two rectangles and align them into the center horizontally. Okay, now let's draw

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our Monday to Sunday down the left hand side. So, click on text on the left. Here we go. Let's double click on that and change it to the letter M.

Now, while it's selected, again, change it from basic cut to print then cut. And we're going to make this white. Now roughly position that where you want it to go, but we're going to again, drag the corner to make it smaller. So, we want that to be the right size.

Okay, I've zoomed in. So, what I actually want to do is have Monday to Sunday down the left hand side so I can double click on that M. There we go. Press enter. Do Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

Okay, now what I can also do is just increase the line space so that the Sunday is nearer the bottom of the sticker. So here where it says line space. Let's just change it. Can you see it stretching it out? I'm going to keep on clicking until I'm done. There we go. Pretty happy with that.

And using my arrow keys, I'm just going to roughly change where I position those letters. And that's done. So, the next thing I'm going to do is draw my circles. So, go to shapes and circle. Here it is. Change it from basic cut to print then cut and make it white.

Grab the corner. And we want to make that smaller. So, let's drag it here, see if we can fit seven or eight of these across. So that looks good to me. And now we're going to duplicate it until we've got enough in a row here. So, I'm just going to fast forward through this bit. All I'm doing is right clicking and choosing duplicate. All right, we're going to have seven of these. Lovely.

So now what I'm going to do is just click on my circles. Holding down the shift key, I can now select all of them. And when they're all selected, we're going to go to the align button and align them all center vertically. There we go. And again, we're going to distribute them horizontally, then right click and group those together. Now we can move these circles around. They're all grouped together in a nice, neat row.

Okay, the next thing I'm going to do is duplicate these until I have one for each day of the week. Okay, now we're going to position them roughly in place. So, let's move this one down a little bit more. I'm happy with that. Happy with where the top one is. So now again, holding down the shift key, just select all of those rows of white circles. Go to align, align them, center horizontally and then distribute them vertically.

Okay, now we can group those together while they're still selected. I'm going to go to hold down shift and click on the white rectangle at the top and align everything to the right. And my sticker is done. So, let's just select it all. Now right click and group that together. There is our first sticker.

SIMPLE SHAPE STICKERS

Okay, let's move on to the next one. So, this time we're going to have another rectangle. So just go to shapes and square change it from basic cut to print then cut. Let's give this a different color. Let's do a pink one. Okay, unlock the lock on size and this time it's going to be a header size. So, 1.5 wide by 2.5, sorry, by 00:25 high. There it is.

And now this could be a habit tracker to track anything from water consumption to getting to inbox zero every day, to doing your exercise daily, whatever it is that you

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want to track.

Let's go to shapes here. Now if you have a subscription, you have all of these shapes at the bottom, but we're just going to use the basic ones here. So, let's go with a star. There's my star.

Change it again from basic cut to print, then cut and change the color to white. And let's make this smaller. So, we want it to be able to be positioned within our sheet, within our header here.

Okay, now I'm going to duplicate this one and I'm going to have, I think I'll have seven or eight of these. I think I can probably fit eight. So, I'll speed through this bit until I have the number that I want. Okay, now you can see that the stars here are not aligned. They're not very neat.

So, we're going to correct that now. So, click on one of those stars, hold down shift, and then you can click on each of the other ones until all of these stars are selected. There they are. Let's go to align and align them all center vertically and then back to align and distribute them horizontally. There we go.

Now we're going to right click and group them together. Nearly done. The last thing I'll do is select everything here and go to align and centrally align everything. And then I can right click and group them and then my sticker is done. Perfect.

WEEKLY TRACKER STICKER

Okay, the last thing I'm going to do is a weekly tracker sticker. So, let's go back to shapes again. Start with a square. We start many planner stickers with basic shapes. Change it from basic cut to print, then cut. And this time let's give it the color green.

Okay, let's change the size. This time we'll go with 1.5 wide by 00:45 high. There it is. I think I'll just zoom in one more.

Okay, now we're going to again have a white rectangle just like that one. So, let's just duplicate the green one and change the color to white. And this is going to be the space that we write what we're tracking. So, let's unlock the lock of this rectangle. Then I've grabbed the corner and I'm going to position it here. Okay, happy with that.

Let's just select everything and align it all center horizontally. And now again, I can have stars, I can have squares, I can have circles. But you get to choose now the shape that you want for the spaces where you'll actually check off your different habits.

So, let's go with oh, I even love hearts. I think we'll go with a square to make it different. Let's just go with a square with a rounded corner. Change basic cut to print then cut. We can make this white and we can grab the corner and make it smaller and position it roughly where we want it here in our sticker. Okay, there we go.

And now I'm going to duplicate this one again so that I have, I think I'll have seven this time. Okay, now, same as above, all I've done is take my right one and aligned it to the right with this rectangle at the top. The same with the left one. And then when they were all selected, I went to align. I made sure that they were all aligned centrally and then I made sure that they were distributed horizontally. So, it's a nice neat sticker shape like this one.

And my sticker is done so I can select it all and group that together. And now I have three different stickers.

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CREATING A STICKER SHEET

So of course, now let's just zoom back out again. You can arrange these into a sticker sheet so I could move this one here. I could have a complete row of this one by just copying and pasting them. And what I would like to do here is just select everything, align them all to the top and then distribute them all horizontally. So, there's my row.

I could now group that row together and I can copy and paste that. And I could have a full sticker sheet just copying and pasting positioning things in place. I could have a full sticker sheet with only the blue habit trackers. I could have a sticker sheet that had all of the different ones on.

I could arrange them all in rows. I could have added more stickers here. And when you finish, just make sure that you've got the sticker sheet all complete and neat and symmetrical. You would then right click, you would attach everything together and then we're going to go to make it. There we go.

Of course, you'd have a full sticker sheet with no white space, but then you would follow the instructions on the screen to be able to print and cut your sticker sheet.

I hope you really enjoyed this class and I hope you're now thinking, I wonder what else I can make a sticker for? It's quite addictive. So, I am warning you, but it's just so much fun. And I've really enjoyed teaching the thousands of sticker makers all over the world that I've got to know in the last few years.

GOODIES

Now, I promised you a goodie bag, and the goodie bag contains the two templates that I have been showing you how to make today. It also includes an invitation for another free class for you, and it includes my resources kit so you can find out all of my favorite recommendations, from sticker paper to my printer, to the patterns that I use, all kinds of different tools and equipment and resources for making stickers. So, make sure you grab that.

There's a link on the screen now, or you can head to mimjenkinson.com/gohq. Get Organized HQ. So, go to that link now.

And if you have any questions at all about sticker making, or if you want to share the stickers that you make with me, please feel free to tag me or to DM me on Instagram at Paper Planner Club.

Thank you so much for watching this class. Thank you, Laura, for having me, and I really hope you had fun.

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Organize Your Photos

MISS FREDDY • TRANSCRIPT

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Hi. I'm so excited to talk to you today about organizing your photos. My name is Ms. Freddy, and I'm a professional photo organizer. I help people all over the world move from overwhelmed by their camera roll to overjoyed with their photo collection.

All right. My name is actually Casey Von Stein, but I'm known as Miss Freddy. It stems from an unfortunate resemblance that I had at birth to Fred Flintstone. My parents started calling me Fred over the years. That morphed to Freddy. And here we are nearly 40 years later, and I'm known as Miss Freddy. That's the name of my business.

WAIT – THAT'S A REAL JOB? YES!

I often hear, wait, a professional photo organizer is a thing? That's a job? Yes, it actually is. I spent ten years as a professional photographer before I realized, hey, people actually really need help managing their photos and enjoying their photos. And so back in 2017, I got certified as a professional photo organizer, and I've been helping people around the world ever since.

A HIGH LEVEL LOOK: WHERE TO START AND WHAT TO AVOID

So what we're going to cover today is, first of all, where to start and some of the common mistakes to avoid. Second, how to actually organize and ways that we can make it easier with technology. And third, what comes next? Maintaining it, sharing it, having fun.

Now, really quickly, I'll say that I am going to keep this fairly high level because I have to cover a lot of information in a fairly short amount of time, but also because everybody's situation is so unique. I'm sure we have a mix of iPhone, Android, PC, Mac, all kinds of different scenarios. So I can't get into exactly like, what button do you click where? But I'm going to cover some high level tips and then give you resources that you can turn to if you do need that detailed level of tutorials.

DIGITAL FIRST

So where should I start? My advice is to begin with your digital photos. Most people have physical photos they've accumulated throughout their life. Maybe they're in a box in the closet, and you look at it and think, oh, I should really do something with that. Well, lumping the physical and the digital photos together in your mind makes it this big, huge, overwhelming task. So I'm going to encourage you to begin with the digital photos only.

First of all, because the digital photos are more vulnerable to loss; it's more common to have a hard drive crash or a phone break than it is to lose your physical photos. But second of all, if you get your digital house in order, then it becomes easier to tackle the

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physical photos, maybe digitizing them and adding them into your digital life later. So let's take those physical photos out of the question right now.

MAKE A LIST: WHERE ARE MY PHOTOS?

We're just going to start by getting your digital photos in order. The next thing I want you to do is sit down and write down a list of your current photo sources. Where are your photos and videos currently saved?

Do you have some on an old hard drive? An old computer? Maybe some old memory cards? CDs? Google Photos has some. Maybe Dropbox has some.

It's going to be different for everybody, but I want you to write down all the photo and video sources that you can think of just on a piece of paper so that you can start to understand what you're working with.

PICK A DIGITAL PHOTO HUB

And finally, I want you to decide on your hub. I'm going to use that term Digital Photo Hub, and that is where we're going to keep everything.

If you're a Mac user, your decision is, do you want to have your hub be inside the Apple Photos program and iCloud? If you love the Apple Photos program, then great. We're going to pull everything in there as your hub.

If you don't love the Apple Photos program, then you don't have to use it.

Or if you're a PC user, you can create a hub elsewhere.

Where I recommend creating your hub is an external hard drive so that you're not limited by storage. And you can take that hub with you as you grow or move on to different computers or different devices.

COMMON MISTAKE: TACKLING THE JUNK FIRST

Let's talk about some of the common mistakes that I see. The most common one for sure is that people focus on the junk first. Let's say you put this project on your resolution list for the year. This year I'm going to tackle my photos once and for all. And you start by sitting down and scrolling back on your camera roll and deleting blurry photos, screenshots, all the junk. It's where we all naturally start. And the problem with that is that you quickly run out of energy and you wear yourself out before you've accomplished what actually matters most.

So focusing on the junk first is going to deplete your energy, and it's actually a task that you're probably never going to finish, right? We could just keep going back and back and back and finding more junk.

FOCUS ON WHAT MATTERS: ONE PROPERLY BACKED UP PLACE

Instead, I want you to focus on what really matters, and that, in my opinion, is getting all of your photos into one place and then getting them properly backed up. Once you accomplish those two tasks – your photos are in one place and you have backups of that place – then you can always come back and focus on the junk.

Look at it this way. If you're not backing up your phone's camera roll because you feel like, oh, well, I'm going to clean this up someday and then I'll back it up, well, what

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happens if your phone crashes tomorrow? You have no backup. You just jeopardized everything. You lost everything because you were afraid that there was going to be a little junk that was going to get backed up. That's silly.

So let's try and reframe this. You're going to focus on what matters most: getting your photos in one place, getting a backup in place so that you can sleep better at night, and then you can always come back and tackle that junk later. It will always be there for you to handle later.

IT'S JUST A NUMBER: NO SHAME

The next thing I want you to avoid is feeling ashamed of your number, the number of photos in your camera roll. Every single day, someone's telling me their number. And no matter if their number is 1,000, 100,000, 200,000, they say the number to me with the exact same sound of shame in their voice. And I want you to get rid of that. Our camera roll is an indicator of our memories and blessings in our life that we felt were worth documenting. And so I want you to get rid of the shame that you feel about your camera roll.

THE THING ABOUT ICLOUD

Another common mistake I see for iPhone users in particular is trusting iCloud exclusively. Like, okay, I pay monthly for iCloud, so I'm good. I don't have to worry about anything. If you take nothing else away from this presentation, I want you to hear that iCloud is a sync and not a backup. So that means even if you see your items, your photos, on multiple Apple devices, you should only consider it one copy of your photos. That means if your toddler gets a hold of your phone and deletes everything, there's not a secondary copy somewhere. What you see on your camera roll is iCloud. So if you delete items from your phone, maybe you are mistakenly thinking you want to free up some space. You can always get them back from iCloud later. That's not how it works. When you delete things off your phone, you're deleting them from everywhere. That is iCloud. So iCloud is a backup in the sense that if something happens to your phone, you can get a new phone and restore it from iCloud to look like the old one. But it's not a backup in the sense that if something happens to your pictures or you get locked out of your iCloud account, there's no other copy. So hear me when I say iCloud is a sync, not a backup, and you should consider it one copy of your photos.

NO QUICK FIX

The final mistake is expecting a quick fix. We've probably all seen those Instagram ads that promise, oh, you just buy this app and then it's going to fix your whole phone, right? That's just not how it works. I want you to change your mindset and say, I'm committed to putting in some time to fix this, to organize my photos, get a system in place so that going forward, I can enjoy these photos. So buckle up. It's worth the work.

FOUR STEPS TO ORGANIZING

Let's move on to how to actually organize. There's a four step workflow that I use. Number one is centralizing your photos into one place, like we've already talked about. We're going to create a digital photo hub, and we're going to put everything into it.

One thing that I think is really important is that we're going to copy and paste our photos into it. So we're making a new copy.

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This Digital Photo Hub is going to be a new world with all of our photos organized in it. And in making it a separate copy, we're not jeopardizing any of our originals. So as we gather from all our places, we're not deleting it from those places so that if a hard drive crashes or we make a mistake, we do something wrong. We can always revert back to our originals. They were never in jeopardy.

I know organizing your photos is really emotional work, anxiety provoking work. We really don't want to do anything wrong and lose any of these memories. And so copying and pasting over to this new Photo Hub is the safety net that if we make a mistake, it's okay. We weren't really playing with the originals. We can always revert back to it and start over. So copy and paste is key.

DON'T WORRY ABOUT DUPLICATES

Secondly, during this step, don't worry at all about duplicates because you could spend hours analyzing, oh, did I already get these photos from 2017? Did they come from Google or were they on those CDs? Is this overlap? And all of that is just a waste of time. Right now we are just bringing things over to the hard drive, going through our list of sources, copying everything, pasting it into the Digital Photo Hub. Later we're going to clean it up and the duplicate removal is going to be automatic. That's why I don't want you to waste any time on that.

Now, here's a little graphic to help you visualize this. Let's say you have photos on your phone, old CDs, an old computer, a couple of places in the cloud, memory cards on the desktop of the computer. You're going to copy and paste each of those places over to the Digital Photo Hub that you've created. It's going to be messy. This Digital Photo Hub is going to be messy, but everything's going to be in one place because then we can move on to the second and third steps, which are cleaning it all up, deduping and sorting.

LET THE SOFTWARE DO IT: DE-DUPING AND ORGANIZING

I'm not going to cover this in depth because this is where it's going to vary based on if you're a Mac user, if you're a PC user. But I want you to know that both of these steps, removing duplicates and sorting into chronological folders can be done with software automatically. And the software is really affordable too.

So first step – centralizing – is definitely the most time consuming, but it's not hard. You're just copying and pasting, moving down your list, getting everything there. Expect to spend the most amount of time there. The second step and the third step are really easy because the software is going to do it for us. And then step four is now that we have a Digital Photo Hub – that's all de-duped, sorted into folders by year and month, beautifully organized automatically – now we're going to create backup copies.

THREE BACKUPS

The backup best practice is to have three copies of your photo library. The digital photo hub on the hard drive that we've made is one copy, and then we need two more copies to protect us in case that hard drive fails.

One of those copies should really be off site, and the reason for that is if you have all three of your copies, let's say, sitting in your office, well, what if you have a fire or a flood?

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It's going to knock out all three copies at the same time, unfortunately. So you want to diversify yourself by having at least one copy off site. For me, I consider offsite to be the cloud as that backup.

Let's look at a couple example backup scenarios.

Here are the three copies for this sample person. We have iCloud as the primary copy. And remember, iCloud is only viewed as one copy, no matter how many devices you're seeing it on. Then we have everything on an external hard drive, and then we have everything backed up to Amazon photos as our third copy. Amazon photos, if you don't know, is included with your prime membership. So if you're a prime member, you get unlimited full size photo storage for free. So that's a great one to add into the mix if you're looking for a third copy or another cloud backup for your photos. One little caveat, though, is that you do have to pay for video storage with Amazon. Because of your prime membership, though, it becomes really reasonably priced for most people. They can use the $20 a year plan or the $60 a year plan. Both of those are significantly less than other cloud services costs.

All right, let's go into another backup scenario. This person has their digital photo hub on a hard drive. Then they have placed a copy of that to Dropbox and a copy in Amazon photos.

I think it's really important to point out that in both of these scenarios, they have what I call a local copy in the mix of their three. A local copy I consider as like the computer or an external hard drive.

LOCAL COPIES

I love to have a local copy because then you aren't reliant on the Internet service to access your photos or a service in general that could have an outage like Amazon or Dropbox. It's also in your possession. You own it. So if any of these cloud services change their terms and you decide you don't want to use them anymore, well, it's okay. You have your hard drive that's yours, and you could take it to another service should you choose that.

So remember it like this. You want three total copies. One is on site and at least one is off site.

BACKUP BOOTCAMP

If you need help with these four steps, because they are a big project, centralizing deduping sorting and then getting it all backed up. I have a very thorough online course called Backup Bootcamp that has self paced video tutorials for both Mac and PC. It's sort of like a choose your own adventure. So if you are choosing to use Dropbox, then you'll watch that video. If you have Google, you'll watch that video and you'll make your way through the course accordingly. Plus, in the bottom right hand corner of all the lesson pages, there's a direct chat. So if you get stuck because sometimes technology doesn't work the way it's supposed to, right there is a chat to talk to me directly for assistance if you need it.

READY FOR THE FUN PART

All right, let's fast forward a little bit. Pretend that we've done all the work and everything's all organized. What comes next?

This is the fun part.

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Now that your photos aren't overwhelming you, you're not stressed about losing them. You get to have fun. You get to make photo books, create custom videos if you want, scan those printed photos, add them into your digital collection. You get to play with all the cool features that the cloud services offer, like facial recognition, keyword searching, sharing with friends.

Photos are supposed to be a source of joy, not stress. And so if we can get the organizing work done, get a backup in place, that's when they become fun again.

EXAMPLE: THE BIRTHDAY VIDEO

The example that I'll give is recently my son turned ten years old, and I thought it would be fun for his birthday to make him a custom video using clips from the first ten years of his life. So in the search bar, I typed in Colin that's his name and videos, and it brought back tons of video clips going all the way back to when he was a baby. And I brought them all into the Imovie program, set them to music, and made him a really fun three or four minute video that we watched on his birthday. And it only took me maybe 30 minutes because once all your photos are in one place, technology can make this really easy.

LET'S TALK ABOUT JUNK

Let's talk about the not quite as fun stuff. But also I still think this is kind of fun because this is my job. So at the very beginning, remember I said I wanted you to ignore the junk for now, that it's going to just stand in your way and deplete your energy? Well, now that you've done the important work, if you want to, we can do some cleanup work.

THE DAILY DELETE HABIT

One thing that I recommend is a daily delete habit. At a minimum, it's just reviewing what happened today. Look at your camera roll. Are there things that you need to make decisions about or delete? If you're just looking at one day, that makes it feel more manageable if you can stay on top of it, like you do the dishes every night, you also clean up your camera roll every night, right?

EXTRA CREDIT

But if you want to take it a little farther for some extra credit, one of my favorite tips to share is that you can see it here in this screenshot. I typed February 7 into my search and I didn't put a year. And in total it returns 65 photos. These are all the photos I've ever taken on February 7 throughout time. And so this gives me 65 photos that I have to review today. If I stick to this habit, by next February 7, my camera roll will be completely cleaned up. I'll have reviewed every single item in it, little by little.

Some days you might have more to review, some days you might have less. But in general, this gives you a really nice boundary so that you aren't just aimlessly scrolling back until you get too tired to continue on.

A SCREENSHOT STRATEGY

The next thing I'd encourage you to have for cleanup is a screenshot strategy. For me I use my Notes app to organize my screenshots and I don't have them in my camera roll. A little tip for iPhone users if you take a screenshot, you can see this menu here. When you hit Done in the top left, there's an option to save to a quick note that actually saves the screenshot into

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a note in the Notes app. And then it never saves to your camera roll.

And the best part is you can organize your Notes app into folders, maybe recipes or book recommendations. But even better, if you search in the search bar in the Notes app, it will find the text you're looking for within screenshots. So look, this screenshot here is a book recommendation. If I search that title, Black Cake, it would find it in the screenshot itself even if I hadn't written anything in the note.

So if you want more information about managing screenshots, I actually have a fast class for this. It's just a single 30 minutes video that walks through my whole strategy for managing screenshots so that they're never in my camera roll. I've had several students call that one life changing.

ALBUMS – THE BEST OF...

And finally, this is sort of related to cleanup. But play around with creating albums to help you find the things you love most. As your camera roll continues to grow in size, it's going to become a little bit more cumbersome to find what you need again, that growing number is not bad. It just means we need to use the tools available to us and albums are a great tool for that.

So I included a screenshot here of some of mine. I have what I call Best of Albums, so I have a Best of for the dog, Colby. I have a Best of each kid, a Best of the siblings together, best of me and my husband, all of our professional family photos in one album. And I love these albums because I can find the good ones really fast. I know you can use the heart, the favorite, but that just continues to grow and grow over time, making it hard to find what you need in your favorites album, too. So I love these best of albums.

REMEMBER: ALBUMS DON'T TAKE UP MORE SPACE

One thing a lot of people don't realize about albums is that they're not creating additional copies of your photos. Albums are referencing the photo, the original photo in your library. So say I put a favorite photo of my dog in three different albums. It's not creating four total copies of that photo. It's still just one, but it's being referenced in three places. So go crazy with albums. They're so useful, and they're not increasing the size of your library or increasing the amount of cloud storage space you need. They're just here to help you find what you need faster.

So in the case of my Best of Jill album, when my daughter graduates elementary school or high school, I'm hoping to use this to put together a photo book or a slideshow. Or, if I need to turn in things for the yearbook, I'll be able to just come to this Best of Jill album and find all my favorites of her rather than sorting through tens of thousands of photos.

In summary, albums are such an awesome tool. As your library is growing, they really help you feel like you can find what you need faster and just make it feel a little bit more manageable.

SERVICES AND RESOURCES FROM MISS FREDDY

I do want to end with a quick plug for my services and my resources. If you go to Missfreddy.com, you can learn more about my one on one offerings. I have options where I remotely organize people's photos for them via Screen Share on their

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computer, and I get everything backed up to the cloud. So if those four steps I shared just seem too overwhelming and you're looking for a quick fix I know I said before there's no magic quick fix, but actually, if you hire me to do it, that's kind of a quick fix, because I'm doing it all for you via Screen Share. So that's one option.

I also offer scanning services, photo book design services, video conversion services. You can learn all about those at missfreddy.com.

And then down here, I have pictures of a few of my resources. I have several self paced online courses. Backup Bootcamp is the most popular one, and I think that's where everyone should begin. It's that really solid foundation building that's going to set you up to make all the other projects easier.

But after that, you can move on to courses like family yearbooks, learning how to make photo books, organizing digital files like your documents and spreadsheets, managing kids memories, making custom videos. I have lots of different things. They're all self paced, very reasonably priced, and you can find more about them at shop.missfreddy.com.

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Title Pending

NATALIE PAPIER • TRANSCRIPT

TASHA: Today we have Natalie from Home Ec. with us, and we are going to be talking about art forward design. So, Natalie, thanks so much for joining us today.

NATALIE: Thank you for having me. I'm so excited. I love talking all things art and design, so this is kind of like my perfect conversation. Awesome.

WHAT IS ART FORWARD DESIGN?

TASHA: Yeah, I'm sure. I think I'm going to learn a ton in this conversation. You are the expert here, so can you just start by defining art forward design for us?

NATALIE: Totally. So my background is in art, and what's really inspired me with design is finding a piece of art that really resonates with you. So it's an individual thing that you're drawn to. You're drawn to it because of the story behind it, the color palette, the vintageness of it, the history of it. You're drawn to it for a reason.

And so if there's a piece you already really love, I have been taking that as inspiration for the whole room design, whether that's with the color palette or just balancing it to make it more of a focal point in the room. It's just a great place for me to start design wise.

WHERE DO YOU FIND ART?

TASHA: Yeah, absolutely. So when people are looking for this, where do you go to find art or things like that?

NATALIE: That is, like, such a loaded question, right? Because somebody needs art, and it's like, where do you go? Where do you find it? There are so many ways.

The obvious ones are go out to galleries and just look at art and try to get an understanding of what kind of art you're drawn to. The Internet is a great place. Social media for me has been amazing in finding artists that I'd love to follow.

START LOCALLY

I like to start locally. For example, this weekend we went to a local art fest, and I connected with some more artists that way. Your community is a great place to start. Social media is a great place. Galleries are a great place, but art literally is everywhere.

I think it's important to just start recognizing what you're drawn to and why, and then you can start establishing what your kind of eye for art is.

CAN I AFFORD IT?

TASHA: So for people who are maybe just starting to think about design in their home as it relates to art, when I hear things like, oh, going to an art gallery, I'm thinking of millions of dollars' worth of pieces.

Where do you find affordable art, I guess

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I'd say that I can hang in my living room? Where we're actually living and not feel like I have some out-of-my-budget piece of history hanging in my room.

NATALIE: 100%. And I think I use galleries often. It's a good starting place to start recognizing what kind of art I like. And then once you start looking or going to art fairs, especially community events, you'll find that there's local artists who are just starting out. Emerging artists are huge for that.

And even artists that are more well established, that have pricier original pieces, often offer exclusive numbers of prints. And those prints are great ways to support the artist that you love, get the art that you love without breaking the bank.

TASHA: Right. So you find that if you find a print of something, do you feel just as good about getting a good quality print from the artist as you would about getting the original piece?

NOT JUST PAINTINGS

NATALIE: Absolutely. And especially with all the ways you can frame it and make it your own, to connect again back to your design style, just gives you a lot more options that way, too.

And I think it's hard sometimes for people to think of art as just like a painting on a wall, when it doesn't necessarily need to be that. I have a Victorian homes coloring book in my old house that I had members of my family all color a page in, and we framed them all up in Ikea frames all along this long hallway. And that, to me, is like a personal piece of art because it's contributed to it by my family. It's important to me. It's personal, and it's just like, funky. And again, no one else has it.

But we're not buying thousands of dollars of art here either.

THE PERSONAL TOUCH

TASHA: Right. I love that. I love the personal touch. Obviously, that's affordable. It was a coloring book and a memory you made with your family.

NATALIE: 100%. And it's not always about just like, expensive gallery art. It's about taking these things that are personal to you and displaying them in your home, like your grandmother's china. But think of it, instead of on a table, maybe hung on a wall, there are so many ways to infuse things that are important to you, your history, and just think a little outside the box.

TASHA: Yeah. Can you give some examples of that? Because I do think a lot of times when people talk about art, and especially what we're talking about when we first say, design of a room centered around art, I mean, I think of what is behind you, like that piece on the wall with all the colors, and it's a framed piece.

THINGS OUTSIDE THE BOX

What are some examples of art that's maybe not what people first think of, not like a framed thing on the wall?

NATALIE: Well, first of all, this actually is a good example, because while it is a framed piece on a wall, it's a vintage scarf.

TASHA: Oh, really?

NATALIE: It's not a painting. So that's something again, that's a little outside the box.

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And I have these amazing plate collections right to my left. I'm actually going to show you because why not? They're all drawn on by an artist, but they're vintage plates. And that's just another way of infusing, I think, art into your home that's different than just the painting on the wall.

Sculptures, anything that's like large or small, sculptural, pottery, paintings, tapestries. There are endless ways to have art in your home, especially when you're trying to get a big defined area to be a focal point.

Something like a really pretty rug or tapestry is a great way to do that. Or handmade quilt that your grandmother made. And I know I'm getting a little sentimental, but there's a lot of ways to incorporate art into your home that aren't this literal slap a painting on a wall as an afterthought.

CONNECTING IT

TASHA: Absolutely. Yes. So we've talked about finding art, different types of art. So let's say you've got the piece. You've got what you want to be that focal point. So what's the next step? How do you connect that piece to the design of the room?

What do you look for next? What are those next steps?

NATALIE: Well, this painting behind me sorry, not painting the scarf. Got those colors I was really drawn to, that's why I purchased the piece. And I was excited about that. And it did inspire the color of my ceiling.

And now that you have this focal point and the color is harmonized, to make that one piece of art more of a focal point in the room . . . because everything around it is more warm.

And then you'll see that I brought in, like, little pops of decor that complement it without being overbearing and still letting the art be star of the show.

TASHA: Yes. So it sounds like a lot of this has to do with the color palette, maybe in the original piece of art that you chose.

NATALIE: Yes, definitely color palette. You can also choose shapes. There is some art that I've seen that's very interesting lately with its curvature. And to mimic it with curvature in the lines of your furniture is a really interesting way to connect the piece to the art.

COLOR

TASHA: Yeah. So whenever you were working with these colors, did you take that piece, like that scarf to find the color? How do you match the colors?

NATALIE: I don't ever think you need to match it completely, but as long as it's a complementary color to it, and sometimes by complementary to make it more of a focal point, it's like you can flip and choose, like, a secondary or other primary color that lets the piece shine and it's not getting lost amongst the things. Yes.

TASHA: So if you were to do that with something like that scarf, like, what type of color would you be looking for, for example, on this scarf, like, you could do anything next to it.

NATALIE: In the color wheel, you could do a bright blue, and it would still speak to you because it would stand out so much from

this bolder color in the background in here. I wanted this kind of cozier, warmer space. This is where we dine. This is where we hang out. And it was important to me to have kind of this rosy, comfortable, afterglow kind of moment in here. That's why I chose kind of the other pieces I did for this space.

GALLERY WALLS

TASHA: Yeah, absolutely. So when it comes to art forward design, how does that play in? Or like, what are your thoughts on a gallery wall? Do you typically pick one piece and that's the focal point, or is there ever a time and place where maybe multiple pieces that kind of are in the same vein would be a good fit?

NATALIE: Gallery walls are great. It's a great way for smaller pieces to kind of work together harmoniously. And there's so many ways to do them eclectically. You can mix different frames and different kinds of art and photos and make that more eclectic and personal to you.

But even by taking photographs or art and all framing them in the same frames gives it a little bit more modern cohesion to things too, that feels a little bit more structured. It's just about using your individuality and how you want your individuality to shine in your home.

Are you more eclectic? Are you more modern? I would say if you were more modern to go like the same frame route.

ARRANGING THE GALLERY

TASHA: Right. So where would you suggest people start with a gallery wall? I know sometimes I can see them in other people's homes and be like, oh wow, that looks so good, but how do I get that in my own home?

Do you still start with like a center point piece of art or do you look for art from the same artist? How do you get that started?

NATALIE: Well, that's really up to you, which is fine. But it is always good to have a bigger piece or a couple of bigger pieces as your landing spot and then building out from that so it's not quite so chopped up in small pieces everywhere. There is like a sense of scale that's necessary.

Pinterest is a great resource for looking at gallery wall templates, different examples of that. Also, when I do have my art in front of me, what I like to do first before I start, just like hammering nails in the wall, is use butcher block paper and cut out the size of the art framed. And then you can place them on the wall in a way that feels right to you before you start actually making those nail holes. I like that.

TASHA: Yeah. And I think you mentioned too, like incorporating pieces, not just saying it has to be framed paintings, but like plates and other things that you can also hang.

NATALIE: Yeah, anything that will stick on a wall is game. Right?

OTHER OPTIONS

TASHA: Right. Absolutely. That's a fun way to add some character, for sure. So speaking of character, I guess what are some things that people might look for that maybe are not always associated as being art?

NATALIE: Well, we talked about a few already, like rugs and tapestries in place, but there's also just like . . . wallpaper is art

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and I think a lot of people forget that.

You can also do wall murals and experiment with that. There's a lot of people I follow on Instagram that do a really good job at hand painting a large wall, and sometimes it's less of a huge project, and it could just be a couple of stripes to break up the focal point. And sometimes it can be really a lot more involved and intricate.

But both of them are really great ways to infuse color and pattern into your home in a way that's just a little different from what everybody else is doing.

MAKING MISTAKES?

TASHA: Yeah, absolutely. So have you ever started working on a room, maybe with a piece of art, and it's just not coming together the way that you wanted? How often are you redoing these? I guess I'm thinking of people who are maybe like, okay, I want to try this. I want to do this, but I'm afraid of messing it up, and I'm afraid of doing it. Going to all this effort to design something, but then it doesn't really work out.

Have you had that experience at all, or can you speak to people who are concerned about that?

NATALIE: I think if you're starting with a piece you already love, you really cannot go wrong. If we're talking a pretty landscape that you bought, and what you really like about that landscape is that you bought it while you're on vacation. It reminds you of that beach. You love the colors that makes you feel serene. Take that feeling and pull from it the colors that give you that serenity.

You're not going to want to be this bold color background when you pick this piece because it makes you feel calm and serene. So it's about bringing that feeling and mood into your home, pulling it in with colors, and then again, layers, layering patterns, and things that are personal to you and making that cozy moment.

I don't think there's a way to actually go wrong, and if you do, this is like your house, and it's okay to change it up too.

NOT SO TRENDY

TASHA: Right. Yeah. And I mean, it seems that when it comes to picking these pieces, it's so important that they are special to you. I think sometimes when it comes to art, there are things that we I mean, they are art and we're told they're art.

But you're looking for maybe it goes without saying, but you're really looking for what speaks to you in your space, not just something that's like, oh, well, the general public really responds well to this, but if it's not personal to you, then it's probably not going to fit as well in your home.

NATALIE: Right. I don't like to buy art as, like, a trend or that's something everybody else could have. Like, if you're at Ikea or you see this black and white piece of art, it's fine to use that as a placeholder, but just know that there are several other people buying that same piece. And so does it really speak to you? And if it does, that's fine.

There are no rules when it comes to what speaks to you and what art means to you, but it feels better to me when it's not mass marketed. You're supporting the artists, and you have a story behind it that's not like, I just picked this up at Ikea.

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CONVERSATION STARTERS

TASHA: Absolutely. And in some of those cases, not all, but sometimes you can even potentially meet the artist who made it, and that just gives it that special touch.

NATALIE: Art, to me, is such a huge conversation starter. I love going into people's homes and being like, oh, this is amazing, and hearing where it's from or how they connected to it. It really speaks to the individual who lives there. And I think that's a great way to just infuse your home with things that surround you with joy.

TASHA: Yes, absolutely. And we talked about those stories. Whether it be like a personal touch or something that even you just met the artist or you were on vacation, that alone is going to draw you to it more.

Even if you have a technically correct artistic space in your home, if it doesn't have the story, it's not going to resonate with you as much.

THE FOCAL POINT

NATALIE: And that's the whole goal for me. It's your house. Just surround yourself with pieces that speak to you and that you love. And honestly, it's a great way to just take the elements that you love from the art and bring that into the rest of your home.

So often I feel like designers can make a beautiful room, and then it's like, oh, we better find some art to go above the sofa. And that becomes that last minute thing that you pop up on the wall. But it falls flat to me because it doesn't have that same meaning.

TASHA: Right. If you start with the piece that you really like and then design the room around it, it can really become the focal point. Instead of being like, oh, we have a room, and now we need to find a focal point.

NATALIE: 100%, like, starting with the art is just a concept that I really believe in and adopt into my own practice.

A SENSE OF SCALE

TASHA: Yeah, absolutely. So when it comes to placement and scale of this art, how important is that in this process?

NATALIE: So important. If you love this piece, but it's like this big, you don't want to put that on a big empty wall because it's going to have so much negative space that you'll lose it.
But if you infuse it in a way that I have another little piece with the oranges on my credenza over here, and it's on a little art easel, so that's a way to display it where I still love it, but it's not getting lost. If I hung that size on the wall, it would just get completely lost.

Either smaller pieces are a good opportunity to put somewhere a smaller space or into a grouping with other larger pieces and smaller pieces in order to make it make sense.

But scale really does play a huge part. If you put too much art together and clump it, it almost feels like your eye doesn't have any negative space to kind of stop and appreciate the art that's there.

So it is a balance, but again, this balance can be achieved by experimenting. Start with the butcher block paper, and even if you do just go rogue and put a nail on the wall and decide you don't like it, there is this handy dandy little thing that's like a hole

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filler that you get from Amazon, and it's not the end of the world.

It's okay to make mistakes. It's okay to move art around. It's okay to just play with it until it makes sense to you.

YOU CAN'T HAVE IT ALL

TASHA: Right? Yeah. So I'm curious. Have you ever passed up a piece of art that you really liked because it didn't fit into your palette or something in your room?

NATALIE: I'm really struggling with that now because I'm kind of running out of walls but yet still accumulating art.

And that is hard for me. I know that's not everybody's problem, but yeah, there are several times where I can appreciate something, but also recognize that it's not the right fit for my space or I don't have a space that would let it shine. And that's okay too.

TASHA: Yeah. And it definitely doesn't mean that you don't appreciate it or that even down the road, something along that line, maybe, you decide, okay, I've enjoyed this room for ten years the way it is, and now I'd like to move on to something new.

NATALIE: But the fun part for me too, in the interior design world is I can keep that in mind for my clients' projects and still spread the love without it being piece, collecting dust in my own house, or not giving it its proper credit.

TRAVEL FINDS

TASHA: Absolutely. Yeah. So circling back to kind of where we started, I feel like we touched on some of this. We talked about finding art and artists, but can you speak to people who maybe are just new to finding art that they even like?

How do you find art that speaks to you even once you found the artist, once you found the gallery, how do you discern what's going to be a good fit for you?

NATALIE: Well, there are several ways. I think travel is huge. Sometimes when I'm traveling, there's always something that kind of sticks with you, oh, I love this. This is different. And it might not even be art. It might just be a color palette. Something you feel inspired by.

I like to say, like, just take pictures of that, make it put it into an album of just things that make you feel good. So then when you do see art in the wild, you're like, oh, I know why I like this, because I'm drawn to things like this all the time. Traveling is great.

CLOSE TO HOME

I also think you don't need to travel. In your own hometown . . . For me, I just look on Instagram and I check #CharlotteArtists or like, Charlotte Galleries and just pop in, see what draws your eye. And sometimes galleries that have one artist that I really love end up having other artists I really love because they're kind of on that same wavelength of finding art that's kind of similar or it speaks to the gallery, and I find myself getting drawn into more artists that way as well.

TASHA: Yeah, I can see that. If you find something you like finding similar things to it is a good place to look for more.

NATALIE: Right. And art fests are great, especially during the summer. I feel like lots of local cities have local art fests. They're really fun. It's really fun to see people and

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talk to the artists themselves and just connect with it on a very personal level.

TASHA: Right. And a lot of times hearing the story that inspired the art that even if they took a print of that and sold it at Ikea, you would never know if you hadn't been able to talk to the artist. And local art fests are a great place for that.

NATALIE: Yeah, and I work with some artists now where it's fun because I'll see their mural in the wild, and I know immediately I'm like, okay, I know who that is. And it's just you feel like you're on a different connection with people that way too.

ART DESING NO-NOS

TASHA: Definitely. So before we wrap up here, do you have any art no-nos, or like, things that you would encourage people to avoid as they start this journey of, like, art forward design?

NATALIE: Please don't just start by going to a big box store for your art. It's just that's not the story you want in your home. It's going to take you a little bit of creativity, but just don't buy something because you need something to fit the room.

Wait till you find something that, actually it's okay to let it sit until you find something that speaks to you. Just give it a quiet moment.

TASHA: Yeah. To not be afraid of empty space while you look for the right fit.

NATALIE: Easier said than done. But it's okay, too, to buy those placeholders. I'm not saying, like, no to that. If you need something to be a placeholder, just know that you're still looking for your forever piece of art, right?

FOLLOWING UP

TASHA: For sure. So do you have any last thoughts or anything before we wrap up here?

NATALIE: No, I kind of just want to go to an art gallery now.

TASHA: Fair. Yes. Maybe that's the next action step for everyone. Find an art gallery and attend.

NATALIE: And go support your local artist community. There's a lot of people out there that are super talented in emerging, and they're excited to show you their work. Definitely.

TASHA: Absolutely. So if people want to hear more from you, where can they find you online?

NATALIE: My Instagram handle is @ Home_Ec_Op. Or you could find me@www. homeecop.com.

TASHA: Perfect. Well, we'll have links to all of that down below so everyone can go follow on Instagram, get more art inspiration from you. Thank you so much, Natalie, for joining us today.

NATALIE: Thank you for having me.

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Going Paperless

NEENA NANDAGOPAL • TRANSCRIPT

Hi there. My name is Neena Nandagopal and I am a professional organizer and productivity coach that blogs about organization and productivity at Almost Practical. Over the years, I have helped people gain control over their time, their space and their information by creating reliable systems for consistent action. My own background is in accounting, so I guess you could say that I know a thing or two about paperwork.

Today I am going to help you learn and share some ideas with you about how you can increase your productivity by going paperless and introduce you to the nuts and bolts of creating a paperless system for your home. But before I get started, I would really like to thank Laura for including me in this summit. I am so excited to start sharing these ideas with you.

So let's get started. I am going to minimize my screen here so you can see some of my slides and bear with me if I fumble through some of these things. But it let's get started. Okay. Here we go. Here.

REACTION TO GOING PAPERLESS

Okay, so what does... let me start by asking you what are some of the things that you think of when you hear the term paperless? Some of the common terms that I hear are efficiency, being able to do things in less time, less clutter, having less paper lying around, going green, paying it forward for the environment and saving the trees.

FEAR IS AN OBSTACLE

But there is one term that I think people feel when we talk about paperless but don't really verbalize, and that is fear. In fact, fear is one of the biggest obstacles that people have to going paperless. First, they may be afraid to let go of the way they do things. Maybe you're a paper person like me, surprise, surprise. And you like your notebooks, your files, or just touching that physical piece of paper.

It can be pretty terrifying to dump everything on the computer and just throw all that paper away. And what about the fear of losing your important documents in a digital black hole? I think we have all lost a document on our computer. Maybe we downloaded something and then we're unable to find it. And then of course, there's the fear of having your personal information hacked. We hear all those horror stories in the news these days. So all of these concerns are extremely valid.

ONE SIZE DOESN'T FIT ALL

And what you'll realize is that when it comes to going paperless, there really isn't a one size fits all approach. You have to work within your own personal comfort level to figure out a system or to create a system that is going to work for you, that you're going to stick with and that you're going to feel really happy with. It will take away some

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of your stress instead of adding to it.

INSTANT ACCESS

So let me rewind and say that the term paperless is not really very accurate. Paperless is not about just getting rid of all the paper but rather it is about becoming more aware of the paper that you use and the paper that you create. And it is about becoming more open to online alternatives to your traditional paper and pen.

So the goal of the paperless process revolves around a basic organizing concept which is being able to find what you need when you need it. Digitizing your physical paper can take this concept one step further by providing you with instant access to that information no matter where you are and no matter what device you're on, especially if you're using a cloud drive or a cloud service as opposed to storing documents just on the hard drive of your computer. And we're going to talk about storage options a little bit later.

START WITH A PLAN

So where to start? Where do we start? Most people fall into one of a few different camps. So either you are feeling completely overwhelmed by the idea of a paperless project or you are fiercely determined to get started. You're ready, you got too much stuff everywhere and you want to get this going.

Or, and this is where I think most of us fall, is that you've already given it a try and ended up creating a bigger mess than where you were when you got started. None of these situations is unusual.

And no matter what position, no matter what camp you're falling into, the best place to start is with a plan. And often that's why the already tried camp exists, is because there wasn't a plan to start with.

DOCUMENT YOUR WORKFLOW

So before you grab your scanner, grab a pen and a paper notebook that is dedicated to your paperless project and think through your workflow and document it. In fact, like a flowchart or a diagram can be very helpful. You want to use this notebook in many ways throughout this project.

First you want to, like I said, document your workflow. You want to document how you're naming your files, where you're storing your files, where you started on this project and where you left off at the end of the few hours that you work on it, or the end of the day so that you can pick it up tomorrow or the next week and pick up right where you left off. And so you're not recreating the wheel or doing things differently than you had originally decided.

So this little project notebook is very important. I say just use a paper notebook and a pen. But if you're more comfortable using a notebook in, say, Evernote or in Apple notes, by all means use what you're most comfortable with. But keep a trail and a map for yourself of your progress.

WHAT TYPES OF DOCUMENTS?

So what types let's think about the documents or the types of documents that you want to manage. Some common examples are bank statements, bills, personal or family information and documents, insurance documents, health care records, home improvement records, legal documents, and of course, memorabilia, kids' artwork and kids' notes. And things like that.

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So what I would recommend to keep things manageable is to pick one type of document or one area of your life to start with and use it as a test case to massage that process that you're documenting so that it works. And then you can apply it to another area or type of document.

You just don't want to take your whole home, office, digital all at once. You want to go step by step so that you can stick with it and become more familiar with it and tweak it as you go along.

THE EASIEST STARTING POINT

So the easiest place to start, in my opinion, is with bills and bank statements. These days, most banks, credit card companies, utilities and insurance companies, they all offer online portals that you can use to access your current and your past statements. So generally, you can get rid of a lot of the paper that comes across your desk by signing up for these electronic statements and accessing your statements from right within the portal.

For the most part, you don't even need to download and store these statements on your computer because you can always sign in and find what you need online. So, given that that seems so easy, let's talk about what might be holding you back at this stage. Typically, the concerns that people have about using electronic statements revolve around keeping track of the websites that they need to go to to find their statements, and also keeping track of the passwords to log into these websites.

So one easy option to alleviate this concern is using your pen and notebook, jot down how you plan to keep track of this information. You can make a list of the websites that you need to go to and then use an online password manager, like One Password to keep track of all your passwords. Or you could even use something like One Password to create groups of passwords along with their websites all in one place.

Whatever you decide, just make sure that you use it consistently. And one thing to keep in mind is that it is extremely important to use strong passwords and change them often and not to reuse the same password for different sites.

PAPER YOU ALREADY HAVE

So let's move on to some of the harder stuff. We just talked about switching to electronic statements, and by doing that, you are reducing the flow of paper that comes into your house. But what do you do with all the paper that you already have lying around? That's the harder stuff.

And for each piece of paper that you have, you need to make a decision. You can either keep the actual piece of paper in a physical file cabinet, you can scan the paper and put it into an online filing system that you create and then either shred, toss, or keep the original. And one more option is that you might have papers that come across your desk that you really don't need or want. And those, you can just decide, those are easy, right? You can just get rid of the junk mail or something like that. So for each piece of paper, you have to make one of these decisions.

EQUIPMENT YOU NEED

Now to keep moving forward with this process, you need a little bit of equipment in your home office to keep your paperless project chugging along. And I'm going to jump over to this equipment and then

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we'll go back to how we're going to deal with each type of document. So some of the equipment that you will need for this paperless process is a high speed scanner, a file cabinet, an online place to file your scans, a high capacity paper shredder, a good backup option, and a password manager.

Now most of us, that was the slide that I was getting to there, most of us have something that looks like this in our home office. And this is an all in one printer, copier scanner, and fax machine all rolled into one. And if you've ever used the flatbed scanner on one of these, you know that it is painfully slow. And when it comes to digitizing lots of paperwork, you need a high speed scanner like a Fujitsu Scan Snap.

SPEEDY SCANNERS

Because if your scanner is too slow, you're just going to give up on your whole project. So let me show you. This is my Fujitsu Scan Snap. It's a few years old and I know there's a newer model out and mine is a little dusty, but it's probably the most used piece of equipment, office equipment, in my home office. And it has made scanning so much easier.

You can see there's a feeder, document feeder, and you can put several sheets in there at once, like a small stack. And when you scan, it scans both sides of the paper at the same time. And it also gives you the option to save the file as either a PDF or a JPEG or some other file types. But there are some settings that you can set up ahead of time. And when you scan your documents, they'll automatically save as how you set it up.

STORING FILES

So let's talk about where to store the files once you scan them. And again, this is more getting all your ducks in a row so that when you do start the scanning and when you do start filing things into your online system, it's all set up and ready to go. So we talked about the equipment that you need in your home office. The other thing that you're going to need is a place to store your files.

And one of the things I actually don't have on this slide, and I mentioned it before, is a good file cabinet. If you already don't have a good file cabinet, you will need one to store the papers that you plan to keep. And having a centralized location for your important papers will not only keep your papers organized. But it will also give you peace of mind knowing that you will be able to find any particular document when you need it. So instead of you don't want your papers floating around the house, you want one central place where you keep the ones, the papers that you decide to keep.

ONLINE STORAGE

As far as online storage goes, and these are some of the options that I have listed here. You need a place obviously to store your digital files and most people use some sort of cloud storage for this purpose. This type of solution makes it easy to access your documents from any location and any device. So there are many options in cloud storage such as Google Drive, Microsoft OneDrive, iCloud Drive, Dropbox, Evernote is an app, you know, notetaking app. So slightly different form of storage. Apple Notes, OneNote and definitely more.

ENCRYPTION LEVELS

But before you pick your online storage

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option, you should really become familiar with the encryption levels that each service offers. And ascertain your comfort level with that, you want to make sure that you feel comfortable that it's offering enough encryption when data gets transferred back and forth to that service, when you upload something that it will keep your data secure.

So very important to learn to do a little research. If you're not familiar with different encryption
levels, do that research and find a service that works with your comfort level.

WHO HAS ACCESS?

Another thing to keep in mind when picking one of these cloud services is if you share your account with your spouse, with your kids, with your friends who has access to your cloud drive. That's very important because you might be uploading sensitive financial information or personal information that you might not want other people to have access to. So be very cognizant of who is able to access the documents in your drive.

Sometimes you even give permission to other apps. So it might not be somebody in your household or a friend. It could be a different app that wanted access to your account that maybe you gave access to. So you really want to keep the place that you store your documents button down security wise, so that you have comfort that your data is safe. And that is definitely a personal decision and an individual decision that you have to come to terms with.

SHRED IT

So let's talk about the type of documents that we want to manage. You know what, I want to go, I'm jumping ahead of myself. So going back, I do want to talk about a few other items, a few other equipment, pieces of equipment. In your office I had mentioned a high capacity paper shredder. That is also very important because when you scan your papers, you really should shred the originals. Especially, I mean, if you don't want to keep them, you want to make sure you securely dispose of them if they have sensitive information on them.

And a high capacity shredder makes it so that you can shred several pieces at one time and it doesn't overheat, whereas a smaller scale shredder tends to overheat. And then you have to only do a couple of pages at a time and you may again stop your project because it's just taking too long.

BACK IT UP

The other thing I mentioned was a backup system. So if you are storing items on your computer, you might want to use a backup like Backblaze which backs up your whole entire computer to their servers. And again, you'd want to be comfortable with their encryption level. Or you could use an inhouse option like Apple's Time Machine. But if you're scanning everything onto your computer and onto your hard drive, you definitely need to have a backup solution. Or you could risk losing all your data if you store into a cloud drive.

Again, you can get comfortable with the level of backup that they use. You might be fine with it being in the cloud and using the backup servers that that service uses. Or you may also want to do a local backup in your home as well. So just some things to think about if you are going to go fully digital.

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TYPES OF ITEMS

So let's talk about these different types of items. Again, so each type of item that you're scanning and storing or going paperless with deserves a different type of treatment. Each item, there's some items that are more important than others. So for old paper statements that you have lying around, you can decide if you really want to keep those records, if you need them, or if you can access them online. Maybe you can just shred the ones that you have because you can get them from your portals and then you can either shred them or if you think that you want to have a copy of it, you can scan it or you can decide to keep it. With all of these, it's your comfort level to keep in mind.

There are medical records, insurance documents, home inventory and maintenance for these types of documents, again is the same thing. You need to decide if you want to scan and keep or scan and shred. And if you think you're going to need the originals then by all means hold on to them. But you have to make that judgment call.

LEGAL DOCUMENTS

One area I want to talk about specifically is legal documents. For legal documents, I think that it's a really good idea to hold on to the originals. You definitely want to keep the originals for things like birth certificates, home deeds, car titles, passports, Social Security cards, all of those you will need the original document. So definitely either store them at the minimum in your file cabinet, but you might want to store them off site in a safe deposit box or in some type of home safe to keep them... I'm not even thinking of the word but keep them safe I guess is the word I'm looking for. So definitely take extra care with your legal documents.

MEMORABILIA

Now memorabilia, there's a couple of ways to handle that. A lot of times you like that original. If it's kids artwork or things that can't be replaced, you might want to hold on to the originals. I know I did a project when my daughter was in kindergarten where we took a picture of her artwork as she brought it home every day. And at the end of the year, I created an album from one of the online album services of all those photos. And we did get rid of the originals because they were bulky and big and she would flip through that book for years.

And so it was actually a great way for her to enjoy her art, whereas she would not have probably dug through a bin or a box. So there's different ways to handle the memorabilia. But again, you have to figure out what you're comfortable with.

ORGANIZING DIGITAL FILES

So let's talk about organizing the digital files. We've already talked about how to go paperless and what to digitize. So once we digitize, we need to organize. And if you know where you put your files, then you're going to know where to find them. So this is the process that I usually use, is I scan my document and I make sure that scan lands in a folder that I call inbox. And that's just a name that I gave to that folder. You could call it Scans or Important Things or whatever you want to call it. I call it inbox because it's a folder that I need to process periodically.

So I take this Inbox folder or I take the scan and I know it's going to go into this folder called Inbox when I scan it. And I use my

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scanning software to set up the place where the scan is going to land, the folder where the scan is going to land. And I apply a naming convention to the file, to the piece of paper that I just scanned. And then once I've named this, I go to my inbox and I file all the scans in my inbox. And I can do that once a week. I don't have to do it as soon as I scan the documents. So I sort of batch process my scans.

NAMING CONVENTIONS

Now I want to talk about the naming conventions. And here is an example. When I say naming convention, when I create a scan, I name it starting with the year and then the month, and then the day, and then kind of a descriptive title for the item that it is. And actually I'm just looking at this and I would probably put an 0 here. So I'd do like 3- 10. So kind of messed up the formatting of this slide. But that's how I would do it because let's see, let me go through here... because when you look into your folder after you've filed everything away, they come up, when you sort alphabetically in a descending order, the most recent date will show up on top.

This isn't an ascending order, but the most recent date would show up on top. And that way if you're filing things that are chronological, it's a little confusing and you sort it alphabetically, it comes up in order. If you use this type of naming convention, a lot of folders you can sort based on the date created or based on the date modified. But I find that is not always as accurate or documents tend to get a little bit lost for me if I do it that way because I might modify something and then it changes order. It's not in the same place every time when I'm looking for it.

So I would just use a consistent naming convention and write it down in your paperless project notebook or even if you're doing a lot of work with it, use a sticky note on your computer as a cheat sheet until you are really familiar with that naming convention.

And make sure you name all your files consistently. That way, once you've cemented your naming convention, you need to file your electronic document away, like I said before, to get it out of your inbox.

FOLDER STRUCTURE

And so I'm going to show you quickly my folder structure. So inside my Google Drive or OneDrive or Dropbox or whatever you're using, I have a folder, one single folder called File Cabinet. And this is where I store all my scan documents that I filed. It's sort of like a virtual file cabinet that would sort of mimic what I would keep in a physical file cabinet.

And inside this virtual file cabinet, I have subfolders. And then I try to keep it like just two levels deep. So I have a file cabinet, I have subfolders for kind of major categories like, say, business and then kids. And then under that I will have some subfolders for other things. So like my client files I will have inside my business folder. In my kids folder, I might have a folder for report cards, but I don't want to go too deep.

Like you don't want to spend a lot of time filing away your scans. You don't want to waste time filing. So you just keep the folder structure pretty shallow. If you keep doing that consistently, eventually you will get through your paper and have less clutter in your home office.

So I hope you enjoyed this presentation. I hope this helps you gives you some ideas

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for how to implement a paperless system in your own home office.

And again, my name is Nina and you can find me at Almost Practical.

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Creating a Family Emergency Preparedness Plan

NIKKI BOYD • TRANSCRIPT

Hi, friends, and welcome to my session here at the 2023 HQ Summit. I am so excited to be a speaker again because I love this summit. This summit shares. It gives you the opportunity to learn so much, right? It's just a one-time summit every year that you can just get so many great nuggets.

THIS IS NIKKI

And I hope to share some really valuable nuggets with you today. But before I jump in, I want to introduce myself for anyone who may not be familiar with me. My name is Nikki Boyd. I'm a professional organizer and founder of At Home with Nikki.

And I simply love the art of organization because I know how it impacts our lives, as far as reducing stress, saving us time, and saving us money. Those are key things in our life, right?

And so for me, being able to come here today and share with you how to put together an emergency preparedness plan for you and your family is so essential. And I find that most families don't have a plan when something kicks off, whether it's a flood or a storm or a hurricane or some type of tragic event in your community.

DO YOU HAVE A PLAN?

Do you and your family have a plan? If your child's at school, and you're at home, and maybe your spouse is at work, what do you guys do? What is the plan if something happens at that time? Does everybody know? Do you have all those important things in place so that you can get through this?

And if not, this is the session for you. So let's jump right in.

SEVEN STEPS TO A PLAN

Okay, friends. So there are basically seven steps to putting together an emergency preparedness plan. And in my book, The Beautifully Organized Home Planner, this is a home planner that I have that allows you to put all of those essentials that you need for your home together in this one planner. And in this, I have that emergency preparedness plan so that it's all laid out. And in there, I talk about those seven steps. And I want to go through those steps with you so it can help you actually establish that plan for you and your family.

If you definitely want to get my planner, you can grab it anywhere books are sold. Barnes and Noble, Amazon, all of those lovely places. But when you go through this session, you will be able to put together your emergency preparedness plan.

STEP ONE: CONTACT INFORMATION

So let's jump into step number one. Okay, friends, step number one is to record all of your contact information for your family and your friends. Those important contact

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information, all that important contact information.

What we are in today is the day of technology, right? Everyone has all their information stored on their phone. We don't even know each other's phone numbers anymore, right? We just go to our phone, you put them in, and the call pops up. But what happens in the event that you don't have your phone? Or there's no power, no service, you can't utilize your phone again. I always say technology is beautiful when it works, but then when it doesn't, it just can just totally throw things off, right?

And we don't want that to happen in the event of an emergency. So step one is to physically document all of your contact information. And in my home planner, that is one of the places that I have for you to document it in the planner. And that way you have a tangible copy.

So what I recommend is you can get a family emergency notebook. Or if you don't get my planner - you don't have to get the planner, but if you want to get the planner, it's all laid out in there - but you can get a binder or a notebook. However you want to do it.

And just physically write down, create your emergency preparedness binder, a book, and write down all of those emergency contact information. Such as your kids' school and the telephone number, your parents and their number, your spouse and the work number, all of the things that you would need to contact and the people you would need to contact in the event of an emergency.

So that is something definitely to have a hard copy of. Not in a digital space so that in the event you can't access digital, you have that backup copy. We can never get away from paper and pen, can we? I love it.

STEP TWO: ACTION PLAN

Okay, friends. So step number two is to come up with the action plan. And this is something that you definitely want to do together as a family because everyone needs to be on board with what the actual plan is, right? That is just essential part of the process.

And so there's four things that you kind of want to talk out and work out when you're putting together your action plan. One is to ask yourself as a family, what is it that we do when an emergency kicks off? Kind of what is the plan of action? What's the thing that we do? The next thing is where do we meet? Having that place, where do we meet as a family. And then not only the third is not only where do we meet, but where do we meet if we're not all in the same area, everybody's not home, right? So that's something else to work out. And then lastly to work out, what are the initial things that we need to do when an emergency kicks off?

And I recommend sitting around thinking it out, talking to the family, and then in the end, writing down that action plan. And some of the things when you're thinking about the action plan and such as when you're thinking about what are those initial things that we do?

HAVE A CHECKLIST

Okay, look at the local news in the broadcast. Pull my emergency preparedness plan so that I can see this checklist. And I would actually create this checklist of these are the initial things that we do so that you can just look at it and go

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making sure that the electricity is turned off, depending on the situation, making sure that the electricity is turned off, taking pictures of everything of value that is currently in the space.

That's another thing that really needs to be on your checklist. And so when you're coming up with that action plan, you also want to make sure you have a checklist that accompanies that, so that if an event comes off, you can simply look at that and know exactly what to do in the order that you're putting it in.

NOTE SHELTERS

Another thing to note in your action plan are shelters. If there are shelters that you can go to, knowing where they are, how to get in touch with them, kind of whatever the case is in your community, you want to be aware of that. All of those important contact numbers that you need to make sure that you have them on hand in this emergency preparedness number two kind of section. Okay?

STEP THREE: INSURANCE DOCUMENTATION

Step number three is all about making sure that you document those insurance plans because you're going to need that information if it deals with kind of your home, your medical, different, things like that. So you want to make sure that you take a moment and you document all of your insurance, the policy numbers, the contact information, because you're going to have to reference these as you go through the process of that emergency.

And you may hopefully not, but you may need to. So having the actual information documented in your emergency plan can save you a lot of heartache. So go ahead and you want to put that as a section in your plan.

STEP FOUR: HOME INVENTORY LOG

The next step is to create your home inventory log. You want to have a log of all of the valuable things in your home in the event that there is an emergency and you have to file a claim with your insurance company or you need to follow up on it. And you want to have that information in your emergency plan because it may be somewhere else that you can't get to it. Again, you may not be able to access things, it may have gotten destroyed in the house, whatever the case may be. But having it in your emergency plan is your backup, your security, to know I have it in hand.

The goal I will say with this plan is to know when you have that book that binder my home plan or in your hand, that it is all the information you need to get you through all of the stuff that goes along with going through some type of emergency situation. So that's the goal.

So you know that I grabbed this one book and I have everything I need. So that's why it's important to go ahead and put your home inventory in there. So that you have that on hand. And again, I like doing this by pen and paper because in emergency situations, you just don't know kind of how technology and digital and having it on an SD card and things like that are going to work out for you. But you never can go wrong with having a backup copy of that in your plan.

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STEP FIVE: MEDICAL INFORMATION

So the next thing that you want to have in your emergency preparedness plan is the medical information for the entire family. You want to have their doctors, their prescriptions, the contact information for not only your pharmacy, but for your doctor.

Having that stuff is so valuable in an emergency situation. So definitely make sure to document all of that in your emergency plan and having that section.

STEP SIX: EMERGENCY KIT

We are all ready to six. Step number six. So you see how easy this plan can be to put together. It's not anything that is just not doable. It's, so doable, it's so important to do. And so number six is to really have that emergency kit, that supplies, for you and your family that you can grab in the event of an emergency.

What I like are emergency backpacks. I think having an emergency backpack that you can set up for each family member or for the family, and then have that always updated, always on hand. You can keep it in your mud room if you have that, your garage, attic, wherever you want to keep it, but somewhere where in the event of emergency, you really can easily grab it. That's the key.

And so the garage is always kind of a good place for those types of things, or the mud room or somewhere like that. But having that where you can grab it, each family member can grab their backpack, throw it on, you have everything you need. And you can even keep your emergency preparedness plan or the home planner in that backpack, in your backpack.

FREE CHECKLIST

All right, so in your emergency kit, there is a variety of things that I recommend that you put into it. And so I have a checklist that I'm going to provide to you in this session. This is going to be my gift to you, is to give you kind of a principle that will help you with your emergency preparedness plan. And in that you will have a checklist that will give you all of the essentials that I feel that you need to put in your emergency kit.

And this is something that you can work on as a fun activity for the family you can make. And I've talked about family home meetings in a previous HQ Summit, and so it would be a great topic for a family home meeting.

So definitely you're going to get that printable if you are part of this HQ Summit. And it's really going to be helpful with everything that I talked about today.

WHAT GOES IN THE KIT

So with your emergency kit, there are seven different categories that I feel are great to work out as far as how to put your kit together. And it's a great way to categorize it. Because it's great to categorize it, because it'll make it simpler for you to put it together than just having a running list of all of these different things. And then when you put your kit together, you can really create your categories and little baggies and kind of maybe have a zip bag for this category.

Some of them are a little larger items so you can't do that. But as much as you can categorize each thing, it'll make it easy for you to make sure that you have it on hand, that you have everything you need and just keep it well organized, if that makes sense.

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ESSENTIALS

So let's talk through those categories. So one are things like your essentials. Like that first aid kit, your baby formula. I have on my list here, pet supplies, wipes, a flashlight, fuel container. I have a long list of just those essential things. Mobile phone charger. That is something that you definitely want to think about. Having some cash on hand, definitely most important. Clean clothes. Making sure that all family members in their backpack have clean clothes.

Portable radio, you can go on Amazon and you can find so many just small, efficient portable radios which will be huge. Just water, one gallon per person per day. So having that stash of water on hand can be huge. And again, not all this is going to fit in a backpack. So the backpacks, if you're deciding to go the backpack route, that has all of the essentials for that individual family member to get through. But these other things you would need to have in an emergency preparedness cabinet or place in your home so that you could easily access it.

SAFETY AND COMFORT

The next category is safety and comfort. And some of the things that I have listed here are like those sturdy shoes, candles, eyeglasses. I know I need that. Ponchos and sewing kit, books and games for kids, things that could entertain them when it's in those challenging moments. Razor blades, moist towelettes. So those are the more safety and comfort things.

And so when you think about the categories, this is just my suggestion. You know your family, you know what they need to function in an emergency situation also. So this is just more so a guide for you to just kind of look at, to pick out and determine what you feel that you need for you and your family. Right?

COOKING

The next is cooking. It's like paper plates, paper knives, heavy duty aluminum foil, some camping items. Me, I like my coffee, a little coffee packet. Think about those things that you would need as far as cooking in a challenging situation that you can put together. And the beautiful thing is now on the market there's so many compact things that are battery operated that you can really create an efficient system, when it comes to your emergency preparedness plan and items and kit, rather, is what we're talking about right now. But your emergency preparedness kit.

SANITATION

And then next is sanitation. Think of about those toiletries, the shampoo, soap, toothbrush, all of those things that you would need as a family. That is one category that you want to put together. And then also again, so many things that you can do. And can buy them in already little kits or things that are already put together for you, so really could be efficient for you. And if you don't know me, I'm on Amazon. If you go to athomewithnikki.live, that is my Amazon page and I have a storefront, Amazon storefront. And I have a list in there, it's the emergency preparedness list. And a lot of these things from this list are in here and you can go there - from this list are in there - and you can go there and kind of shop those items there to put that together if you choose to.

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TOOLS

So another thing to have in your emergency preparedness area are those supplies that are like tools. Those things that an axe, or plastic tape, duct tape. Those things that you would need for maybe if something is . . . a pipe is burst, you can tape up with the electrical tape. Just those different types of tools and supplies that you would use in the event of an emergency. Shovel, pliers, plastic tape, a hammer. You don't think about it, but those are things that can be helpful in the event of an emergency.

IMPORTANT PAPERS

And friends, the final category are those important documents, those birth certificates, your land titles, all of those documents such as passports that are so key to us. Social Security cards, so key to us, and that we would need to reference in the event of an emergency.

So definitely make sure that you have all of those copies of all of those and have those all to where you can grab them, throw them in your backpack and have them ready to go. So ideally keeping them close together in a way that you can grab, throw it in the backpack could be ideal.

STEP SEVEN: FAMILY MEMBER PROFILES

And we're at number seven. The final component to putting together your emergency preparedness plan is creating those profiles for each family member. That is all the adults in the family, the children in the family and the pets in the family. This is so important to have those profiles and have them in your emergency preparedness notebook or binder.

And what that is, is just this one page that profiles that family member. You have a picture, current picture of that family member. You have their name, all of their information, their mobile phone number, you have their blood type. Do they have any allergies, all of the details? Do they have any identifying marks on their body?

Do they have nicknames that they like to be called by all of those things that relate to that family member. The details about that family member are so important to have in a profile format in case someone gets missing, a pet gets missing, a person gets missing, or it's a big shamble and you're trying to find someone having that is so important.

Again in my book, Beautifully Organized, I do have a section for you to create your profile for each family member, for your pets, for the children, and a place for you to put the picture. And then all of it's written out, where you can put any birthmarks, their eye color, their name, all of that information. Because you're going to wish you had that information if it ever comes. And we pray that none of us ever have to experience that. But it's so much more. It gives me a sense of peace to know that at least I'm prepared, because you just don't know.

MAKE IT A FAMILY ACTIVITY

So having sitting down and again, this does not have to be anything that feels like a task. You can make it something that's really fun for you and the family because you can make it an activity. Okay, one family meeting, you're going to do all of your emergency preparedness profiles and take the pictures and print them out and put them in the book, and everybody writes out their profile, and then you have it. It's good. So that's really so very important.

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So friends, if you sit down and you work out these seven steps that I discussed that will give you your total emergency preparedness plan. But like I said, I wanted to give you a free gift of giving you my printable, which is my emergency preparedness printable, which will do just that. It will help you flesh out and put all of this together. And I hope that you will accept that gift and use that gift.

And then you'll have that sense of peace that you have put this together for your family. You all have communicated about it. And again, we can put together emergency preparedness plan, but if we don't discuss it with the family, and do this with the family, and they don't have an understanding of how it works, it's not going to be useful, right, because they don't know that the plan exists, right?

So you don't want to sit down and lay all this out without talking with your family during the process and have them do it with you or whatever the case may be. So definitely make sure that the communication component is there when you're putting together the plan.

But friends, I hope that you found this to be extremely helpful because it is something that can give you a sense of peace in your life. Just taking a few moments to do this, I just can't stress that enough.

KEEPING UP WITH NIKKI

And I also want to say thank you for being a part of my session at this year's HQ Summit. And if you would like to learn more about all of the other resources and things that I do. I'm a professional organizer. Again athomewithnikki.com is my website and I also do virtual organizing sessions.

So no matter where you live in the world, if you want to work with me and my team and work through those challenges, we can even work with you on putting together the emergency preparedness plan. Definitely reach out. I'll put my 1-800 number up, along with you can always go to athomewithnikki.com. Or you can always reach out to us at info@athomewithnikki.com.

And don't forget to follow me on all of the platforms. You can find me there at @athomewithNikki on everything. And I'm also live if you want to come be a part of my friend girls and friend gents. We always are talking things on Amazon as far as home, work, life organization. And you just go to athomewithnikki.live and that will take you to my storefront and to the live. And I'm live every Thursday at 9:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time and every Friday at 1:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time.

So I hope to connect with you even further than this session here. And I hope you enjoy the rest of the summit. It is such a phenomenal, phenomenal summit that happens each year so don't forget to come back next year also because they always have such great topics and it's just really an exciting event every year.

So I am going to sign off now and I wish you all so much success with creating and putting together your emergency preparedness plan. Have a beautiful day my friends. And this is Nikki saying goodbye.

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Tips for Organizing a Multi-Purpose Storage Closet

NIKKI COTTON • TRANSCRIPT

Hey guys, today I'm going to be sharing with you my tips for setting up and organizing multipurpose storage closet.

THIS IS NIKKI

Hey, guys. My name is Nikki Cotton and I am from the YouTube channel Carry Grace. All right? So let me tell you guys a little bit about myself and about my channel before we jump into today's topic. All right, so I am a wife of over 25 years, which is crazy. I have two teenage sons that I homeschool. And then I also run my YouTube channel.

Like I said, the name of my channel is Carry Grace. And on that channel, we cover all kinds of homemaking topics. I talk about cleaning and cleaning routines. I talk about time management. I talk about organizing. Sometimes I just do regular old cleaning videos to give you some motivation. And then I also review a lot of different planners.

So if those are topics that you think you would enjoy, please make sure that before you leave this video, you head over to my YouTube channel and subscribe. That way you can keep up with all of my regular content.

Also, I want to give a quick thank you to Laura and Tasha for including me in this year's conference. I am just excited to be here.

WHAT IS A MULTI-PURPOSE STORAGE CLOSET?

All right, so let's talk about a multi-purpose storage closet. What even is that? I consider a multipurpose storage closet, any closet that serves more than one purpose. So maybe you have a coat closet. Now, a lot of us have a coat closet, some of us don't. But if you have a coat closet, you probably use it to store things like coats and backpacks and shoes and things like that.

But if you are short on space in your home, there's a good chance you need that closet to function and hold more than just what it was built for. So that's what we're going to be talking about. So right here, I'm going to give you guys kind of a quick peek of a couple of closets that I would consider multipurpose storage closets.

In my home, I've got a random closet upstairs. I'm not really sure what its intended purpose is or was, but we are using it as a home school closet. And I say that in air quotes because it's not just a homeschool closet. There is way more in that closet, which I will be sharing with you guys towards the end of this video.

The other closet that I'm going to give you guys a quick peek of right here is our coat closet. And yes, it does hold coats and shoes and backpacks and things like that, but it holds so much more. So that's what we're going to be talking about.

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If you have a closet and it really needs to serve kind of as a multipurpose storage closet, let's talk about how you can do that effectively and efficiently. All right?

DEFINE THE PURPOSE

So the most important thing that you are going to do with your closet is. You are going to define the purpose of this closet. You are going to define categories for this closet so that you know exactly what is to be stored in this closet.

Let's say you have a linen closet, but you need this linen closet to hold other things. So you're going to sit down and you're going to make a list. You're going to know how big your closet is. You kind of know what it can hold, what it can't hold. So then you need to make a list.

What are you going to keep in here? You're going to keep linens. These are going to include things like towels and sheets and linen type things. But then maybe you also need to store medicine in here. Maybe you need to store beach items or like seasonal items like sunscreen and bug spray, things like that.

Maybe this is your only main closet in the house that is not like a bedroom closet. And you also need to store out of season items in here. Maybe you need to store like kids' games or just kind of random things in here.

MAKE A LIST

That's what you're going to do. You're going to sit down. You're going to make a list, and you're going to define exactly what needs to be stored in this closet.

Now, if you are not sure what that closet needs to hold, there is another way you can come up with a list to define your items. The other way that you can do this is you can take everything that is in the closet and pull it out. As you pull things out, try to group like items together.

This is going to give you your categories because you're seeing exactly what is already in this closet. And there's a good chance most of those things need to be in the closet.

Now, after you have come up with your categories, you may have some random things left over. There's a good chance you've got some random things left over. You're just going to make decisions about what to do with those items.

So number one, you're going to decide, does this random item need to be in this closet? Is there a reason specifically that it needs to be in this closet? If that's the case, great. Add that to your category. That way you know that particular item lives in that closet.

Now, if it's an item that you don't need or you don't want anymore, you can decide to declutter that item. You can donate it. You can give it away. You can trash it, depending on what the item is.

The other thing you can do is maybe you just need to find a better home for that particular item. Maybe it needs to go in somebody's personal closet or it needs to go in a bathroom or wherever. Just make a decision based on what it is and find the best home for it.

The items that don't fit in the category of the closet, you're going to need to find a different place for them. Like I said, that can be in another closet. It can be somewhere else in your home, it can be decluttering,

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it trashing it, whatever it is. But don't put things in the closet that are not in your designated categories.

The reason it is so important to designate categories for your closet is so that your closet does not become a dumping ground. You guys, if you don't know exactly what is supposed to be in a closet, it is going to be a place for people to just store things when they don't know what to do with that item.

People are going to come in your house, your kids, your spouse, whoever, they're going to come in and they're going to have this random thing. They're not going to know where it needs to go, so they're just going to shove it in the closet. It's kind of an out of sight, out of mind kind of thing. And so we don't want that to happen. So that is why we are going to define the space.

You have defined your categories. You have defined the space. You know exactly how you want this closet to function, what you want it to hold.

TAKE EVERYTHING OUT AND SORT

What do you do next? All right, so if you pulled everything out of the closet and made categories so that you could define your space, you are one step ahead. If you haven't already taken everything out of the closet, this is when you're going to take everything out of the closet because you need to sort your items.

The reason you sort your items is simply so that you can see what is there. You can go through things, you can declutter things, because the less you put back, the better. I'm not saying get rid of all of your things, but you may find something in there that you don't actually need or don't want.

Doesn't fit all of those different things.

So pull everything out and make categories. Put like items together. Once you have done this, this is going to give you a good visual of how much stuff needs to go back in this closet in an orderly fashion. So at this point you are going to start thinking about how you want to put the things back in the closet so they make sense.

GATHER STORAGE SUPPLIES

So look at your items. Do you have a bunch of small items? Do you have large items? Do you have a lot of different categories? You may want to consider baskets. Sometimes a basket is a great tool to corral smaller items so that you can kind of keep a lot of different items together. Sometimes it makes things less cluttered to look at when things are in a basket. It also makes things easy to find.

Maybe you want clear bins so that you can see exactly what is in every bin. I want you to think about your vertical space. Should you add hooks or some kind of shelf or some other kind of thing in the closet, maybe you need to add a bookshelf or some kind of cube shelf into the closet.

Now, obviously, you could totally get the closet and do like a whole custom closet, but that's not really what I'm talking about. If you want to go that route, you can absolutely go that route. But there's a lot of things you can do that are very easy and minimal.

And that would just be gathering baskets, purchasing baskets, containers, clear bins, cubes, little organizers, all of those kinds of things. Maybe a cube shelf, a bookshelf that your kids are no longer using, things like that. So as you've gathered your items,

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think about how you can store those like items together so that you can put them back in the closet.

CLEAN THE CLOSET

Another tip I have for you, once you have everything out of your closet, is this is a great time to go ahead and clean your closet. Wipe down the walls, vacuum, make sure you don't have any dust bunnies or cobwebs, and then give those floors a good clean.

Closets are not normally places that we clean as routinely and regularly as we do the main part of our home. So when everything is out, that is a great time to go ahead and give it a good wipe down and a good clean.

FIND A HOME FOR YOUR ITEMS

So now you've got all of your categories. You have decided if you needed bins, you've decided if there were things that you could add to the wall, like hooks or command hooks or baskets or bins, all the things, you're going to put everything away.

Now, what I want you guys to remember is that this does not have to be perfect. This can be a process. I have found that in my homes over the years, most of the time, things continue to get better a little bit at a time, and that's okay. We are not trying to have a perfect closet. We are not trying to have a Pinterest-worthy closet.

We just want a closet that functions well for our family. So put your stuff back in your closet. Group your things together, put them in bins, put them in baskets, shift things around, make it work. All right?

LABEL EVERYTHING

So once everything is put back in your closet, the next thing you need to do is label everything. I'm talking everything. The reason you want to label everything is simply so that it makes it easy for all the other people in your home to know where to find things and where to put things back away when they have used them.

Now, it's going to be very easy if you are the person that took the time to take everything out of the closet. You sorted everything into categories. You put everything either like in a specific place or in a specific bin or on a specific hook, you know where that item goes.

But your family is not going to know, nor are they really going to care. So this is where you're going to get out your label gun or your Cricut or some washi tape and a marker.

Keep this simple. You can cut out like an index card and clip it with a clothes pin. Do not make this hard on yourself, but you definitely want to label things. Label exactly what is in a bin. Label where something goes on a shelf. Label where a certain thing on the wall goes. This is going to help you. It's going to help your family, and it's also going to look nice.

MAINTAIN THE SPACE

My next tip for organizing your multipurpose storage closet is simply to maintain the space. How are you going to maintain the space? You are going to check in on this closet on some kind of routine for you. It may be monthly, it may be quarterly or seasonally, but you need to have a system for routinely checking in on this space.

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The reason for this is because things get messy. Sometimes we are in a hurry and we throw things in the closet. We don't put it exactly where it went and we need to straighten it up. So you're going to come up with a system so that you are going back to that closet, you are straightening it up, you are putting things back where they go, and just kind of assessing the closet and make sure everything is still working the way that it should.

At this point, if something is not working and you have a better idea of how to tweak things, move things around, declutter things, whatever it is, go ahead and do that. That is normal. I truly believe that most closets and most spaces evolve and are a process. I feel like most things continue to get better with time because we get better, we learn things, and sometimes our needs change. So it's okay for your closet to need to be tweaked.

HOMESCHOOL CLOSET

All right. So now I'm going to show you a couple of closets that I have in my home. This first closet that I'm showing you is what we call our home school closet. Now, we haven't lived in our home for very long at the time that I am filming this video. So this closet is not actually done yet. But I did want to kind of give you guys a peek so that you can see how you can apply some of these things very practically.

So this closet, I painted the inside of the closet when we moved in because it was in really bad shape. And then we changed the wire shelf. I just took the old one out because it was very nasty, and we put a new one in. Now, I could have made this closet super custom, but I just didn't feel like it was necessary. I feel like sometimes we have closets and they need to change over time because our needs change sometimes over time.

CUBE SHELVING

So I decided that for in here, I wanted to just put some cube shelves in here. We are a homeschool family and we don't have a homeschool room. So I choose to store all of our items in a closet. That way, when we are not doing school, my home doesn't look like a school.

So I mostly have homeschool things in here. But there are also several categories of other things that I have defined for this closet. So I've got homeschool items. I have extra planners and planner supplies because I do review planners and usually have a lot of them on hand.

I have a space for gift wrapping. I needed somewhere to corral all of our gift wrap. Here is an example of where I needed to get kind of a specialty item to kind of organize all of that gift wrap. I've done this in many different ways over the years. But in this particular closet, this is what made the most sense. So I found this hanger on Amazon, purchased it, put all my stuff in it, and it fits in here beautifully.

BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

Another thing that we have in here is kind of some long term storage for things like manuals. That's what you see right here just in these magazine bins. These are old. I have had these for a very long time. They are not pretty to look at, and that is why they are behind closed doors. The other thing I have in here is just kind of some random bits and bobs. These are like command hooks and hardware for different things. Random screws, things like that.

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These are the kind of things that I sometimes need when I'm working on a project. Things that I don't want to have to ask my husband for, like screws and things like that. So I kind of have my own little stash in here. I just keep everything separated in these little clear storage bins and they work really nicely.

So again, this is just an example in my home of a multipurpose storage closet. We've got home school things. We have planner things. We have some long term storage, and then kind of some random like command hooks and hardware type things.

COAT CLOSET

Now I'm going to give you a quick tour of our downstairs coat closet. This closet does a lot of things for our family, and it really needed to function well. I had to figure out how to get a lot of different things in here. All right, guys. So here is my coat closet that I turned into a multipurpose storage closet when we moved in. This was really meant to just be a coat closet, but I knew that I needed this closet to function in a lot of other ways.

So we do not have a laundry room in this home. So I knew that I was going to need some other things. So I'm going to kind of give you an overview. And then I'm going to show you what my categories were.

So I still needed this to function as a coat closet. We live in Florida, so we don't use coats all the time. But I do have some hangers here. And then I've also got these hooks. These are great for purses, hats, coats. You can actually just hook them on there instead of actually putting them on a hanger. We've got a place for hats and we've also got hooks.

I mentioned if you may need to add hooks or things so that you can use space vertically in your closet. I've got a hook for a purse. I've got a hook for my husband's backpack. So when he comes in from work, he's got a place to put that. And then down here, we also needed a place for shoes. We've got a dog. Have to check the mail. So these are kind of ratty shoes that we slide on to go outside.

BEACH STUFF

The next category I have is beach supplies. We do leave in Florida and frequent the beach and the river. So I've got a place for our beach and pool towels. I've got all of our beach and pool bags right here. And then also our cooler. And then you can see I've got labels.

The next category I have in here is some tech gear. I needed a place to store my camera gear and tripods. So that is what all of this is right here. The next category I have is some cleaning supplies. We do not have an inside laundry room. I do have all of my laundry in the garage. And there are some things that I just want to be able to access quickly in the house. So I've got some cleaning supplies here, mostly like sponges and things like that. I have my microfiber cloths here.

We have a dog, so we've got all of his pet supplies right here. And then I have all of my mop pads right here. So all of this is easy to grab, easy to see. You can see I had them contained in clear shoeboxes. These were not expensive. The labels were not expensive. I just used like a regular label maker and I just kept it really simple.

VERTICAL SPACE

More cleaning supplies. I needed a place to

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hang my vacuum and dusters and mops. So again, think about how you can use your vertical space. We found this hook. I think I just found it on Amazon. It's like you can put something right there and it pulls out. Then it also has hooks. My vacuum came with something to hang it to the wall. So again, I'm using my vertical space. If you can't screw things into your walls, there are command strips and all different kinds of things like that that you can use to use your vertical space.

The other thing you want to keep in mind is if you are going to use the space this way, is it going to keep you from using the floor space? So you really need to think about that. If you need something on the floor down here, you may have to hang these things up higher. So before you put everything kind of back in your closet, you kind of want to just hold things where you think they might go and kind of just think about all of those different things.

LONG TERM STORAGE

The next thing I have in here is kind of just some long term storage. We have some bins right here that are not currently being used. Sometimes I have canvas bins, sometimes I have plastic bins. But I know that if we need extra bins, I'm going to check here first. The other thing is, I have a basket for all of our diffusers. This was kind of one of those random things that didn't really have a place anywhere. So I made a place in here because we have diffusers that we use off and on, and they needed to be housed somewhere down here.

This is kind of just long term storage for our shredder. We don't have an office in this house, but we still need a shredder from time to time, so I made a space for it. The other thing is, I did not fill this closet to the max. I have some floor space here that kind of gives me a little bit of flex space. If we have something come in temporarily or seasonally or something that I kind of need to stash, I've got a place to put it because this closet is not full.

The other thing I have in here is a crate for things that need to be given away. So things that we are no longer using, clothes that don't fit, things like that. Everybody in our house knows they can come put them here, and I will either sell them, give them away, donate them, whatever the case may be.

GETTING IDEAS

So here is just an example of how I used those steps in my own closet to set this closet up to serve me really well for many different functions. I hope it gives you guys some ideas.

You don't have to spend a lot of money. You don't have to make this complicated. It doesn't have to be Pinterest-worthy. It just needs to function really well for your family.

Thank you guys so much for watching this session. I hope you enjoyed it. I hope you found it helpful. Hopefully you found some kind a tip or trick that is going to help you in your home.

If you are interested in seeing content from me on a regular basis, make sure that you subscribe to my YouTube channel. Thank you again to Laura and Tasha for hosting this year's Get Organized HQ Virtual Conference.

See you guys later.

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The Top 5 Hacks for Working Moms Who Want to Get Off the Hot Mess Express

NIKKI ODEN • TRANSCRIPT

Hello there. Welcome to The Top Five Hacks for Working Moms Who Want to Get Off the Hot Mess Express. I'm Nikki Oden, founder of Your Ideal Mom Life, host of the Love Your Mom Life podcast, and author of But Definitely Wear Mascara: Hacks to Help You Love Your Mom Life and Yourself A Little More.

You're here because you want to feel more organized, confident, and joyful. In other words, you want to stop feeling overwhelmed and like you're a hot mess. During our time together, I'm going to share with you the top five hacks for getting off the hot mess express so you can be a boss at work life and mom life.

I'm going to pop off the video here so that we can focus on the slides and really get a great experience before we dive in, just some quick reminders to help you maximize your experience. You're taking the time to be here, so let's go all in. Put your phone face down, shut all the windows on your computer, close your door, open your heart and your mind, and give yourself this time. This time is just for you. Deal?

HACK #1. DECLUTTER YOUR MIND

Okay, let's dive in. Hack number one declutter your mind. We begin with easy. I call this the mental dump. It is just what it sounds like, an active and intentional dump of everything that is in your head and out onto paper.

I encourage you to do this at least once a week. I like to do mine on Sundays. When you're ready, set an alarm for at least 15 minutes and up to 30 and just begin listing every single thing that's on your mind. And when I say everything, I mean everything.

It doesn't matter what area of your life it pertains to. It doesn't matter if it's big or small. It doesn't matter how long it's been on your to do list. It doesn't matter if you think you'll never have time to do it. If it's on your mind, dump it onto the paper.

TWO PURPOSES

Despite being easy, this hack is vital to getting organized. It serves two purposes. First, it feels good. It feels so good to finally get all of the things that are swimming around in your head threatening to suffocate you out.

Second, it allows you to capture all of those little things. The things that are swimming around in your head are making you feel overwhelmed, spread thin and like you're one missed reminder away from dropping a ball. Or five.

You're not going to forget to do the big things like feeding your kids or picking them up from school. No, it's the little things which are the things you're going to dump onto the paper the second this video is over that fall through the cracks.

And when those little things like sending money for a picture day or book fair or

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downloading that app, or ordering grocery delivery for the food drive, whatever it is, keep falling through the cracks, that's when we start to feel like we're a mess. That's when we feel like we can't keep anything together. So by doing the mental dump, you're capturing all of those little things so you can refer back to them later.

ONE RULE

Now, along those lines, there is one rule here. The mental dump must be done in one place. In other words, do not do your mental dump on sticky notes that can get lost. If you remember something you need to dump out of your brain at a time when you don't have your mental dump sheet in front of you, just jot it down in the note section of your phone. But when you can, transfer that note onto your mental dump sheet so it's with everything else.

Trust me, there's no point in doing a mental dump if it's split into parts that are all over the place. You need to have one place where you write everything down. I encourage you to take a second right now to decide when you're going to do your mental dump. Go ahead and pause. I'll wait.

HACK #2. CREATE A TO-DON'T LIST

Moving on to hack number two, create a to-don't list. As you start doing a regular mental dump, you may start to realize that there are things on your list you kind of wish weren't. Or you might feel in your gut that some things that you're doing you really should stop. This is where creating a to-don't list versus a to-do list (get it?) comes in.

A to-don't list is just as powerful as an effective to-do list. This is how we create margin and ensure we're not running around like chickens. To create yours, I suggest you ask yourself a few focusing questions as you're evaluating what to keep on and what to scrape off your plate.

ASK YOURSELF 3 QUESTIONS

Question one is this activity serving me or would my life be less rich or joyful without it? It might seem obvious, but it's worth saying out loud, continuing to do things that don't serve you is like flooring the gas pedal while slamming on the brakes. It's not getting you anywhere. If you're continuing to engage in an activity that is sucking the life out of you at worst, or simply not adding to your life at best, stop doing it.

Question two have I formed a healthy new habit that should take priority over this old activity? Sometimes the reason our plates are crowded is because we've picked up new things but haven't dropped off the old ones. Evaluating which of those old activities should take a backseat because they're not adding to your health, vitality, or spirituality the way the new habit is can make it really easy to decide which to put on your to-don't list.

And finally, question three what could I say yes to if I said no to this? Or put another way, what would I have to say no to if I said yes to this? Remember, time invested in one area is time away from another. As moms, it's our duty to command our time so that we can be our highest and best, not only to the people who love and depend on us, but to ourselves. When you think of it that way, answering this question becomes a lot easier. By saying no, you're creating an opportunity for someone else to shine and give her best yes. See how beautifully that works out?

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ASK FOR HELP

As you're making your to-don't list and asking yourself these focusing questions, you might realize that some of these items do need to stay on your to-do list, but they don't need to be done by you. So take this opportunity to recognize where you might need some help. Women, including your neighbors, your mother in law, your wacky aunt, love to help other women. Most of us just need to be asked. So ask.

HACK #3. WAKE UP EARLIER

Hack number three, wake up a little bit earlier. Okay, before you close out of this video, hear me out. Feeling more organized and like you've got your stuff together requires you to make guaranteed intentional alone time that is just for you every day. If you're not currently getting time to yourself every single day, here's your easy hack. Wake up a little bit earlier than you are now.

Just a little bit. Waking up earlier doesn't have to be painful, I promise. You only need twenty minutes to yourself before everyone else in your house gets up to fill your cup, so to speak. What you do in those 20 minutes is entirely up to you. Maybe you sit somewhere cozy and enjoy your first blissful cup of coffee without anyone interrupting you. You might read that novel you've been meaning to dig into, or meditate journal, or exercise. I use those first twenty minutes of the day to work on my biggest, hairiest, most audacious goal.

THE ONLY RULE

Whatever you do at that time, the only rule, if you want to call it that, is to spend it on something you love. Something that's just for you. Now, if you're shaking your head at me like, listen, Nikki, I snooze three times before I make it out of bed as it is, how am I supposed to wake up twenty minutes earlier? I got you, girlfriend.

THE TRICK TO DOING IT

Here's my pro tip start by waking up five minutes earlier. Just five. You've got five in you. Come on. And if you think that five minutes isn't going to do anything, try it. I dare you to wake up five minutes earlier tomorrow and just sit down with a cup of tea and breathe. Once you have that down, set your alarm for ten minutes earlier. And when you're rocking ten, move it to fifteen. Eventually you'll get to twenty minutes like it ain't no thing.

The best part is that as you're working your way there, you're getting an extra five, ten, fifteen minutes in your day of guaranteed alone time.

SLEEP HABITS

Take a sec to imagine how glorious that would be. To really seal the deal, I also suggest going to sleep at the same time every night. And no, that's not code for go to bed at 8:00 p.m. My go-to bedtime is 10:00 p.m., which allows me to honor my body's needs, because, like a koala bear, I love to sleep. if I don't get enough, I'm kind of a monster, and I most definitely do not behave like a person who has her stuff together.

To help me stay on track, I use the sleep wakeup tool in the alarm section of the built in clock on my iPhone. Going to bed at the same time every night solidifies my routine in the morning and allows me to get seven and a half hours of sleep before I'm up at 5:30 a.m., yes I said 5:30 a.m., to enjoy the peace, quiet and productivity that comes

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with the stillness of my household. At that hour, I worked my way up to a 60 minutes morning routine, which, in addition to allowing me to work on my biggest, hairiest most audacious goal gives me time to meditate and journal.

Decide what you would do with guaranteed alone time. Then set your alarm for five minutes earlier than it is now, or twenty if you're feeling robust, and start going to sleep at the same time every night. Once you start doing this consistently, you're going to notice how much calmer you feel as you start each day.

HACK #4. SET YOUR MORNING UP THE NIGHT BEFORE

Which brings me to hack number four set your morning up the night before. If your household is anything like mine, mornings have tremendous potential to be very stressful. I actually call this time of day the morning whirlwind. The thing that makes the morning whirlwind so beastly is that it happens well in the morning, which means one nasty spin through it can set the tone for your entire day.

For me, a rough morning often translates to feeling less powerful, which means that honoring my well intentioned plans for the day takes serious motivation. The good news is that the opposite is also true, meaning once you tame the morning whirlwind, you can take back your day and your power.

So that's why I'm encouraging you to set your mornings up the night before. The fewer decisions you have to make in the morning, the less time you'll waste and the more powerful you'll feel. And feeling powerful directly translates to behaving powerfully.

PLAN YOUR OUTFITS

So first things first, plan your outfit down to the last detail. And when I say plan it, I mean plan it, including your accessories. Yes, I'm talking everything from underwear to earrings to shoes. If you have a particularly hectic work week, consider planning your entire week's outfits on Sunday night before the mayhem of the week begins.

I find this strategy particularly helpful if you first create a rotating uniform of sorts. The uniform should just be several pieces, you know, look great on you. I call them Old Faithfuls. My uniform consists of four dresses I feel great in. If I want to get creative and wear something off uniform, I certainly will. But if I have no idea what to wear, I fall back on the uniform. And I don't even need to try it on the night before, because I already know it looks great on me. So do you see how simple this is?

Planning what to wear the night before is also really effective for your kiddos. Where my kids attend school, students are expected to be dressed in compliance with the school's dress code. So to avoid any time consuming, ear splitting meltdowns, we most definitely decide on outfits the night before. Easy. Also not time sucking.

GET AHEAD OF BREAKFAST

Next, get ahead of breakfast. I don't know about you, but for me, scrambling in the kitchen, trying to find blender parts or a clean bowl in an effort to serve breakfast, whilst ensuring that the small humans in my house are brushing their hair, getting dressed and heading downstairs on time for that meal is like, a major drag if I haven't figured out the breakfast puzzle ahead of time. More often than not, that story ends

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with hasty, open mouthed scarfing of an unsatisfying tiny little granola bar, probably while driving.

But it doesn't have to be that way. Why not instead, plan breakfast time the way you would plan anything else the night before? Wash the dishes you know you're going to need in the morning so they're ready to go and easy to find. Fill the coffee maker with water, put your cup under the spout and get the coffee beans in the grinder. Or measure out the grounds and get them in the filter so all you have to do is press a button.

I'm a smoothie kind of gal, so I compile the ingredients for my smoothie the night before, stick them inside the blending cup and pop the whole thing in the fridge with a lid. If your kids are old enough to help themselves, put bowls and spoons out on the counter and make sure that the milk and cereal are within reach in the fridge and the pantry.

Whatever you decide on, just know that the few minutes it takes before bed to get this stuff done will be well worth it come sunrise. Doing everything you can to make your mornings run more smoothly is one of the most powerful ways to set yourself up for a good day. You'll walk out the door already feeling like you're winning and by the way, you are.

HACK #5. SPEAK LOVE TO YOURSELF

And that brings us to hack number five speak to yourself the way you would speak to someone you love. So I know that this entire time we've been talking about being a hot mess, but I'm going to encourage you now to stop telling yourself you're a hot mess. Start speaking to yourself the way you would speak to someone you love.

The stories you're telling yourself are affecting the way you behave and the way you feel. And if you think that sounds silly or a little bit woo, let me ask you this. Would you ever, as in like, ever speak to your child the way you so often speak to yourself? Would you tell your daughter she was a complete mess? Would you tell your son he just can't keep it together? I'm going to go out on a limb over here and say no. No, of course you wouldn't, because you don't want them to behave that way.

And more importantly, you don't want them to believe that about themselves. So stop doing it to yourself right now. Cold turkey. Listen, I understand that you've been criticizing yourself for years. We all have. And it's not always possible to control your first thought. But your second thought, take responsibility for your second thought.

KEEP YOUR PROMISES

Treat yourself like the capable, confident, organized person you are. And that goes for keeping the promises you make to yourself. Sometimes we feel disorganized or like we can't ever do the things we want to do because we don't honor the commitments to ourselves. You've probably told yourself you were going to go for a walk or watch that tutorial you've had favorited on your list, or wash your face before bed, or keep any number of other promises you've made to yourself.

And then when the alarm goes off, you tell yourself you're just too busy and you dismiss it. Yeah, I see you. And then later you feel like a total failure because you still haven't started doing that thing you told yourself you were going to do.

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SET POWERFUL REMINDERS

My recommendation? Make those calendar entries and alarms hard to ignore by changing the language you use for them. Instead of just reminding yourself to meditate or work out, use words that will be powerful for you. Speak to yourself the way you would speak to someone you love.

My favorite phrase is choose yourself right now and fill in the blank with whatever I promise myself I do. Another effective one is, hi, beautiful, take some time right now to fill in the blank with the promise you made to yourself. It sounds too simple to be effective, but it's one of those hacks that totally works.

It's like the lead domino that's going to knock over all the rest. Start speaking to yourself the way you would speak to someone you love and watch as you start feeling more confident, more joyful, and yes, more organized, because you start taking action that aligns with those feelings.

ASK NIKKI

If you have any questions about these five hacks, please feel free to send them directly to me at nikki@youridealmomlife.com. Thanks again for spending time with me today to chat about the Top Five Hacks for Working Moms to Get Off the Hot Mess Express. Again, I'm Nikki Oden, and if you like these tips and would love to take it a step further, go ahead and visit youridealmomlife.com/momlifechallenge and join my free three day challenge that helps you kickstart the habits you need to start living a happier and more or organized mom life that you absolutely love. Thanks again.

And I'll leave you with this. Anyone can do anything, Mama. Why not you?

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Dealing With Stuff From Your Adult Children

PAMELA HENKELMAN • TRANSCRIPT

TASHA: Well, we are so excited to have Pamela Henkelman with us. She is a life coach for Midlife Moms, and we are going be discussing and breaking down some strategies for dealing with stuff that's been left behind by children who've grown up left the house. I know they can be, like, a really complicated and touchy subject. So thank you so much for joining us today, Pamela.

PAMELA: Oh, I am thrilled to be here. Honestly, no one talks about this. No one's talking about what do I do with my kids stuff.

TASHA: I know, but we get asked about it all the time. So I'm so glad that we are finally covering it here at Get Organized HQ virtual. So can you just tell me, starting off, what is the most pressing issue when it comes to dealing with adult children's stuff?

THE MOST PRESSING ISSUE

PAMELA: Well, I think there's two parts to that pressing issue. It's number one, what do I do with the physical stuff? What do I do with a child's childhood room? What do I do with that?

And then the second thing is, what do I need to adjust in my mindset now that my kids are grown? Because it's a whole new world for moms once their kids reach adulthood. And it requires a lot of changes.

THE PHYSICAL ROOM

TASHA: Yeah, absolutely. So let's just start with the first one, the physical room. What would you say to do with the actual room? The bed, the stuff, the boxes of papers from first grade?

PAMELA: Okay, so I have a tip if you are a young mom, here's what I did. I had five kids, so when they were very young, the first one was young. I bought a large, huge file folder, and each child had a file. And then I only saved the best papers. Any award, anything that you loved, I put it away in there.

So when their senior year came, I had all their things in one spot. I never had to wonder, well, where's that certificate from fourth grade? It was filed away.

And so then when graduation comes and you want to do all the things, then you can go through it. And sometimes when the kids are like, don't throw that away, you can just say, oh, honey, I filed that. So that's a bonus tip back to when our kids are adults.

So, first of all, we need to understand what stage is your child in, because it makes a big difference. How you handle a freshman leaving for college and how you handle a married child are two very different things.

GOOD COMMUNICATION

So first of all, it's all about good

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communication with our kids. Sit down and have the conversation and say, what do you want to do with your room?

Do you want this to remain your room through the whole time that you're in college? Or do I have a little freedom if you're not going to come home every summer? Do I have a little freedom? Or is there any way that we can compromise.

Like for my fourth daughter, I had just started my writing career and I was really looking for a space, and I knew that she was only going to be home for a summer or two and then she was going to stay in the city that she was going to college.

And so I said, would you mind if I made a little writing desk in the corner? I didn't remove her bed. I didn't remove her things. The shelves were filled with all of her stuff so that when she came home, she would knew that this still was her space.

And she's like, no, Mom, I would love that, because she was excited that I was stepping into something new for me.

Because sometimes I think as moms, we really struggle. Well, what am I going to do now? Well, we got to find something new to do. So I think just having conversations with our kids really matters.

AVOID EXTREMES

Now, I don't think any mom should say, well, I'm taking over your room. It's going to be the craft room. Because honestly, especially when our kids are just leaving for college, it makes them feel unwanted or unloved, and we do not want that.

So then we can go to the other extreme. What about the mom who has a married child who's been married for ten years and still has their childhood room?

Okay, now that's a problem. That's a problem because she is a mom who's stuck in the past and she hasn't moved forward. If your child is married, they are not coming home to their childhood room.

Whenever I see it in movies, I'm like, people do that. Like it becomes this shrine or this special place, and I'm like, oh, no, I don't want to come home to my childhood room. I'm like, mom, turn it into something else. Make it a beautiful guest room. Update it.

So if you're a mom who really clings to things, then you really need to start looking at what is it that I need to look at inside of myself? How could I see this differently? How could I see that this part of my life as a mom is closing? And it's okay. It's okay.

A TIME TO LET GO

I love this passage from Ecclesiastes. It says, Ecclesiastes three one through six says, there is a time for everything and a season forever activity under the heavens, a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep, and a time to throw away.

Well, in the message version, verse six says, there's a right time to hold on and another time to let go.

Can you believe that? Like, mom, we can let go. You have permission. Your season as a mom was beautiful and wonderful and lovely, but God has so much good for you.

And so when we let go, when we give ourselves permission to let that stuff go, then we can step into the good that God has for us, and we don't have to be stuck in the past.

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LET THEM BE RESPONSIBLE

And I told my five children, once you are married, I am not keeping your stuff anymore. I am not hauling it around. So that's kind of the boundary that we put in our family now.

It's different for everybody. Sometimes our young marrieds don't have a large apartment, so they can't keep our stuff. And so our youngest daughter got married and just two years ago, and just a couple of weeks ago, I hauled off six totes, and I said, here you go, honey, you can figure out what to do with it.

And we don't have to be nasty about it. We can just happily say, here, honey, this is yours, and let them be responsible for it.

I think what sometimes moms do is we're overly responsible for our kids stuff, and it's not our responsibility anymore. It's like their stuff. So if they want it, if they want to keep it, then God bless them, let them have it.

STRATEGIES FOR MOVING FORWARD

TASHA: Absolutely. Yeah. So do you have any specific strategies or anything for women who feel like they fall into that category of being stuck in the past? What can they do to move forward and past that?

PAMELA: Right. So you really are going to need to process some things with God. Often a mom gets stuck in her identity as a mom. Like, her whole identity was wrapped up in her kids.

NEW ROLES

And so she has to understand that motherhood is simply one role that she played. And it was a beautiful role, but her identity is a daughter of God.

She's a child of God. And so know that you can move on to new roles. God has new things for you.

And so it's just about processing it with God, writing out some journaling, do some journaling, do some praying, but really come at it with just a surrendered heart and knowing that there is a time for this to end. And it's not bad. It's not bad. You just really have to change how you see it.

COLLEGE KIDS THAT COME HOME

TASHA: Absolutely. Yeah. So talking about that physical room a little bit more, so we talked about how there's kind of multiple categories right, that people fall into.

You have the kids who have grown up and they're married and they haven't lived at home for ten years, but you also have that kind of season of transition, maybe, where they're coming home every summer for like, three months and bringing all this stuff and then taking all this stuff and it's very, like, touch and go, what can you do in that?

Because I think sometimes that's almost like the worst of both worlds. You can't just overhaul the room and you also just have them there.

ORGANIZE IN BINS

PAMELA: Yes. Oh, my gosh. Okay, well, first of all, the day that they come home from college is the best day of the spring because they come back and literally their things just explode all over the house and you're like, oh my gosh, they're back with all

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their stuff. But you're so happy, you're like, I don't even mind.

But what we decided to do was just to just be a little organized about it. We're like, first of all, we were very smart with packing for college and make sure you have your bins, you do your things, you're organized in everything that you do.

And so then when you come home, you're like, these are our college bins. And you find a space. Maybe it's in their old bedroom, maybe it's in the attic, maybe it's in the basement.

And it's a designated place that you choose as the mom to accept that this is how it's going to be. We just have to get over this. Like, everything has to be neat and tidy and perfect because it's not.

Because it is a season of transition and we had five kids. So I can't tell you how many years of college, how many summers that kids slept stuff back in, how many times we moved kids from dorm to dorm to apartment to apartment.

I can say, thank you, Lord that they are all graduated from college and I don't have to see any college bins anymore.

BE ADAPTABLE

But you do really just have to accept that this is how it is. And really they don't have that much stuff when they're in a college dorm. It's just a bunch of bins stacked up.

So be adaptable and don't complain about it. I don't think that's necessary. Like, we want our kids to be happy to be home.

TASHA: Absolutely, yeah. Giving them a space where they feel like they can feel welcome, to come back to where they you don't want them to feel out of place in their home.

PAMELA: Right, exactly.

PREPARING FOR THE TRANSITION

TASHA: So this is obviously a big transition, not just for the spaces, but also like a mental, emotional transition. And so what can moms do to just prepare for the fact that this transition is coming?

Maybe it's moms who have kids in high school and that transition into college is coming. Or maybe it's even moms who have been in that season of like, okay, well, my kids are at least coming home for months every year, but they're going to get married or they're going to move across the country and take a different job and that transition is coming.

What can moms do to prepare for that?

PAMELA: Right? This is huge. Well, first of all, every mom knows that it's coming. Like, we knew these kids were going to grow up. Why are we surprised? Like, oh my gosh, they're 18 now, they're 22 now. How did this happen?

LOOK AT IT DIFFERENTLY

And I think what happens is we just aren't mindful about it. We kind of want to ignore it because we think it's going to be painful and there is some sadness.

This transition in our motherhood is just as large as when we became moms. So remember when we didn't know what being a mom would be like.

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Well, we don't know what being an empty nester is going to be like. We don't know what it's going to feel like when our kids are out into the great big world.

And so you have to start looking at it differently. You have to choose to see the good in it. Like, this was God's plan for our families. We were actually supposed to raise them to be independent, wonderful humans so they can go off and build their own family.

And so it's all about understanding this is the natural order of things. And then we partner with God in it. We just get honest with God about how it is difficult.

COMMISERATE WITH FRIENDS

You find some friends who are going through the same things. You went through activities with your kids and you knew the parents well. Now is a great season to commiserate with another mom who is also going through this challenge of learning how to be an empty nester. Acceptance is huge.

FOCUS ON YOUR PURPOSE

Also start focusing on your purpose. Goodness. When a mom gets stuck in just that mom role, she can lose herself.

But she has to remember that she has gifts and abilities that were always within her. God placed them there. And actually being a mother strengthened many of those.

So if you look back of what you've done while you were raising your children, you probably led some things, you did some things, you were productive.

Well, those are natural gifts. What are you naturally good at? Then start focusing on that.

Like, for me, I had always wanted to write a book. I've been a speaker for years and I said, I'm going to write a book.

Well, one day I got to the point where I was like, oh, if I'm going to write a book,I should really learn how to write a book. And so that's when I joined Hope Writers when my fourth child went off to college.

And then that just opened this whole ministry to midlife moms and starting a podcast and blogging and also life coaching.

I had no idea for years I thought I would be a great life coach. That just sounds like so much fun. And then I actually stepped into it.

THE SECOND SEASON IS BEAUTIFUL

And so a mom needs to know that God has so much good for her after the kids are grown. This second season of life is so fruitful. It's so beautiful.

NURTURE YOUR MARRIAGE

And then there's the beauty of our marriage. Sometimes moms really struggle with paying attention to their marriage. They can be so child focused that once the kids leave, they're like, oh my gosh, what do I do now?

Well, you have to nurture your marriage. But my husband and I walk around all the time saying, we can do it whatever we want, whenever we want. No one is going to tell us to do. We don't have all these activities to go to.

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We can't believe it. We're just like, if we want to eat cereal for dinner, we'll eat cereal. If we want to cook a gourmet meal, we will.

So know that there is so much good on the other side when this chapter of your mothering closes. There's such beauty.

GET CURIOUS

And so it's just leaning into God and getting curious, what could I do? What possibilities out there? What have I always dreamed of that I didn't have the guts to do or I was too busy with the kids and now is your opportunity to go try that.

I'm telling you, I'm having a fun time.

TASHA: I love that positive outlook, because when you were explaining all that, it sounded like to me, and correct me if I'm wrong, but that maybe the fear of the unknown, of this being a new season that you've never been in, it sounds like maybe that is where a lot of that fear comes from.

But looking at that excitedly to discover what good can come from it.

PAMELA: Exactly. Being expectant. Being expectant and the freedom of it is just like unbelievable.

TASHA: Yeah. I think it's important to acknowledge it can be both you're excited for the freedom of it and like, mourning a little bit, wrapping up that we're good.

GRIEVE, BUT DON'T GET STUCK IN IT

PAMELA: Right. Exactly. And it's just about being self aware. Just be aware.

If you're sad, then take some time and grieve it. You have permission. No one's going to be upset with you for that.

But don't get stuck in it because the moms who don't want to empty out their child's room, she's stuck. She is definitely stuck.

And so just talk to someone and see what you can do to see that there's still good ahead.

WHAT NOT TO DO

TASHA: Absolutely. So we've talked about some positive strategies, so maybe we can approach it from the other side a little bit.

What would you say is the worst thing that a mom could do with her child's stuff that they left behind?

RESPECT GOES A LONG WAY

PAMELA: Get rid of it. Like the mom who immediately cleans out her room, her child's room, who's just left for college. Don't ever do that.

And don't do something without asking permission. I think respect goes such a long way with our kids and honest communication and open communication.

So you want to turn their bedroom into the football den? Well, have a conversation and say, hey, would you mind or would you like us to wait a little while?

You can overcome so many difficult situations by just being transparent and being honest.

And they might say, no, please don't do that. And then you'll say, okay, we won't. We'll wait.

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TASHA: Yeah. Have you seen in your experience that maybe sometimes it can almost be a temptation to do that just for the cathartic, like, okay, this is done. I just want to jump into this new season.

PAMELA: Yes. And so we have to really help our kids through that really awkward- Are we home? Are we not home? One minute they are going to come home for the summer and then the next minute they're not going to come home.

And so you're like, should I? Should I not?

YOUR YOUNG ADULT IS CHANGING SO MUCH

And so, yeah, it's just about being gracious with our family members like we do in every other way. This is a special season and your young adult is changing so much.

Those college years, or they go off to the military or the workforce, those early 20s are, you won't even recognize your child by the end of the fourth year because they change so much, they grow so much.

And so know that your child is growing and you are growing too. And so just be gracious with yourself.

IT'S A TENDER SEASON

I want to say it's a very tender season. It's a tender season and it can be tender in your marriage because you're trying to re-familiarize yourself if you've neglected your marriage a little bit. So everything just feels a little wonky.

But I think just really partnering with God and talking and being honest about it will really help you not hurt your child or hurt yourself. We don't want to hurt our kids.

TASHA: Absolutely. Yeah. I don't think anyone listening has any desire for anything but good for them and their stuff, whatever they want.

MAKE ROOM FOR THE FUTURE

PAMELA: Exactly. And then I think really another bad thing you can do is to keep their childhood bedroom that way forever. I don't know, I just feel like that's kind of stuck.

I mean, I suppose you could feel differently about it, but I'd say out with the old, in with the new. Let's make room. Let's make room for the future and the good that is coming.

MINDSETS

TASHA: Definitely. Yeah. And so I feel like this kind of is something we've been touching on the whole time. But what are those mindsets that are just going to be most helpful to have throughout this entire season?

PAMELA: Right? And I want you to friends, I want you to get a piece of paper and write some of these down. Because how we think about things really impacts everything in life. Starts from what we believe about it.

I CAN DO NEW THINGS

So if you believe that my life is crashing down because my child has left, yes, that's what it's going to be. But if you can say, I can do new things, try that mindset.

How about if you try the mindset, it's my turn to dream or It's my turn to do what I want to do because motherhood is a beautiful calling and you sacrifice so much in motherhood.

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But this season of life, once the kids are grown, it's your season. It's your season to thrive, to dream, to do the things that you've always wanted to do.

How about if you work on this mindset that motherhood was one role that I had, but I can focus on a new role.

I HAVE SOMETHING TO OFFER

And then another mindset that is important for women of this age, shall we say, is that I do have something to offer. I think sometimes we think, I'm all washed up. It's over for me. But it's not true.

When you look at a lot of famous people, writers, dreamers, artists, they didn't hit their mark until their sixties, seventies.

So I'm like, I figure at 57, I'm just like, whoo zooming into the good times.

So it's not over for you. It's not over for you, mom. And you still have something to offer.

THE BEST YEARS ARE AHEAD

And then the last mindset that you can practice is the best years are ahead. Sometimes we think the best years were when they were little, but let me tell you, it is beautiful having adult children.

It is beautiful having an empty nest. It is beautiful having a place where your family can gather again, and then eventually they give you grandchildren. And that is just about the best space in the whole wide world.

So there's just so much that you can do to deal with the physical space and also deal with the mental space of this season of life.

TASHA: Absolutely. Well, I feel like this has just been so full of encouragement and help with mindset and positive mindsets, along with ideas for what to do with their stuff, having those conversations.

So if people want to learn more from you, where can they go to? Just hear more of what you have to share.

WHERE TO FIND PAMELA

PAMELA: Right? You can find me@ pamelahinkleman.com, and I also host the Midlife Mama podcast. You can find that on anywhere. Apple, Spotify, you name it, and then that's probably about it. Yeah, mostly the website. Yeah.

TASHA: Do you have anything that people can take with them from the session if they want to refer back to some of what we talked about?

FREE GUIDE

PAMELA: Sure. I have a free guide. It's called Your Kids Are Grown, Now What? And it's a four page guide that really takes you through the different phases of midlife motherhood.

I like to call the first one the Empty Feeling Mom, and then you have the Questioning Mom, and then you have the Celebratory Mom.

And so this guide will help you just know what to expect in different areas. And I feel like it takes the mystery out of it a little bit.

And I think, like you said before, that's what's scary is, like, we don't know what's ahead, but when you can kind of see, okay, this is what it might be like, and know that women were very different. Some women

are actually quite thrilled and they're already celebrating.

Like, for us, we have 30 years of active parenting. So when my nest emptied, I was like, well, look at that. This is going to be pretty amazing.

TASHA: Yeah, absolutely. Well, all those links are going to be down below so that you can go find that guide, you can find your website, all of those things.

So thank you so much for your time and for joining us today.

PAMELA: My pleasure.

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Creating Consistent Family Routines

RACHEL NORMAN • TRANSCRIPT

TASHA: Welcome back, everybody. Today we have Rachel Norman with us from A Mother Far from Home. And we are going to be talking about how to make routines specifically for and with your kids so that your home and family life feels more organized. So, thanks so much for joining us today, Rachel.

RACHEL: Thank you. I'm glad to be here. Absolutely.

ROUTINES AND ORGANIZATION

TASHA: So, before we dive into this topic, can you answer this first question? What exactly does having a routine have to do with being organized?

RACHEL: Well, I'm going to tell you, and I'm going to do it in the backwards way, and I'm going to say let's put it like this. Whether we think we have routines or not, we do, because routines are just what we do over and over again. So if we don't have purposeful routines, then we probably have chaotic routines.

So, I guess the way I mean, you guys are the organizing experts, but if organized, it's like things are just happening in a proper, predictable order, so everything hasn't gone to pot.

And routines are in my opinion (but I'm a routine mentor, whatever) but in my opinion, routines, especially for moms with kids in the home, it's just one of the easiest ways for your home to feel in order and not overwhelming.

But they've got to be purposeful because like I said, whether you think you have them or not, you have them, you might just not like the ones that you have.

KIDS AND PREDICTABILITY?

TASHA: Yeah, I love how you put that, that we do have routines, but maybe in this session we can learn how to cultivate more helpful routines for our family and like you said, really purposeful, making sure that we're getting those best things done that we want included in our routines.

So for moms with small kids, it may be like, okay, routine sounds like great, but kids are not always super predictable. So, is it possible in your experience to have a set routine, even with small children?

RACHEL: 100%. Now, again, I will say this doesn't mean you have to have your day written out by the 15 minutes increments. That's not what I'm talking about. So, your routine can be loose or tight. Some moms like that, honestly. And yes, kids are not that predictable, but they're also super predictable. It's both.

You know, their moods are not predictable. What they might want to do day in, out is not predictable, but their needs are predictable. What they need to be okay is predictable.

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MOODS VS. NEEDS

It's the same thing with us. We might be up a day, down a day, in a mood a day, but our needs are predictable because they're just constant. They're always there, the need for enough rest, for enough sleep and rest, I guess. Relaxing, downtime, eating, having a little space, having interaction, connection. These needs are constant and they are predictable.

So, I think in some ways, it's helpful for you to separate what kids feel about the routine and the routine and especially, of course, we can be flexible and it can be very loose.

When I say routine, I can mean we have morning routines, you know what I mean? So, it's not like, "We've got 19 things to fit into this 45 hour block. Toddler, are you with me?" No. But the routine does actually help meet all of those needs.

And you will find (and I had five babies in five years), I know when people would be like, kids can't be on a routine, I would be like, but that's not true, though. And also, my favorite thing to say is go to a daycare around nap time and come back, and tell me you can't get kids on a routine because you'll walk in and there'll be like 25 kids happily going over and getting their sleeping bag and laying down and sleeping.

So, it's more usually that resistance is from the mom. And maybe that's resistance because you just don't want to be a clock-watcher. And I want to tell you don't have to clock watch to have a good routine. You really don't.

ROUTINE EXAMPLES

TASHA: Yeah. So maybe before we dive into some of the questions about these routines, could you give an example of either like a morning routine or an evening routine? Not that this is the only way that someone could make a routine, but we're talking a lot about routines in general, but maybe if you could just run us through here's what I mean when I say routine. That could help kind of frame this in perspective for everyone.

RACHEL: Absolutely. So now my kids are in elementary school. So our morning routine is we have a set time. Since we have to leave at a set time at, say, 6:15, their alarm clocks go off. So, the routine for us is usually unless they forget, and then we'll go get them.

They have their own alarm clock that goes up, they wake up, they get dressed, they make their beds. We incentivize making their beds by keeping a checklist of who made their beds or who didn't. Okay?

They made their beds. They come downstairs often if they have time. They'll read a book, they'll eat, they'll get their backpack, and they'll go to the car.

So, you see, these are things that kind of would happen anyway, but we've laid them out with directions. We've helped make a framework, for example, getting them an alarm clock or saying, you can't go outside and play if you haven't eaten.

Because then right when we're going to leave, they'll be like, I haven't eaten. So, we've just made it purposeful so that they can do it.

So, what would happen in the mornings if you didn't have a routine? But it's usually mom running around saying, do this, do this, do this, you didn't do this, you didn't do this, you didn't do this.

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OWNERSHIP

The routine gives some ownership. Our evening routine, for example. It depends on if your kids are older or younger, but it could be, okay, dinner. So, say we're going to say dinner, and after. It could be dinner. Then certain people clean up, then bath, then family reading time, then everybody goes to their rooms to calm down, then go to bed. You see?

So, it's the things that kind of happen anyway, but it's a routine that benefits you when the mom rises up as the leader of the routine, because ultimately the mom has to keep the routine. It has to go with your personality. So, you rise up, you become the leader of the routine. These are the things we want to happen. This is the order that it happens best in, and you kind of manage it initially at first, and then you can give ownership over to the kids, depending on their age.

So, when we say routine, it's not anything you're probably not already doing. It's just flowing in an organized way that makes it less chaotic.

WHAT YOU'RE ALREADY DOING

TASHA: Yeah, I like that, because sometimes whenever I think of building a routine, my first thought is like, oh, well, then we need to build in all these things that we aren't already doing, because I'm creating a routine.

But from what I'm hearing from you, it sounds like the first step to creating a routine is actually what you're already doing, or things that need to be being done, maybe like eating before you get out the door to go to school.

NO PIE IN THE SKY

RACHEL: Exactly. That is an excellent point, Tasha. So excellent. One of my biggest things I say when I'm talking about building a routine is not to be pie in the sky. Pie in the sky is an enemy, enemy, enemy, enemy. You do not want to be pie in the sky.

Your routine should start with the things that have to happen. Like kids got to eat, they got to wash. You don't even wash seven days a week, I guess research is showing. And they got to go to bed.

So, you want to start with the main things, then you can add some extras. Kind of like if you have no skincare routine and you decide to have one, and you jump from none to like a twelve step skincare. I mean, good luck with that. Do you know what I'm saying?

Like, the skincare routine should go from nothing to I wash my face with water. And you've got to start low and let the satisfaction . . . because this is the truth. Once you get a good routine going, it'll keep itself because it works so well and you love it.

So, this is not like, oh, I'm going to get up and run five K every day, and even if I hate it, I'm going to make myself. No. Routines bear good fruit in a way that you want to protect them.

EASY OR HARD?

So, you want to make it easy enough to do, so you can go ahead and start reaping some benefit of it. And then it's not hard to keep it up.

It's not hard. Like, what's hard? For example, I say this as a certified sleep consultant. When toddlers and preschoolers just

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act like they don't want to go to bed and they're running around and they're tired. If their fussy or they're screaming or they're coming out a million times, that's hard. That's hard.

Having a bedtime routine is much less harder than that. You see what I mean? So, you just got to flip to what you're thinking about.

TASHA: Yeah. So, let's talk a little bit about starting these routines. Maybe things have been kind of chaotic. Like, we were talking about things are happening, but maybe not in the order or flow that we would like. So, what would you say to someone who's like, okay, this sounds great. I can tell my family needs routines, but I am so overwhelmed, I'm not even really sure where to start with building a routine. What's your advice on just starting?

KNOW YOURSELF

RACHEL: Yes. So, the first thing I would do is get clear on your own personality without shame or without pie in the sky, in yourself. So, some moms can be like, I'm just not that organized. I'm kind of type B. That's just how it is. The idea of being super-efficient is great, but that's just not how I am. You just need to be like, okay, cool. So, I need a routine that is sort of minimal, bare bones, but makes sure I get it all done, and I'm not going to aim for the sky. And you just need to be okay with that, and you need to start there.

If you're more kind of like the more type A going for it, then you could be more robust. But you want to start with where you're at, because it'll never work if you try to create a routine for a different kind of mom. But you're the mom that's got to do it. Okay, so that's the first thing I would say.

START WITH THE WORST!

And the second thing is I would pick the worst time of day. I would pick your major problem time. And you might want to do that. Honestly, you might not want to, depending on your personality. But for me, I like a quick win. I want to feel like this, so I want to hit the worst part of my day.

And often it's like, say if your kids are in school, maybe it's the afternoon or after you pick them up or get off work, and you want to think about what would be a good purposeful thing that could make that time of day go easier.

Like maybe it's snack or everybody has to go to their room for a little while. Or maybe that's the time you want to do screen time since they're already in bad moods. Whatever. Just think it through instead of just letting it happen. Just sit back and think it through and create a small little routine for that problem time of day.

And then you need to announce it. Like, it needs to be like, this is what we're doing. If it doesn't work, we'll tweak it. But I've decided we're doing this. This is what we're going to do. And then here's how we can make this happen. And depending on the kids ages, you can get some buy in, get some ideas, and then you make it official.

I often get pushback from mom sometimes. Like some things we do feel cheesy. Just kids are used to things that are cheesy. Do you know what I mean? It's okay, we're going to do this. We're going to try to make it. Things are a little bit crazy. We want to make them more peaceful. Kids get it. They really do get it.

TASHA: Yeah. So, can you dive in a little bit more to this idea? So, like you said, there's

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two types of maybe moms or styles when it comes to routines. So, you probably got the more structured, maybe a little bit more like, we're on a time crunch, we have to get out the door for school by this time.

What would you say for people who are like, I really want a more laid back routine? How can you make a laid back routine that is still a routine that things happen and get done?

THE MAIN THING IS THE MAIN THING

RACHEL: Okay, so this is a great question. So, what I would do here is I would take the main things that need to happen every day and I would determine when those need to happen.

So, for example, you won't have the same time at breakfast, more or less. You want to have the same if you're home with the kids, you want to have the same snack times, you want to have the same meal times, you want to have the same rest or nap times.

If they're going outside or if you let them do screens, you want that to be at the same time. So just pick the main meals, resting naps and screen time. And if you don't have any screen time, it's maybe outdoor play. And pick a time that you aim to do those because this will help just set the bones of the day and then the rest could fill in.

KEEPING TRACK OF TIME

Like you do this, you lost track of time. This kid wants a snack. They want the snack. Before you know it, it's one, nobody's eating and then it's two or three, and then they want to take a nap. Nobody should be starting a nap at three unless they go to bed at like ten. And they don't need to go to bed at ten, they need to go to bed at seven or eight.

So, if you just set the bones of the proper, the big event, that might be all you need for a daily routine. And then you can say, oh, lunch is in an hour. Okay, well, we need to do this to speed up or oh, because especially if your kids are like six and under their body attuned to time, it's just how it is.

It's the same with us if we eat lunch at noon every day at 11:50, we're hungry. It's how it is. It's how it is with kids. If we go to bed at nine every night at 8:50, we're tired. You want to harness this natural way of your body, especially with kids. You want to harness their natural rhythms. They've got set to those times.

So, if everything is happening at random times all day, you're going to fight sleep and eating and moods. It's just what's going to happen. So, if you pick if they get used to certain times, and of course they're going to be flexible if we have to be.

But if you're home with the kids all the time, honestly, you don't need to be that flexible because it's the same thing that happens day in, day out, perpetuity for years, and we all know it.

SENSE OF CONTROL

So, the one day every two weeks we have an appointment doesn't count. And then they will get hungry at times, they'll get tired when it's right, they'll get tired at bedtime, and it'll feel like you're having a bit more control over your day.

So, I want to add this, although this isn't about organizing. Well, it is. Organizing feels good because it gives us a sense of control over our lives. And that is important because if we don't have a sense of control

and we feel out of control, then we feel powerless and we start spinning around and doing crazy stuff. Kids, us, everybody.

So, I'm not talking about over control, I'm just talking about the normal amount of being good and organized and together. It's the same with kids already. Having kids makes you feel out of control because you can't control everything they do. So, having no control over what happens in your day genuinely leads you down the path of mental unwellness.

BREAKS IN THE ROUTINE

TASHA: Yeah. Can you also touch a little more on so you mentioned like, what do you do on the day when you have an appointment at two and two is Normally when screen time is or whatever the case may be. How do you handle those situations when you're trying to maintain these routines as well?

RACHEL: That's a great question. So, what I like to do is I like to pick the appointment time based on when I want to have it. So, for example, I would never and I remember for years and years, we never had appointments during nap time. I would never have done it especially because I had so many and I have to drag them all. I'm just like imagining us, five of them, in the doctor's office at nap time.

No, whenever I make an appointment, I say I can't do nap time. We need mornings or we need afternoon. So, if you have those bones in place, you can pick times that you know it's going to be okay. Maybe you have an appointment after nap time or maybe it's the morning. In that way, sometimes we're just going to have to be flexible.

And kids they're fine. Even a day or two of missed routine, they're okay. It starts day three and on, or depending how bad it goes off, is when it got really bad. And as they get older, they're much more flexible. But even as they get older, if that built in calm, quiet time isn't there, you'll see, it won't be like they're having a meltdown on the floor like a little one, but they just will be out of sorts.

So, yes, I still think having a routine means the flexible times that things that you can try to work with that a little bit. Like vacation, for example. Of course, you're not doing the same routine you would do, but you're not usually being gone seven nights a week, 5 hours late to bedtime, because then vacation will be horrible. I mean, do you want it to be memorable or not memorable in a good way? Do you want it to be right? It'll be memorable or not.

AVOIDING PITFALLS

TASHA: Yeah. So, before we wrap up here, can you touch on just some of the biggest mistakes you've seen families make as they try and implement these routines? Because maybe from some of your experience, you can help us avoid pitfalls in starting our own routines.

RACHEL: Oh, excellent question. So, I would say one of the biggest mistakes is, like I said, making a routine for another person or the person you would imagine yourself to be in another life. Don't do that, especially where you're at, where you meet yourself.

And then as you grow, as the kids age, as there's more time, as things change, you can change your routine to meet yourself where you're at again. So just no shame on yourself.

Or even if you feel like, I know I should be

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doing better, you still want to start where you're at and you want to start small.

The second thing is feeling . . . And there's something they call it in psychology, it's like cognitive dissonance. And it's the words you think in your mind does not go with what you're feeling. So, you need to make sure that what you're feeling down here is that routines are good for my kids.

It's good if they're well fed, well rested, everybody is doing okay. Because if what you feel is, I want to do this, but it's bad for the kids or they're going to cry, they're not going to like it, it means I'm hurting them, I'm going to break their attachment or whatever these lies you tell yourself, then you won't do it.

So, if you know you need to, but you feel a resistance, I'm going to encourage you to journal and figure out, okay, if my kids resist this, they don't want to do that. Do I think it's better for them or not? Do I know what their needs are? So, I want to encourage you not to drop out of routine because your kids might act like they don't like it, but they're just very small children and they're supposed to do what you know is best.

And so, you've got to take that on board. I can't believe I have to say this in 2023, but you have to take that on board. When your heart is for them, your heart is to love them, and your heart is also for you not to be mentally ill. You're going to have to take on board that they'll be okay because you're going to fit in all the things that are good for them in a way that's good for everybody. So that's the second thing.

DON'T FORGET YOURSELF

The third thing would be to make sure that in your routine, it also benefits you. So, the routine doesn't need to be so crazy or so down to the 30 minutes that you feel stressed, like you're protecting the routine in a sense. Like the routine should protect you.

So, it should be like there's a block you want to put in their routine, a lot of downtime and lots of alone or rest time for you. So, if you and your needs are not in the family routine, you're going to deplete yourself trying to take care of the kids and where moms, they don't keep thinking down the path and realizing, it's like, I'll do anything for my kids. I'll martyr myself or our kids. I'll do whatever. But they don't realize that leads to a lot of depletion for moms.

And then you can't really connect or bond that well anyway. So, if you're telling yourself not to do these things so you can, it doesn't work. Because if you're not doing so, moms who ignore themselves, their routine won't stay. So that's what I would say. The big mistake would be not entering in things for you.

PROGRESS NOT PERFECTION

And I guess another one would be probably to your point earlier, Tasha, about letting it be a guideline that you aim for like 75% of the time, so then you're not aiming for perfection. One day it gets off, you don't care. You're an hour late for a nap, you're not berating yourself.

I had a boss one time, and she said she just always in her corporate life would say 80% is good enough. And so, all of us, like straight A students who think like A minus is not good enough. We just got it. No, aim for 75% of the time. You're keeping it, and it'll still provide lots of benefits over time for you. Think about it. Like if 75% of the days of the year you ate pretty well or exercise, you'd be

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healthy. That's a good result.

TASHA: Exactly. And when you have that routine in place, it may even be that only a piece of it got thrown off during a day, so that's still worth doing.

Well, any last things you want to leave us with before we wrap up here today?

MAKE IT VISUAL

RACHEL: Well, yes, I will leave you with one last thing that I have to think about. I love, especially when your kids are like, middle school or under, the idea of visual, making your routines visual. There's resources all over the internet.

I have a lot as well on my website, a Mother Far from Home, my shop. But that helps even if it's just a Post it. My daughter in middle school for her skincare routine. She literally has a post it that's like, morning this. Just keep it simple. So that really helps solidify it.

Or for us, putting a post it that's like, read this devotion at dinner or whatever, just making it a bit visual. Keeps it in your realm of what's happening, and then you're much more likely to do it.

TASHA: Absolutely, yeah. It really helps me to see things that I need to do. If I tuck them away, I'm likely to forget. Absolutely.

Well, where can people go? I think you just mentioned you have an online store that people can find you. Where's the best place for them to follow you if they want to learn more?

RACHEL: Absolutely. So, my website is A Mother Far from Home. And I'm on YouTube. Same thing. A Mother Far from Home. And I have a shop in a store as well. So, yeah, you can find me there.

TASHA: Awesome. Well, we'll have all those links down below so people, we can go learn more.

Thank you so much for being with us today.

RACHEL: Absolutely, thanks for having me.

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How to Have a Minimalist Christmas

RACHELLE CRAWFORD • TRANSCRIPT

TASHA: Well, we are so excited to have Rachelle from Abundant Life with Less here with us today. And we're going to be talking about a topic that can be a little tricky to navigate, and that is Christmas time, and especially Christmas gifts for kids whenever you're trying to live a more minimalist, less stuff-based lifestyle. So thank you so much for joining us today, Rochelle.

RACHELLE: Thank you for having me. I'm excited to talk about this.

TASHA: Yeah, absolutely. So before we get into maybe some of the logistics of how to have a Christmas with fewer gifts, can you just talk a little bit about what some of the benefits of doing fewer gifts around the holidays might be?

BENEFITS OF FEWER GIFTS

RACHELLE: Yeah, I would say there's quite a few. And we've been at this for seven years now, and we have... just every year it feels better and better. But I would say reducing the clutter in your home is one of the biggest benefits of having a minimalist Christmas. Because a lot of times we're working to organize our space and declutter and get rid of stuff and then, like, birthdays and Christmas come along and it feels like all that progress we've made has now been totally undone.

So focusing on a more minimalist Christmas and trying to give fewer gifts and getting family on board to give fewer gifts to your kids, I think can help kind of maintain that progress that you've made and not make the holidays feel so overwhelming when it comes to stuff.

And then it also helps reduce holiday stress. I feel like Christmas is supposed to be this magical time and I really want to soak it up and make cookies, but shopping and gift giving, it can be really overwhelming depending on how many people you have to buy for. So running errands and just the mental load of trying to figure out what you're going to get everybody, I feel like it really robs us of the joy of just the Christmas season. So I think that's another benefit that we've noticed that it just feels less overwhelming.

And then we started giving our kids, I would say, more quality gifts. Instead of just feeling like we had to fill the tree and adding more and more stuff, it was about making sure that the right stuff is under the Christmas tree.

And sometimes that can mean you're spending a little bit more, actually, and sometimes a lot of times it means you're spending a lot less. So it does help reduce the amount of money that we're spending around the holidays, unless we're focusing on a big family experience that year, we'll usually try and center that around the holidays.

RACHELLE'S FAVORITE BENEFIT

But yeah, it can reduce costs, it reduces stress, and then it's helped our whole family

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kind of shift towards a love of experiences over things. So that, I think, is what I think my favorite benefit because I have kind of this adventurous heart and I love travel and adventure. And we've been able to pass that on to our kids by focusing less on what trending toys and clothes and things do you want this year, but maybe, what cool experiences or opportunities do we want to take on this year?

So, yeah, I don't regret it for a second, shifting towards a more minimalist Christmas. And I haven't seen our kids react negatively to it either. They've really just embraced it and hardly noticed it, honestly, at first.

AFRAID OF RUINING CHRISTMAS?

TASHA: Yeah, absolutely. And I hadn't even thought going into this, but you're totally right. We're talking specifically I mean, the holidays are coming up in a few months here, and we're talking about Christmas, but this would apply equally to birthdays or any other gift giving occasion that your family has.

So can you speak a little bit to those? Like you said, your kids haven't reacted negatively to it, but I know that for some who might be like, oh, I like this idea of having a more minimalist Christmas, fewer gifts, maybe more experience based. But there's a little bit of a worry there of like, oh, I don't want to ruin Christmas. Nobody wants their kids to wake up on Christmas morning and be like, disappointed.

So can you talk a little more about maybe your experience with that or what you would say to someone who's anxious about that first?

OUTDOING LAST YEAR

RACHELLE: I would say I totally get it. I know that feeling so much because our Christmases before we went minimalist, and we went minimalist in January 2017... So all the Christmases before that, they just kind of built on each other that I felt like I had to kind of outdo last year and put a couple of extra things under the tree. And I just remember wandering the store like, what's one more thing I can get my son, who totally didn't need one more thing.

But I was worried that first year because we probably cut at least half of what we normally had under the tree for our kids. And I was nervous. I really was. And as I approached, I was like, oh, my word, am I going to... just the days leading up to it.

MORE INTENTIONAL

And then when they opened those presents, the gifts I did give were so intentional and there was so much thought into them, and I knew that they were going to use them and there were some of the things they needed and some stuff that was just going to get them outdoors more. And I knew they were something that they were going to really love.

So when they opened them, there was no, like, wait, this tree doesn't look... I don't even think they really remembered what it looked like before. They were just excited for the toys their parents had intentionally picked for them. I did not see that. Our kids, they didn't notice at all.

SWITCH YOUR FOCUS

And so I know that it's like a little bit of anxiety, but I think it's really important that we just not focus on what we're giving up

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and focus on what we're getting instead, because there are studies out there that show that kids are more focused and more creative with fewer gifts.

So if you know that what you're doing for your family is going to benefit them, set aside the anxiety and the worry and then just go forward knowing that you're doing the right thing for your family.

WHAT REALLY RUINS CHRISTMAS?

And if you think about it, it isn't like, fewer toys that really ruins Christmas. It's that overwhelming to do list that really pulls me from Christmas and adds stress and makes me kind of look for like, okay, when is this going to be over? When I really just want to savor it and enjoy the time with my kids and my family. So, yeah, focus on what you're getting in exchange instead of what you might be giving up.

JUST GO FOR IT

TASHA: Yeah, absolutely. So I'm curious, when you did this, did you prep your kids? Like, did you say, hey, we're going to go to a more minimalist Christmas, or did you just kind of let it happen?

RACHELLE: No, I let it happen. I think that will make them maybe pay attention to numbers more than necessary. I think it's tempting to do that, but I would avoid that. I would just go for it and see how it unfolds.

TASHA: So you said that you've been doing this for almost seven years. Have you found that each year you've stepped back more and more? Like, was this a gradual transition or did you kind of just do it all at once and it's been the same since?

A GRADUAL APPROACH

RACHELLE: I would say the first. I think now we're giving a little fewer gifts than we did when we first did this. So I think I've gone a little less and less. I don't think it's going to continue on that trajectory of, like, eventually there's nothing.

But yeah, I think the first year I just kind of we cut it by half, which still was a lot of gifts. And our kids at the time were one, five and seven. So as they get older, there is this natural, like, stuff gets more expensive, and so there is this natural, like, you do end up giving fewer gifts as they get older, possibly.

NOT ABOUT THE NUMBERS

So I think as we get older, it's not about the numbers. It's not about making sure the tree looks super bare or anything like that. So I would say it was a gradual approach at first, and now it's just really thinking through what will our kids get excited about? What do our kids need? What adventures do we want to take this year?

Maybe we'll get them something that will go along with an adventure that we're doing. So every year it looks a little bit different now, but yeah, it doesn't have to be, like, go from a crazy amount to super, like, only two gifts or something like that, feel free to ease into it.

There's no rules, there's no right or wrong. It's just about giving more intentionally and not feeling like we have to outdo every year and keep up with friends or keep up with all the trending things that other people are getting this year.

WHAT ABOUT GRANDPARENTS?

TASHA: Yeah, absolutely. So there's

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obviously some stress and transition in ourselves for our children's sake. But then there's also other family members who are Grandparents adore their grandchildren, and all they want to do is just lavish their love on them by giving them a bajillion Christmas gifts.

And that's really like, I do think it's important to acknowledge that comes from a place of love and wanting to make their grandchildren happy, but it can kind of push and pull a little bit with this effort to have a minimalist Christmas.

And some of the benefits you were talking about of just like having fewer things and it's kind of flying in the face of what you're trying to do. So what advice do you have for helping grandparents and other family members get on board with this idea of fewer Christmas gifts?

RACHELLE: Yeah, such a good question. So I think a lot of times I'll hear from people like, how do I get Grandma on board? And grandparents are always dropping stuff off and they just won't reduce what they give.

YOU START FIRST

And I always like to ask, what have you done to reduce the clutter in your own home? Because we often think it's kind of Grandma that's causing the problem when in reality we have not done much to give our own kids different gifts and reduce the clutter and how we're buying and accumulating all year long.

So it's kind of tough to hear, but it's like make sure you go first. Make sure you're modeling this because it's not fair for you to ask Grandma to go first. If that means that your first minimalist Christmas is you just doing things differently and showing Grandma and modeling it and just showing how your family is doing things differently going forward, that's fine. So give Grandma the grace to go at a slower pace than you are and don't expect her to go first.

TALK ABOUT IT

And then next I would say have a conversation with her. Really, and I say her, but grandparents, both grandmas and grandpas, but have a conversation with them about why you're doing this, what your family is trying to do differently. And it's not really just about making her give fewer gifts because depending on the type of person and the love language... my mom loves giving gifts. It's super important to her.

So just saying, we're not trying to take away your ability to give gifts. We're just asking you to do things a little bit different, kind of like we are. And make sure that you're really specific. One thing, I think it's easy to just be like, we want you to give fewer gifts this year. And it's hard to do something with that. I feel like immediately they go to defensive sometimes.

SET SPECIFIC BOUNDARIES

Where it's like we have enough play kitchen toys, like we don't need any more food. We don't need any more Star Wars toys or something. My daughter has a billion stuffed animals. Like, can we just not do stuffed animals this year? So give them specific boundaries that I think it'll make it easier for them to adopt that.

START EARLY

And then the other thing I think it's really important is not to wait until December to have this conversation. If Grandma's

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making her Christmas list and you're saying actually, can you not give us a lot of toys this year? That's going to be harder. So we went minimalist in January and we had a full year to just kind of set the stage and model a different lifestyle.

And they saw I was sending pictures of all the stuff we were decluttering. Though I did try to not send them pictures of the stuff they had given us, but just this general, like look at my before and after photo of my closet and look at the way my linen closet looks, stuff like that. So they knew what we were doing.

And so as we started talking about Christmas, they weren't surprised by it. So if you're just getting around to watching this and it is December, you might be able to approach this topic with them, but don't be surprised if they're like, no thank you. And then just spend the next year really working on moving in that direction.

POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT

And then I think it's really helpful if you positively reinforce throughout the year any and all movement in the right direction. I remember my mom gave my daughter horseback riding lessons instead of a gift and she loved it. My mom watched her just be so excited for this. Where it can feel like not necessarily a gift when you are giving that, because it'll be a few weeks or months before they actually use it.

But I sent pictures all the time. I sent quotes my daughter said after the lessons and just really tried to show them that they appreciate this gift even more than just a toy would have lasted in their minds. So positively reinforce any and all movement in the right direction. I like to call it proof of joy. Send proof of joy so that they can really see that that was a gift that might be more likely to repeat experiences in the future.

MEMORIES OF A LIFETIME

TASHA: Absolutely. And I really think that if you stop and think about it, I think in that conversation, talking about giving experiences, that this is going to probably last longer. I mean, kids tend to have maybe five favorite toys. They can't love every single toy and it's going to get put in the closet and it's going to be forgotten about.

But if they are having horseback riding lessons for three months every week, that is going to stick with them a lot longer.

RACHELLE: And the memories of a lifetime. Yeah.

KEEP THE EXCITEMENT

TASHA: Absolutely. Yes. So do you have any tips? Like you were saying, it's a little bit less exciting to open at the time. And I mean, it goes back to that same, like, we want Christmas morning to still be like a special time. And when you hand someone like a piece of paper, it's like, oh, let me read those words to you. It's just a little bit, maybe less exciting. And especially if you compare if you have like, family Christmases, some of the other kids might still be getting toys and so they're opening this huge Lego set.

So what can we do to alleviate that and make Christmas still feel some of the excitement but with less of the stuff?

COMPANION GIFTS

RACHELLE: Yeah. So I like to suggest people give what I call a companion gift. So if you're like for when my daughter did open

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those horseback riding lessons, it wasn't just a piece of paper. She gave her a little tiny horse figurine and so now she had that to open.

There's so many options for companion gifts. Let's say you're doing swim lessons, you can give goggles or a bathing suit. Our kids got a Dude Perfect... they went to the Dude Perfect tour, and they gave them Dude Perfect t shirts. So there's something fun to open that it doesn't just feel like a piece of paper.

But I have to say too, the joy came from knowing she was doing horseback riding lessons and going to the Dude Perfect concert. But I feel like it makes everybody feel like a win-win, right? They have something to open, something to wear, maybe when they do it.

Think of companion gift ideas and I have a few more I can share. Like if you're going to a sporting event, maybe a poster or a wall decal of your favorite team or the team you're going to see art classes, you can give some art supplies.

KEEP IT SMALL

So think about what gifts you're giving and what small... and it's not about a huge gift basket of stuff on top of an experience. It's about something small that can satisfy everybody. And we can watch them open it, but yet they have the experiences, the bigger gift. So it's not about spending like double the money, right?

TASHA: Right. No, but I love that. And I love if you can give them something they can use while experiencing the experience, because that alone, if they're excited about swim lessons, they're going to be like, oh, I get to wear these goggles. And I don't know, it just connects that. So I think that's an awesome idea.

GIFTS OF EXPERIENCE

Can we go a little bit more into some ideas of experience-based gifts? Maybe if this is a newer concept. You can think, so swim lessons and horseback riding lessons, what are some other just ideas that we can throw it out of?

RACHELLE: The whole list.

TASHA: Okay, awesome.

RACHELLE: Some ideas that we have used and other people that I know have used. So we like to do this as adults too. So there's a number, I got a few adult suggestions as well on here, but that we've done in the past with our family. But yeah.

GETTING IDEAS

I have ropes course tickets if you do like a tree climbing thing. So if you're giving that in Christmas, you might not get to use that until this summer. But that has been one that our kids have loved getting.

And then sports trainings. My son has recently got into basketball training, and that costs money. And so grandparents have contributed to basketball trainings.

If there's specific summer camps that you want zoo memberships or zoo outings, amusement park tickets, water park tickets, concert tickets, fishing charters or fishing. Fly fishing lessons is something my son got from a grandparent a while back. Or just a park and ice cream outing, or going to the roller skate rank or going to the zoo or the museum, children's museum for a day.

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Those are some experiences that can go along, like go carts, take them to the beach. So it doesn't have to be I know, like fly fishing lessons would be like a pretty expensive gift for them to get. And my son's birthday falls at Christmas time, so sometimes they'll double it down.

EVEN SIMPLE THINGS

But yeah, so it doesn't have to be these really expensive things. Like what fun activities during the day can you take your kids to do? Or Grandma can take them to do a baking day. Have bring the kids over and make pie, learn to decorate cupcakes, stuff like that. You can give them maybe an apron or cake mix or something to open for that experience. So pedicures, dance lessons, snow tubing, parks, stuff like that.

I think there's so many when you really start to think about what's in your local area and what do your kids like to do, it can feel like overwhelming at first. But there's so many options rather than just wandering the toy aisle or adding something or handing them the toy catalog and having them circle a bunch of stuff they didn't even know they wanted until you gave them that magazine. Right?

HOW ABOUT ADULTS?

TASHA: Right. Absolutely. So you mentioned some of those experiences for adults as well. So we've been talking a lot about giving fewer gifts to kids, but do you have any tips, sometimes that continues into your adult years as well.

So what have you found works well for the adults in your family to also reduce just the stress and all the gifts and things?.

THE GRINCH AGREEMENT

RACHELLE: Yeah. So my brother and my husband, years ago, they coined the term Grinch Agreement. And they just came together because they were done, which was really... I was doing the shopping for my husband, but still it's that awkward, like Christmas morning where my brother and my husband are trying to swap gifts, and they're like, neither of us want anything.

So eventually they started just like buying each other beer and then eventually it's like, why are we even doing this? So they said, let's just have a Grinch Agreement. And now all the guys in our family have a Grinch Agreement where they just decide we're not going to exchange gifts.

And so I think that can be really helpful. I've done it with my sisters. It doesn't have to be every year, just because you have a Grinch Agreement... Maybe it's a really busy season or you're having babies and say, let's just have a Grinch Agreement this year and we'll reconvene next year, right?

PUT RELATIONSHIPS FIRST

So I think talking with people and seeing if people really want to continue doing these gift exchanges you've been doing for years. Some people do. And I would say that it's not worth really ruining relationships over reducing stuff. Like I like to say people over things, right? It's a common saying that I've heard putting people over material possessions.

But sometimes that means putting people over your minimalism version of things as well. So don't ruin relationships over this. But I bet there are at least, even if we can get like one or two people to go in on a Grinch Agreement, it can help reduce the

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stress of the holidays.

CONSUMABLE OR EXPERIENCE ALTERNATIVES

And if you have people who are super not into it, suggest experiences or consumable gifts instead. Those I think we'll come together with my husband's side of the family and do a fun experience together. We've done an in home cooking class together. We gave my mother in law a family photo session. So that it's just one big gift and it's a cool experience for all of us, but it's not exchanging more and more stuff.

Car detailing I think is my all-time favorite Mother's Day gift. What else? Concert tickets, weekend getaways, museum guided tours, wine tastings, stuff like that are can be cool experiences to do together instead of trying to figure out what to get each other. So I would say reduce the number of the gift exchanges you can with the adults in your life. And if you can't try to go to consumable gifts, coffees, snacks, stuff like that.

GIFT GIVERS SHOWING LOVE

TASHA: And the gift givers in your life. They really want to give something that you're going to enjoy. And it's like you were saying about showing that there is joy in these gifts. And so I think giving those suggestions is key. Like you said, if you just kind of say we want less stuff, well now they feel pressure because the gift givers are trying to show they love you by giving you things. And now they feel like you're going to just hate whatever they pick for you because you said you didn't like things.

So I think having just some ideas in the back of your head like, hey, here's some things we would love or that our family would love, can really help, just like you said, everything goes smoothly, smooth over all the relationships, not trying to pick fights or anything over this.

RACHELLE: Yes, absolutely. One thing I'll say towards the end, too, is I like to leave, I think, like I said, that it is our responsibility in our home. I think the biggest impact we can make in our own home when it comes to clutter and having it feel like too much stuff is how we buy stuff throughout the year and accumulate stuff throughout the year, or rather don't. Right?

GRANDMA WIGGLE ROOM

The more we can get rid of and start living more intentionally in our own homes, it can make when those holidays and birthdays and gift giving type days come around that it doesn't feel so overwhelming. I like to leave like some Grandma wiggle room is what I refer to it as.

Just we can accommodate a few extra gifts. Knowing in our home we have some habits and boundaries where this is where the toys go, and if it's getting too crowded, it's time to let stuff go. A one in, one out rule. Kind of. I don't really stick with that, but what are we done with?

Because we're getting all of these new things. So just implementing those habits into your home and knowing, like, you're in charge of your space. And if there's too much stuff in there, no matter what you've received, you don't have to keep it for all of eternity. But know that you might need to leave a little wiggle room and some breathing room to accommodate the influx every now and then.

TASHA: Yeah, absolutely. Well, this has

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been full of so much good advice. And so where can people go if they want to learn more just about what you share online? I'm sure you share about a lot more than only minimalist Christmas.

RACHELLE: Yeah, I have my website abundantlifewithless.com, and I'm abundantlifewithless on Instagram. And then I've written Messy Minimalism is my book that's available where books are sold. And it's really just a grace based approach to living with less stuff so it doesn't feel so overwhelming and so, like, there's so many rules. It kind of helps you implement minimalist principles in a way that works for you and your family.

TASHA: Yeah, absolutely. Well, we will leave links to all of that down below so people can go and check that out. And thank you so much for your time today, Rachelle.

RACHELLE: Thanks for having me. Absolutely.

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Simple Habits for a Clean and Tidy Home

ROBIN MARCHAND • TRANSCRIPT

Hi, I'm Robin, creator of the YouTube channel Faith and Flower. Today I'm going to talk to you about creating habits for a clean and tidy home. I've been a homemaker for over 30 years, and through a lot of trial and error, I have come up with some systems to help me keep our home clean and tidy with as little effort as possible.

WHAT ARE ROUTINES?

I have some suggestions for what to include in your daily, weekly, monthly and seasonal cleaning routines. But before we get into that, I want to talk to you a little bit about habits and routines. Webster's Dictionary defines habit as an acquired mode of behavior that has become nearly or completely involuntary.

And they define a routine as a habitual or mechanical performance of an established procedure. And so, I firmly believe that you can create good habits, habits that will help you keep your home clean and tidy with minimal effort if you can establish some routines.

BENEFITS OF ROUTINES

And I'm going to give you some benefits for doing that.

REDUCE STRESS

Establishing routines can reduce stress. Constant decision making creates stress. Therefore, making some choices ahead of time by having a routine will help cut back on some decisions and reduce stress.

BETTER TIME MANAGEMENT

Structuring your time is easier when you have routines in place for accomplishing your tasks, which leads to the next benefit.

MORE DOWNTIME

Having a routine or schedule allows you to build in free time for activities you enjoy.

A MORE PEACEFUL HOME ENVIRONMENT

Your family will know what to expect and it will be easier for them to help because they will learn what day to, for instance, sort their laundry, change their sheets and when they are expected to help with other tasks such as dusting and vacuuming their rooms and other areas of the home.

Also, routines are valuable for families during times of crisis. If a parent is ill, for example, children with routines are better able to cope.

FOUR CLEANING ROUTINES

If your goal is a cleaner, tidier home, your best chance for success is to break down the necessary tasks into daily, weekly, monthly, and seasonal cleaning routines. And the best part you get to decide what goes on your checklist and how you want to

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schedule each task into a routine that suits your schedule, your home, and your family.

Feel free to add or subtract to my list according to your priorities. What works for me might not work for a woman in a different season of life. For example, a mom with young children or a stay home mom might have different priorities than a mom who works outside of the home. So, do what works for you and your family.

The point is that we are all homemakers and need a plan for keeping our home clean and tidy. So, I hope this helps you get started on your unique path.

DAILY ROUTINE

Let's get started with the daily cleaning routine.

MAKE BEDS

Making the bed every day is a habit that will set you up for a productive day, and this is something that has actually been documented in research. In addition to that, it is the one thing you can do in your bedroom that has the most impact with the least amount of effort. That's why it's on my list and I highly recommend that you add it to yours. If you get in the habit of doing this every day, you'll notice that as soon as it's finished, your bedroom looks instantly tidy.

PUT AWAY CLOTHES

After that, put away any clothes that are out of place and your room will be reset for the day. It's also a gift you're giving to your future self so that at the end of the day, you are able to enjoy a tidy and peaceful place to fall asleep.

SHOWER & RINSE TUB

Wiping down the shower and rinsing the tub after each use is another small thing that, when done every day, will make cleaning and maintaining your bathrooms so much easier. We keep a squeegee and a microfiber cloth in our shower, so as soon as we're finished, we just use the squeegee to squeegee off the glass and also the little seat in our shower where there's standing water. And then I use the microfiber cloth to quickly wipe everything down. The glass and fixtures won't develop hard to remove water stains or soap buildup, and so cleaning the shower each week will take much less effort. This only takes a few minutes each morning and it's well worth it if you don't have glass. Simply rinsing a shower or tub will go a long way towards keeping it cleaner longer, and will also require much less scrubbing.

KITCHEN

Keep your kitchen clean throughout the day by cleaning up after each meal. We generally eat three meals a day in our home, and I've made a habit of cleaning as I go while preparing our meals and then resetting the kitchen afterwards. While it's tempting to let things pile up in the sink to handle at the end of the day, all day you will have to endure a messy kitchen and all the pots and pans will be that much harder to clean. I promise that putting a little effort in throughout the day will pay off. You might even enjoy cooking more whenever you enter the kitchen, and it is tidy and inviting.

HIGH TRAFFIC FLOORS

Clean floors in high traffic areas. This is one that I'll admit I don't really do every day anymore, but when I had young children, it was absolutely necessary. As I said earlier, choose your priorities and create a daily

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checklist accordingly. I still keep this one on my list and I just assess the situation daily. If I notice that the floors need it, I will do a very quick cleanup. But if not, then I push this task off for another day and that's okay.

TIDY

Tidy. I like to tidy as I go throughout the day. I think of it as resetting each space before I leave it. So, after getting ready in the bathroom. I put away everything I used, clearing away all of the countertop clutter. I also reset our bedroom and throughout the day, and at the end of the day I do a quick tidy up, just returning everything back to its proper place.

Family members can help by taking care of anything that belongs to them and returning items they use back to their designated homes. All of this is much easier in a decluttered home, but that's a separate topic and you can check out many other videos covering that on my channel as well.

All of these daily tasks should be handled throughout your day. Once they become habits, you will be amazed how easy it can be to keep your home tidy and clean.

WEEKLY ROUTINE

Things on the weekly checklist will require you to schedule them into your week. It is important to be intentional and plan when to complete them, but how you do that is entirely up to you. Some people prefer to have a cleaning day, perhaps on the weekend when other family members can help. That can work really well for moms who work outside the home.

I've always divvied up these tasks and assigned them to a day of the week and that has worked really well for our family.

LAUNDRY

On Monday I do laundry consisting of our clothes and on Tuesday I finish any other laundry, so sheets, towels and any other items. I prefer having a laundry day because it gives me a sense of completion to an otherwise never-ending task.

I'm able to create several loads of laundry that are separated into a hot, warm, cold and delicate load, which helps me to care for our clothes so that they stay looking newer, longer and last longer. I like to hang many items to dry, but when I use our dryer I can do back to back loads while the dryer is still hot, which is more efficient.

SHEETS AND TOWELS

When I change our sheets and towels, I wash them and then return them to the bed and bathroom when dry to avoid folding. I'm all for doing anything to streamline the process and keep the effort to a minimum. Once all the laundry is folded and put away, I can check it off my list, which I find super satisfying.

BATHROOMS

On Wednesday, I clean our bathrooms. I clean the tub, shower, toilets, sink and countertops, and if I have time, I will vacuum and mop the floors, but if not, I'll save that until later in the week when I do the rest of the floors. I try to develop patterns of cleaning so that everything becomes rote and I don't have to think about it.

Each task will get easier and faster as it becomes part of the habits that you form and the routines that you create.

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DUSTING

On Thursday, I dust all over our home because I do this weekly. This task is usually very easy and can be accomplished quickly. If you are behind on dusting, it will be a bigger job the first time, but after that you will be able to move through your home quickly and check this task off your list too.

FLOOR

Remember to dust from top to bottom so that you don't knock dust onto a surface you've just cleaned, and any stray dust will wind up on the floor, which is why Friday is the day that I vacuum and mop. As I said earlier, sometimes I will vacuum and mop the bathroom floors on Wednesday when I clean the bathrooms, but many times I'll save that for Fridays and get them done along with the floors.

Everywhere else in our home, it's easy to keep the momentum going while you have the vacuum out and the mop. So, I vacuum all the floors first and then move on to the mopping.

It's important to be intentional, but also flexible with your routines. If I can't accomplish a task, I move it to another day when I have more time and can double up. In the event that I need to skip something, I will just get to it the following week and that's okay too.

MONTHLY ROUTINES

When it comes to the monthly items, you will simply add these into your weekly cleaning. Once you have your routine established, don't try to pack in too much too soon and remember to stay flexible.

LARGE BEDDING

For example, once a month I will add the duvet cover, mattress pad and any blankets from our beds to the laundry. When I take care of the sheets, it adds a couple of extra loads, but it's still easily accomplished on my Tuesday laundry day. Once they are dry, they are returned to the bed, so no folding.

Just incorporate these tasks where it makes sense once a month, and if this seems overwhelming, ignore these until your daily and weekly routines are well established. There will be time for these later. And on the flip side, feel free to add to my list if you want to go deeper.

CLEAN OVEN

Cleaning the oven is probably my least favorite task, and I don't do it every month, but I have it here on this list to remind me to work on it when it needs doing. If you have a self-cleaning oven, count yourself lucky and don't be afraid to use that feature. Newer ovens are very efficient and designed to be cleaned that way.

Whatever type of oven you have, be very careful to read your manufacturer's instructions and clean it often enough to prevent spills and splatters from becoming so baked in that cleaning becomes next to impossible. It will be worth the time you invest to keep your oven functioning well as long as possible.

CLEAN REFRIGERATOR

Cleaning the refrigerator is another task that is best done regularly, so I try to work it in once per month. It's easiest to plan this for when your inventory is low. I like to do it before I grocery shop. It helps me to see what we have purge anything that is no

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longer good and to have a nice clean space for all of the fresh groceries.

I always empty one shelf at a time so that I can keep the refrigerator doors closed as much as possible, and so that if I'm interrupted, I can quickly finish that shelf and complete the job later. This also keeps the food fresher because it's not all sitting out on the counter for very long.

I like to keep it simple with the cleaning products that I use, so I usually opt for just microfiber cloths that are dampened with water. They do a great job for cleaning your refrigerator and you don't have to worry about introducing any chemicals into your food by accident.

And while I am cleaning the inside, I go ahead and do the outside as well. A general purpose microfiber cloth does a great job of removing any smudges and fingerprints, and then I dry it with a fine weave microfiber cloth, which gives it an amazing streak free shine.

And I find that this really helps avoid any buildup that you can get on your stainless steel when using any sort of stainless steel cleaner. This one thing will save you money on cleaning products so much time and effort as well.

CLEAN & ORGANIZE DRAWERS

Once a month or so, take some time to clean and organize drawers, cabinets and closets. Areas like Pantries can be handled the same way you clean and organize the refrigerator. Go shelf by shelf, removing all items, vacuuming and wiping down the shelf, removing items that are no longer good or you know you won't use, and arranging things in a way that makes sense to you.

If you haven't set up systems, spend a few minutes organizing things into zones that group like items together to help you use the space more efficiently when you are cooking and baking in other rooms, declutter cabinets and drawers, and tidy up items to keep them organized.

If you keep items in the rooms where you use them, it will be easier for your family to return things to their proper homes. And if you notice items that are seldom used, declutter them or move them to a less accessible area such as a storage closet or basement to free up space for the things that your family uses regularly.

DUST HARD TO REACH AREAS

Once a month when dusting, take the time to clean crown molding, ceiling fans, doortops blinds and baseboards. Remember to start at the top and work your way down.

SEASONAL ROUTINES

On my seasonal checklist are the deep cleaning tasks that can be done four times a year with a change of season, twice a year, or just once a year. It's up to you.

BLANKETS AND QUILTS

Wash any throw blankets and quilts that weren't cleaned with your bedding.

CLOSETS AND CLOTHING

And declutter closets and swap seasonal clothing. If you have a separate place to keep all of your out of season clothing, that's great. If not, designate a section of your closet for these items to separate

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them from the current season clothing. It will really help you get ready faster in the morning when you don't have to sort through these additional pieces.

UPHOLSTERY

Vacuum upholstered Furniture higher traffic pieces such as family room sofas will need cleaning more frequently, and lesser used pieces can go longer between cleanings. I usually tackle this when I already have out my vacuum, and I usually break up the job room by room over the course of several days or weeks. I can just add one room's furniture to my vacuuming day and have everything covered in just a few weeks.

FURNITURE AND APPLIANCES

Clean under and behind heavy furniture and appliances too. In most cases, you will need some help to safely move them, but it usually just takes a few minutes to vacuum and mop if necessary. Plus, you just might discover some long lost treasure amongst the surprising things you'll uncover.

WINDOWS AND SCREENS

Clean windows and screens. We usually do this two times a year, once in the spring and again in the fall. I clean the windows inside while my husband works outside. Then we work together to clean the screens with a power washer. If you have a dog like we do, or small children, you will need to spot clean your windows a little more frequently. But deep cleaning twice a year works well for us and takes only an hour or so when we work together.

GARAGE

Clean and tidy the garage. This is more my husband's domain and he maintains everything here. But once a year or so we work together to do a more thorough cleaning, and we use the opportunity to declutter and organize to keep things under control.

Many of these deep cleaning tasks that are done seasonally can be accomplished quickly when you enlist your family. Our boys helped out regularly and we have great memories of those times together. So never feel that it is your responsibility to handle everything on your own.

ROUTINES BRING REWARDS

Of course, maintaining a clean and tidy home requires some discipline. Most worthwhile endeavors do. But once you set your priorities and establish some simple routines, you will create habits to keep your home clean and tidy with minimal effort.

Start today with a daily routine of your own and build from there. In no time you will be on your way and I have loads of encouragement waiting for you at my YouTube channel, Faith and Flower. I hope that my suggestions have got you started on a path for keeping your home clean and tidy with minimal effort.

Thank you so much for watching today. You can find me on YouTube. My channel is called Faith and Flower and I would love to see you there. Thank you so much for spending your time with me here today.

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Creating a Consistent Bible Time

SARA • TRANSCRIPT

HAVE YOU BEEN HERE?

So maybe it's Sunday, you're sitting in the church service, and it's your first time to really evaluate your week. Take a little breather and you realize to your dismay that another week has passed with you only doing your Bible two times. Or maybe it's once, or maybe it's not at all.

Or maybe you have 15 minutes where your kids are playing really contentedly to themselves. And so you go to find your Bible and you go to find your journal and you discover that neither of them are in their correct spot. You cannot find them no matter how hard you look and all the pens that you reach for are out of ink.

DISCOVERING CONSISTENCY

I have totally been in both of these situations before in real life. And yet, through my ten years of being a Christian and going through so many different seasons from graduating high school, getting a job, getting engaged, getting married, having three kids in three years, I have managed to discover ways to really consistently have a time with the Lord every single day. No matter what type of busy season I might be in as a mom.

So today I'm super excited to jump into tons of really practical tips and tricks that I've learned so that through any season you can develop a habit of consistently spending time with the Lord every single day.

SHARING INSIGHT

The very first thing I want to address is kind of the foundation of creating a Bible time, even during busy seasons, and that is focusing on your mindset. A few years ago, when I was just becoming a mom, I heard a mom who was going through a really busy season share this thought, and I thought it was so, so good, I wanted to share it with you all.

She said, it's during those seasons when I feel so busy and so overwhelmed and I feel like I just can't possibly find another moment in my day to pull out my Bible and read something or journal, a prayer or something like that, that I actually need the Lord the most.

It's during those seasons and I have found this to be true for myself again and again. It's those seasons when I feel maybe really overwhelmed or super, super busy, where if I will still take the time, even though it's hard to spend a little bit of time with the Lord, all of a sudden my perspective is changed and my priorities shift. And all of a sudden, oftentimes I find that what I thought was so important and I so desperately needed to get done is actually not of that much eternal value. And so it's very refreshing and it brings a lot of peace.

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WHATEVER SEASON

So now with that overarching mindset, I now want to jump into the really practical tips that I have for you around creating a consistent Bible time. Because I really think if you become consistent with the Lord every single day, you will fall so deeply in love with that time with Him that no matter what season you're in ... maybe you're in a pregnancy mode and you're really exhausted and you're sick and throwing up. Or maybe you're a postpartum and you're really tired and you're not getting sleep at night. Maybe your children are even older and you're driving to all these extracurricular activities.

Whatever it is. I really think if you have built that foundation of a relationship with the Lord, you will begin to make time, no matter how you have to squeeze it in, no matter what you have to sacrifice to spend time with the Lord every single day.

And so, with that being said, I want to talk about the importance of creating habits and the habit of spending time with the Lord every single day.

TIP #1: REMOVE ALL FRICTIONS

So the very first tip that I want to give you with creating a new habit, is what I have found to be the easiest way when you want to develop something that you're currently maybe a little undisciplined in, or it just is a struggle, and that is to remove all frictions, remove the pain points and streamline the process.

And so what do I mean by this? Here's a perfect example. I've heard so many people say that they find these little moments that they could do their Bible, or they get up extra early or their kids are playing outside or whatever, and they have a few moments to spare and then they realize they cannot locate their Bible. Their journal has been scribbled in by little children and maybe they can't even find a pen.

A SAFE PLACE

So my first tip for you, if this is a struggle of yours, is to find everything you need or buy whatever you need in order to have a meaningful Bible time. And then keep it either in a box or in a basket or a bag and put it somewhere where those little toddlers who love to scribble on everything or tear pages out - I've had that happen several times - can't access it.

And have it in the same spot every single day. Put it in a spot that you don't have to be super quiet to sneak in and grab it out when your kids are taking a nap, or you have it at a spot where you can turn on the light to get it if you get up in the middle of the night or if you wake up early and so streamline the process.

EASY TO GRAB

The great thing too, about having that basket of all the items you need for a successful Bible time is that when you're not in a season where you want to get up at 5:00 a.m.... I love getting up early. I've developed the habit. I love it so much now, but I'm in different seasons all the time. So when I'm just coming out of postpartum and I'm really tired, I love being able to just go grab that basket when I have a few minutes to spare and spend some time with the Lord, even when my kids are awake.

So this could work in any season of life, whether you want to get up at the same time as your kids and just wait for those moments when they're busy or they're

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taking their naps, whatever it is. But it just makes it a little bit easier to have success.

WHAT'S IN THE BASKET

Welcome into our unfinished office really quick. I just wanted to show you what all I keep for my Bible time. I used to, like I said, keep all my stuff in a basket. Now I have these wire baskets that I got from the dollar store. This is everything I need for my kids' school and for their Bible time. This is everything I need to write people letters. Yeah. Not the string, obviously. And this is everything I need to do my Bible.

So I, of course, have my Bible, which is great. Got my pen. I have my prayer journal, which I love to do every morning. I have my regular Bible journal where I'll write what I learned. And then on days when I have a ton of extra time, which isn't that often, but I have my calendar to plan out and document what I've been up to, and then I have my regular journal.

So this is great because I can either just grab this whole thing, or I can just grab whatever I need for that particular day based on how much time I have. And I know exactly where it all is. I never have to look for my Bible and my journal. And that is so, so helpful. So all that to say, get one of these or get a basket, it's so helpful.

REMOVE DISTRACTIONS

Maybe your pain point is your phone. You have a couple of minutes, or you're taking a bath after a chaotic day or an exhausting day. And yes, you feel like you should read your Bible and you kind of want to, but the draw of your phone is just too much. Remove that as an option. I have done this so many times. Excuse the little baby noises. My son is in the background on the bed.

But I have had so many seasons where I have found my phone has been the biggest hindrance to my relationship with God. And so as a way to combat that, I have made the rule that I am not allowed to get on my phone except to turn off my morning alarm until after I've spent time with the Lord. So that's another thing. Don't let your phone be a distraction. Get it out of the room. Do what you need to do to remove it as an option. And so you will gravitate towards your Bible, and you will gravitate towards God. And later on, I think that can happen much more easily. But to get started, I think that's really important.

DON'T MAKE IT HARD ON YOURSELF

Another thing is food. If food motivates you don't allow yourself to eat a physical meal until you've spent time with the Lord. Now, maybe you're in this season of really little kids and you're kind of in the trenches and that's really not practical. I understand that. But I have known people in different seasons of life and that has worked for them as a really easy way to make sure and to hold themselves accountable that they are doing their Bible every day.

So that's another little tip for you. So the biggest thing is to eliminate frictions, whatever those are for you. Think creatively, think outside of the box, get rid of the temptation, streamline it, make success as easy as possible. Don't make it so hard on yourself.

And this has been so helpful in those seasons when maybe my phone has had a big pull for me, or maybe it's the news that has a big pull for you, or something business related, whatever it is that is

really, I believe, an idol because it's taking precedent over God. Remove it. So it's not an option. Don't allow yourself the temptation. Use it as a motivation. I can do this after I do my Bible. So that's my first tip is to streamline the process.

TIP #2: ANCHOR YOUR HABIT

My second tip is to attach the habit you want to develop onto an anchor you already have throughout your day. And what do I mean by an anchor? An anchor is something you do every single day. So some anchors are, no matter what season you're in, getting up, going to bed, eating three meals a day, eating breakfast, lunch and dinner, those are all anchors. Those are things you do every single day of your life, no matter what's going on.

And so I really encourage you, if you're trying to develop a new habit, to attach that habit to an anchor, something you already do every single day. That way you're not in the middle of out raking your yard or taking your kid to something when you realize, oh great, now I should be doing my Bible. No, because you have an anchor you're attaching it to, that's consistent every single day. And so it works as a really good foundation and reminder.

MAYBE IT'S BREAKFAST

And so for myself, I wanted to develop the habit about a year ago of doing Bible with my kids every single day. And so I attached it to the anchor of breakfast. And so right after breakfast, or now while my kids are eating - I'm doing intermittent fasting, so I'm not eating - I'm able to do Bible with them.

And it's just the easiest way to remember and be reminded of what it is that you're trying to develop and create a habit with. So that is my second tip for creating a new habit successfully.

Now, maybe you're thinking, okay, this is great advice, but I literally, I eat when my kids eat. I don't have any time after the meal to do the Bible. I get up and I'm exhausted or I go to bed and I'm just I fall asleep every time I try and read my Bible at night. That just doesn't practically work for me.

GET CREATIVE

The other thing then that I encourage you to do is to look around and find what is something you do every single day. Another thing that I do almost every single day is I spend some time after I put my kids in bed at night to clean up my house and to clean up the kitchen.

And this is a great time that I can pull out my phone and I can listen to a sermon, I can find a podcast that encourages me. And so don't feel like in order to be a good Christian, you have to have one hour of complete solitude every single day without any interruptions in order to really get to know God.

God understands. It says that God gently leads those that have young. I love that he gently does that because sometimes it feels like anything beyond gentle I can't handle. At different times in motherhood I just feel like I'm going to break. And so I love that he gently leads us. So don't feel guilty if you can't create an hour of solitude every single day. The Lord understands.

TRANSFORMING YOUR MIND

But I do really encourage you to be creative. Listen to a sermon while you're doing the

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dishes in the evening. If you have a drive, you do consistently five days a week, create the habit of turning on an audio reading of the Bible, of some part of the Bible so that you are constantly transforming your mind.

And I really think by transforming your mind … I do my Bible in the morning sometimes. I listen to sermons throughout the day, I listen to worship music. And I don't know about you, but my mind still needs some serious transforming in so many ways. And so I need all the help I can get to transform my mind and constantly be renewing it so that I have the right perspective.

And I find that when I have the right perspective, because I've been doing that, then even the busyness of life doesn't have that same complete sense of overwhelm and stress that it does when I don't have the right priorities. Or I've made things to be an idol that were not meant for me to find all my satisfaction or fulfillment in.

SARA'S RECOMMENDATIONS

Along the line of listening to audio readings of the Bible or listening to sermons, I do have a couple of people I'd recommend that I feel pretty confident recommending to you. If you're looking for people to listen to that are solid Bible teachers. The first is Mike Winger. He's on both YouTube and on the podcast app. His YouTube channel and podcast are both called Bible Thinker and he just dives into tons of books of the Bible. He understands a lot of different religions, he does a lot of Q and A's he's just really well rooted.

Of course, I don't agree with every single thing either one of these guys say, but I would say the majority of the stuff they share is just really good, and I feel comfortable recommending them. The other one's name is Frank Turek, and he dives more into the apologetic side of things. So if you're struggling with doubt in your faith, if you're struggling with maybe unanswered questions, I really encourage you to check him out. His name is Frank Turek. His YouTube channel and his podcast are both called Cross Examined, and he just has a ton of resources as well. And I can credit a lot of my faith today to some of his stuff I listened to several years ago when I was going through a really dramatic time in my faith, I would say. So I really recommend both of them.

TIP #3: MAKE THE WORD VISIBLE

All right. Another way that you can practically digest the word throughout the day if you're really busy, is to just write on some three by five cards different verses that you find encouraging or challenging and print them up throughout parts of your home that you're at consistently.

So I have some above my sink right now. I've taken some with me in the car. I do some Bible memory with my kids. And so all of those are different ways that, once again, you're able to renew your mind and transform your mind as you're going about the busyness of life, the busyness of motherhood, and maybe seldom having times alone with the Lord.

TIP #4: WORSHIP MUSIC

Another thing that's really easy, of course, is just to listen to worship music. I love listening to worship music. I turn it on almost every morning now as I make breakfast. I find it sets the mood for the day. It gets my mind in the right mindset for the day. It calms my soul, and I love that it's playing for my kids to hear as well.

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TIP #5: PRAY FOR HELP

So the last two things that I want to share, and these are some things I felt really challenged and recently myself and very convicted about. You can apply all of these methods. You can develop a consistent Bible time and still not enjoy it or really, truly get to know the Lord. So I would encourage you to pray that the Lord gives you the desire to read his word.

A short little testimony. I was about three weeks postpartum with my last baby, and I just felt like my soul was totally depleted. And I talked to my husband and said, you know what? I think I'm going to get up in the middle of the night and spend time with the Lord. And shockingly enough, the Lord started waking me up in the middle of the night, and I had energy, and I got out of bed right away before that energy left. And I had some of the most precious times with the Lord in the middle of the night.

And so I encourage you, ask the Lord. Lord, help me get up before my kids. Lord, give me the desire to get to know you. Give me the desire to read Your Word. Be honest. Maybe you don't enjoy it. There's been seasons where it's felt like a chore, and yet it doesn't have to feel that way. So pray for the Lord to give you that desire.

TIP #6: SEEK JESUS

Ask and then the last thing is to seek to know Jesus. I felt really challenged in this recently. You can spend a lot of time studying theology and studying about God and never truly developing a relationship with Him. It can just be head knowledge. Jesus is talking with the scribes and Pharisees at one point, and he says, you search the Scriptures for in them you think that you have life, but they point to me. But you will not come to me, that I will give you life. And so I encourage you above all else to study the life of Jesus.

I'm trying right now to study how did he respond in these different situations? What was his perspective? How did he speak? How did he call out sin? Study Jesus, get to know him. And I really think when you do that, you have a love for Him and you are willing to make it a priority, however that might look in your season of life, no matter what.

SARA'S CHANNEL

So I hope this video was encouraging to you. I'm so honored to have been able to be here and to share with you. I hope that these tips were of some encouragement. I hope that they're beneficial. If you are looking for more content for motherhood and homemaking, particularly in the regards of really practical but also mindset related, then check out my channel. It's called Because It Matters. I would love to see you there, and I pray the Lord blesses you. All right, goodbye.

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Cute Gnome Christmas Cards with a Cricut

SARAH EDWARDS • TRANSCRIPT

INTRODUCTION

Hello and welcome to this video on how to make cute gnome themed greetings cards for Christmas.

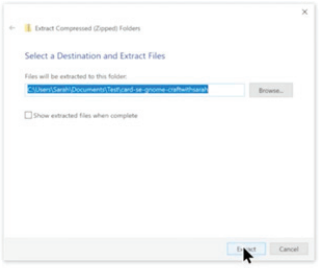
My name is Sarah from Craft with Sarah and I'm going to show you how to craft gorgeous side edge greetings cards on a Cricut machine with a matching envelope too.

I love sending handmade cards, especially at Christmas time, but sometimes it's hard to find the time to make them. I created this project to help solve that problem as these cards are quick and simple to make, but they are still beautifully made and will be sure to impress anyone that you send them to.

To get started, you need to download the free SVG cut file that I've created for you. Go to craftwithsarah.com/gohqcard and follow the onscreen instructions to download the file to your computer or mobile device. Let's get started.

UNZIP THE FILE

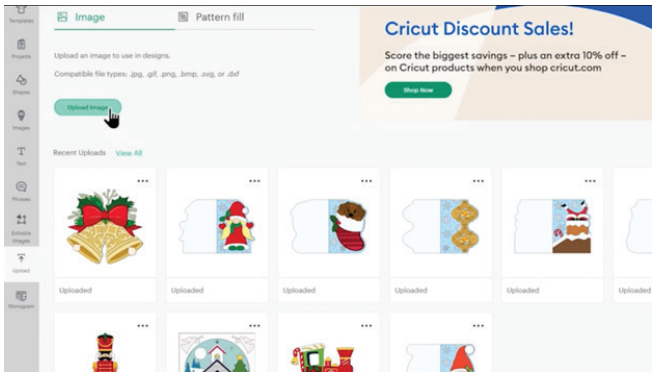
The file comes in a zip folder and you'll need to unzip this before you can get the file into Cricut Design Space on a Windows computer. Simply right click on the folder and press Extract. Choose where you want it to go and then press Extract.



If you're on a Mac or a mobile device, then check out your specific instructions. You can google it if you're not sure how to do it.

UPLOAD THE FILE TO CRICUT DESIGN SPACE

After unzipping, open up Cricut Design Space and start a new project. Go into upload and then upload image you can then click Browse to find the file on your computer or Drag and drop it in.

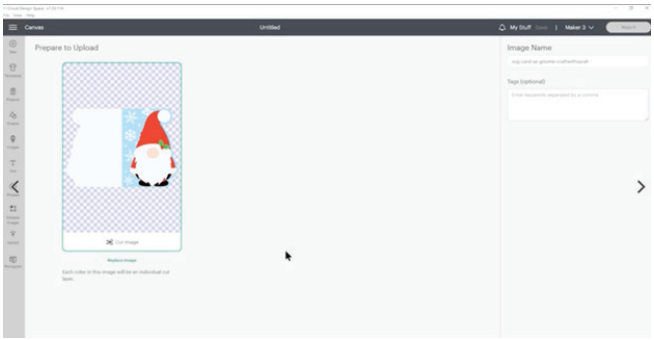


Make sure you choose the unzipped version of that folder. There are several different file types in here for different types of cutting machine. There's also an assembly guide which we'll look at later, and an envelope. But for now we want the card. So choose

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the file which starts SVG in the file name.

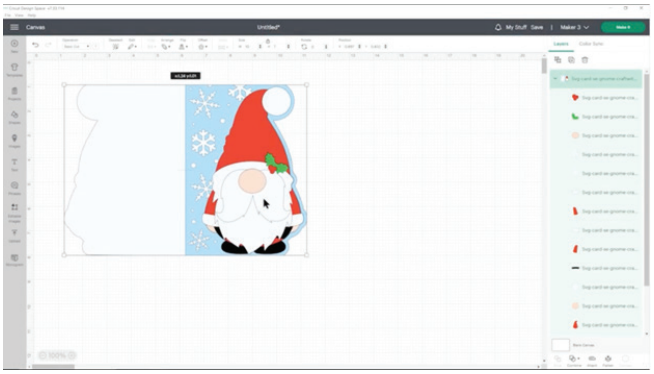
When you click and drag it in, it should look like this with all of the little pieces on top of each other.



If yours looks different and you see all the bits next to each other instead, that means you've accidentally uploaded the wrong file type. So if that's the case, just click Cancel. Try again and make sure you choose the one which starts SVG.

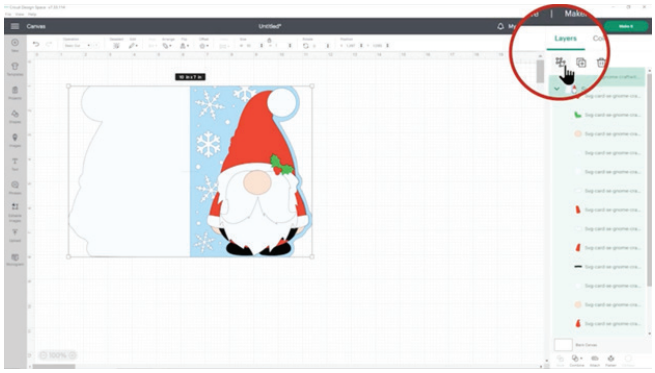
Click on Upload and then it will appear in your recent Uploads so you can click it to get a green border and then press Add to Canvas.

Here it is loaded in and it should come in at ten inches wide and seven inches tall. If yours doesn't, then just change it to match. You can see all of the pieces down here on the right hand side.

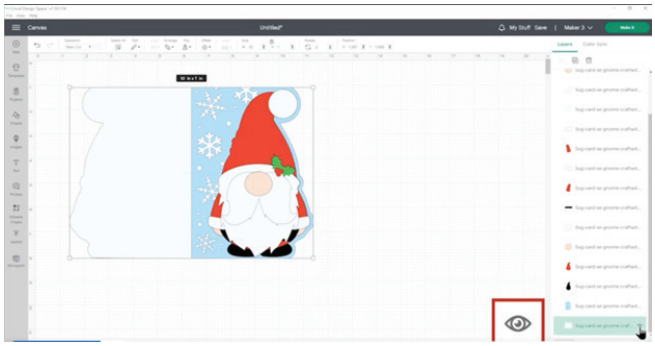


This card is ready to cut as is. However, it is a little bit easier if you add a score line down the middle, then you'll know exactly where to fold it. If you don't have a Cricut scoring stylus or scoring wheel, you can absolutely skip this step, but if you do, it just makes it that tiny little bit easier to add a score line.

Click on the card in the Layers panel and then press the ungroup button at the top. This separates out all of the layers.

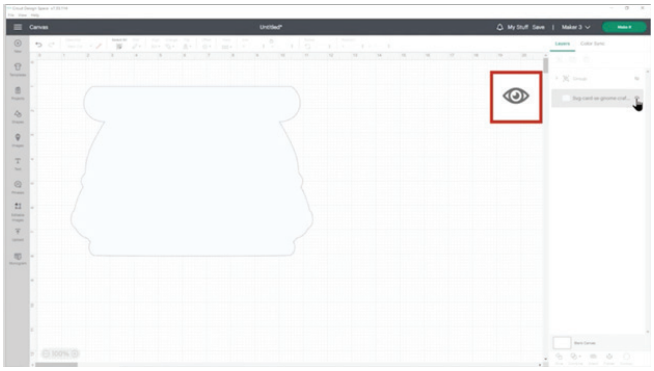


Scroll down to the very bottom and then click on the white base card. And then click the hide icon that appears when you hover, and that will hide it from view.

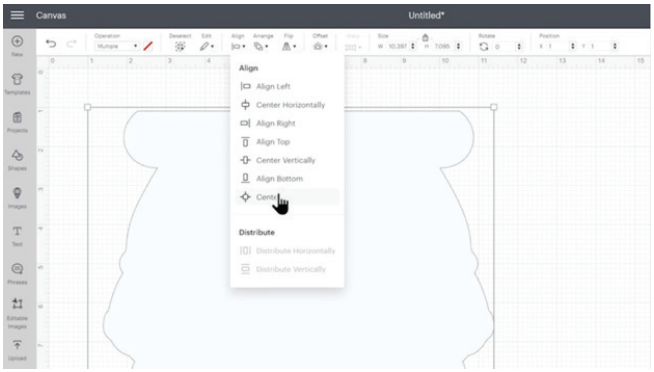


Press select all along the top and then we're going to regroup everything else. And we're doing that so that we can easily just click that little arrow and then click the hide icon. Turn the card back on by clicking the hide on that one. And that's just a really quick way to hide everything on the screen apart from that base layer.

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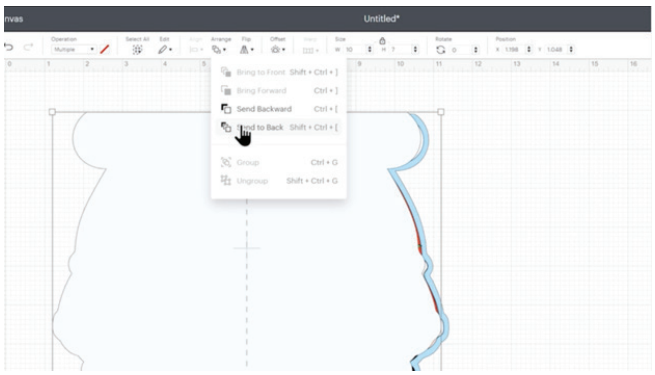
To add a score line, go into shapes and then choose a score line. Resize it to seven inches tall. Click select all and then align and center. And that's put the score line exactly in the middle.



However, the Cricut won't understand this yet. We need to tell it that we want it to do the score line on the base card. To do that, with those two layers still selected, press attach down at the bottom of the Layers panel.



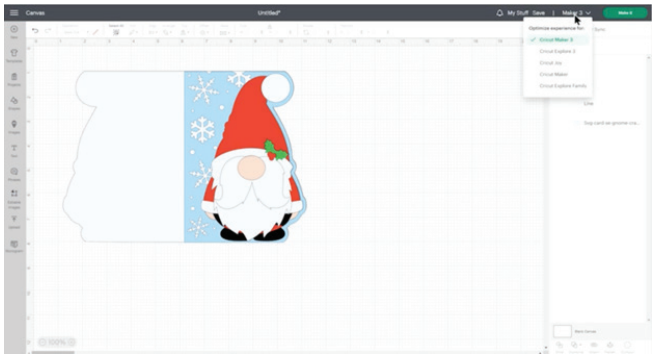
And now I could turn the rest of the card on, but it's now showing underneath the card because when you attach something, it moves it to the top. So just click the card and go arrange send to back.



And then if you want to, you can move that back into place, but you don't actually need to. But there we go. That's now ready for us to cut.

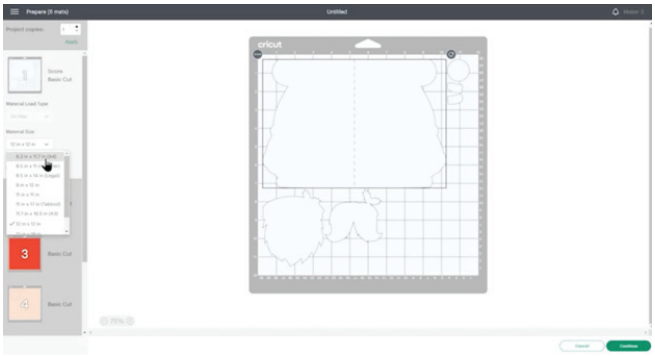
CUTTING THE CARD

To cut, make sure you've got your correct machine selected in this drop down and then press Make It.



This will separate out everything into the individual colors. You can change the paper size down here on the left, so I'm going to use A4, and now that's going to split that onto two different sheets because it's not quite enough space for it to go on one.

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You can move pieces about with your mouse if you want to. To help use up less space, you will need to change the paper size for every color. So just go down and make sure you change it exactly how you want.

And then make sure you click back up to the number one, so that when you start cutting, it cuts from the top and you can work downwards so that you know you're putting the correct color of card on the mat.

When you're happy with how everything's looking, press Continue to connect to your Cricut machine and then follow the onscreen instructions to get everything cut out from cardstock.

TIPS FOR QUALITY CUTS

Here are some tips for getting great quality cardstock cuts with your Cricut machine. First, use a light grip cutting mat and try to choose one that's fairly new or that's not too dirty so it's still nice and sticky.

When you get your cardstock, put it up to where it needs to go and then if you've got a brayer tool or even a rolling pin in your kitchen, go over it to make sure it's really well stuck to the mat.

If you don't have anything like that, your normal Cricut scraper tool does the job just fine, too. By making sure your card is really well stuck, it means it's going to cut better and it's going to have less chance of it ripping or tearing.

When your design is cut out and all finished, don't bring the cardstock off the mat by peeling it up like this, because it will curl.



Instead, turn your Cricut mat upside down and then gently fold the mat backwards whilst keeping the cardstock flat against your surface with your hand.



We're taking the mat away from the card rather than the card off of the mat. This way, all of that rolling goes into the mat, not the cardstock.

Make sure you don't actually bend the mat, otherwise it can snap. It's just a gentle roll backwards, and that way your card stays perfectly flat and smooth when it's taken off of the mat.

Here are the pieces of my gnome card all

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cut out. I've laid the pieces on top of each other to check that I'm happy with all of the colors and that I haven't accidentally missed anything out. And I used the assembly guide, which is included in the download, to show the order to stick all the pieces together in. At the moment, this isn't stuck, though. It's just lightly placed together to see the overall effect.



ASSEMBLING THE CARD

To stick it together, you'll need a combination of glue and foam squares. The glue I like to use is called Collall, which I get in the UK. I love it because it doesn't bend or wrinkle the cardstock like some glues can do. And then I put it into these needle tip applicator bottles for easy precision. Other great glues are barely art glue or art glitter glue.

These are the foam pads I'll be using to give some dimension between the layers. These ones are good because they're quite small, but if you've got bigger ones, that's okay. You can just cut them smaller with scissors if you need to. These ones are 2 mm thick, which is going to give me nice dimension.

But because we're making cards, if you don't want yours to get too thick that it might be more expensive to post, you can buy foam squares that are just 1 mm thick, so you still get a little pop of dimension without it potentially being more expensive to post.

The Assembly Guide shows you which layers will be gluing. For example, this one, it says glue. And which ones will be sticking on with the foam squares. For example, that one.



So let's start. I'm going to move all of that off and then we'll start by gluing the snowflakes onto the card. Turn this upside down and add the glue. Be careful on the little pieces in this snowflake at the top.



They're quite narrow and delicate, so I'm going to make sure I've got some glue in those to make them nicely stuck down. And also this snowflake here on the side, I don't want them to accidentally tear. And then this will perfectly line up with the front of the card.

So it will line up exactly. And the nice thing about glue is you've got a little bit of wiggle room to move things about if you're not quite happy on the first go. But that's

looking good. Much easier than sticking all the snowflakes and dots on individually.

All right, now we've got a little gnome, and as with all my layered designs, we're going to start at the bottom and work our way upwards. So we'll start with this one, the base layer of the gnome. Turn them upside down and add some foam squares.



When adding foam squares to bigger pieces like this one, you don't just want to put the foam around the edge, and that's because if there's nothing in the middle to stabilize it, you might find that the cardstock kind of bends or bows downwards like that, and you won't get as good a 3D appearance. So make sure you put some bits of foam in the middle of any large areas, too, like that.

I can now peel the tops off of my foam squares to reveal all of that stickiness underneath and then stick this on. And there'll be a little border of blue around the edge. So don't put it right the way up to the edge. It should have that border, an equal border, all the way around. Make sure it doesn't go below the card or above it, otherwise your envelope might not fit.



That's looking good. I've only gently dropped it down for now so that if I needed to, I could pick it up and move it. I haven't quite got him straight. We go him about a little. That's better. Okay, now I'm going to push down to get all of that foam nice and stuck.

Next is the big red layer, which is a glue layer. You can use the pieces to line it up. So I'm going to use this little ball on the hat to know exactly where to stick it there.

Next we've got the piece that makes up his face, which is another foam square layer. This time I use the bottom of the beard to line up.

Next is his belt, which is going to go on here. And this is a glue layer.

The next few are just little pieces to add more detail. It's a bit trickier to see where to stick them. So if you're not sure where a particular piece is going, then open up Cricut design space and have a look at the design in there. And then you'll be able to see where the bits go a little easier.

And then I've got the arms on top. And again, these are glue bits. And then the white fluff on the arms. Don't worry that it looks a little bit weird and messy. It's going to get covered up in a moment by his beard, so you won't see any of those kind of join

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bits.

Right, next is his big bit of beard, which is a foam layer. As this goes on, you'll see covers up all the edges of those tiny bits. So now it looks absolutely beautiful.

And now we have his mustache, which is another glue layer. I love his little gnome. He's so cute. For this one, I'll use that holly leaf at the top to know where to put it because that's the only bit that joins on.

And I've just realized I actually forgot to add the top of his hat. So I'll do that now. There we go.

And then his wonderful nose with a bit of glue. That's where his character really comes out. Super cute.

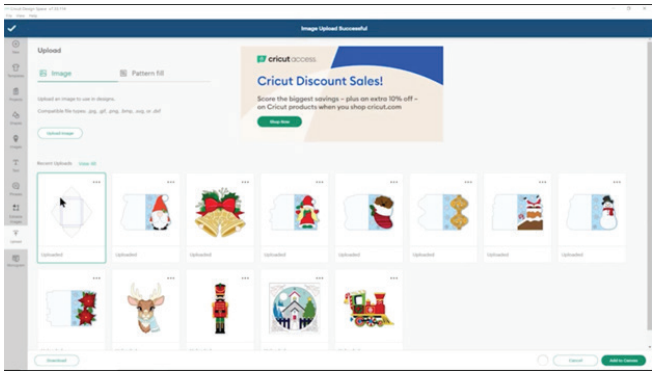
For the holly as this is quite a small bit, I'm going to cheat a little and put the glue directly onto the design. So then I can just drop this on top. And the same for those teeny tiny holly berries, little dab of glue, and then drop that in place.

And there we go. Our Santa Gnome side edge card. It's all finished, so you can open it up and write your message in there. But now we've got the card, what about an envelope to put him in?

MAKING THE ENVELOPE

Now that we've made the card, let's create a matching envelope to go with it. I'll go into upload again and upload image. This time I'm going to look in the envelope folder and then choose the file in there, which starts SVG and drag that in. And then press upload.

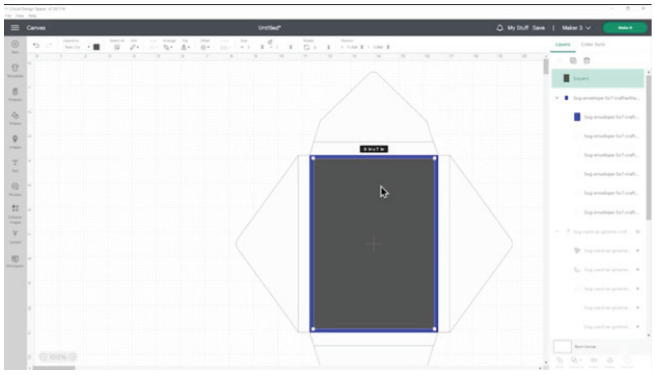
Click it in the recent uploads and press Add to canvas.



You may need to resize this when it comes on the screen. And we're also going to need to do a few extra settings to format the score lines.

First, we'll check the size. And to make this easier to see, I'm just going to hide the gnome card.

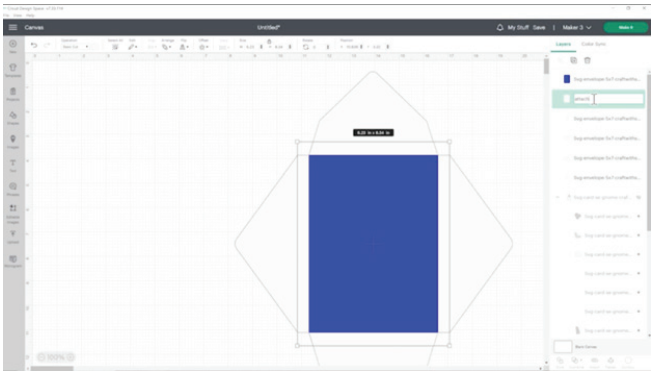
Our gnome card is a five by seven inch card. So to check the size of the envelope, I'm going to go into shapes and choose a square and set this to five by seven inches. I can then move this on top of the envelope and it should fit inside that blue rectangle with a little bit of gap on each side.



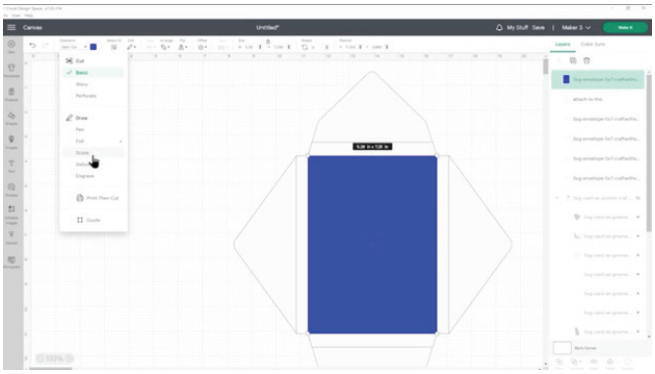
If your blue rectangle is smaller than the gray one, then resize your whole envelope so that it's just bigger. So you've got that little blue border like this. And likewise, if your envelope is really, really big and you have loads of blue showing, just resize it a bit smaller so you end up with a little border like this.

This has come in perfectly sized, so I can delete that one and then I'll click my envelope and press Ungroup over the top of the Layers panel.

Look down the layers and you've got a blue rectangle and then a kind of bigger rectangle underneath. Double click on that one underneath to rename it and call it Attach to this or something similar that's so we can identify it easily in a minute.

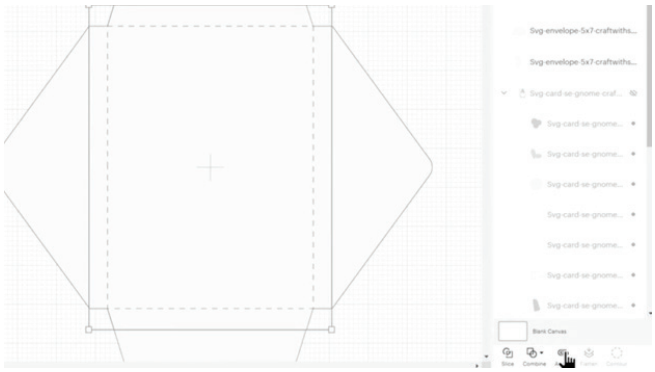


Click the envelope and then under Operations go into Score to change that to a score line.

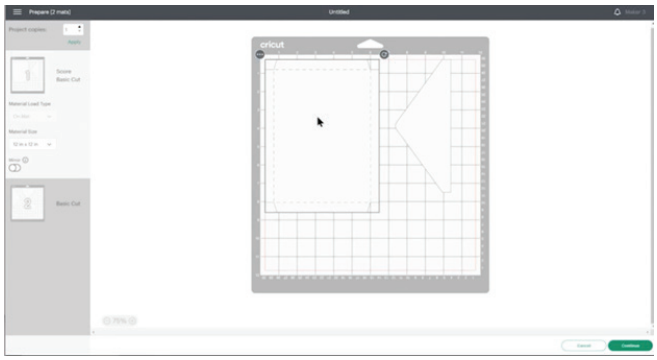


If you don't have a scoring wheel or scoring stylus for your Cricut machine, then you can just delete this layer and skip the next bit. But if you do have one, it's handy to do as it'll make the envelope much easier to create.

Click on that layer, that's now a score layer. Press shift and choose the one called attach to this. Down the bottom of the Layers panel, press Attach and that's going to join the score lines to that rectangle so the Cricut knows exactly where we want it to score.



And then this is now ready to cut out so I can go make it. Just to show you how it should look. You should see the middle bit of the envelope separate from the four flaps.



If your four flaps are joined onto the middle bit, that means you've accidentally attached all of the layers, not just the score lines and this bigger rectangle. So if that's the case, click Cancel and then click it, unattach it and try again.

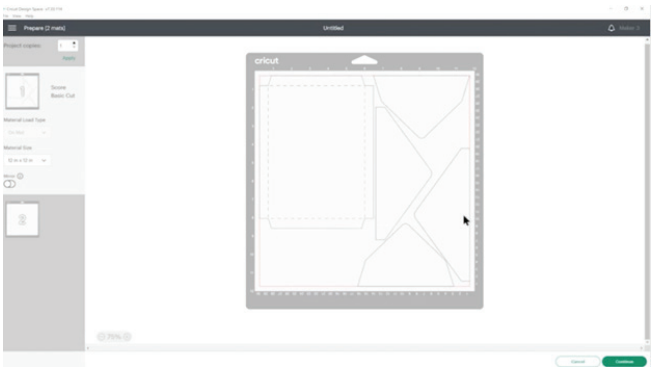
But this is looking ready for me to cut out, although I'll probably just have a little play and see if I can move all of the flaps onto one sheet.

When making envelopes, I like to cut it from double sided twelve x twelve scrapbook paper because that means the envelope will

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be decorated on the inside and the outside, which is a lovely extra touch.

And you can see here I'm just trying to get them all on one piece just so that I only need to use one and not two. As long as nothing's overlapping, you can move things about however you want to.



So that's looking good for me. And now I'll only need the one sheet. So I'll go ahead, press Continue and then get this cut out with my Cricut and then we'll see how to stick the envelope together.

Here are the pieces of my envelope cut out and I've used double sided scrapbook paper. The first thing I'm going to do is turn this bit upside down and then fold it upwards along those four score lines.



So I'm making the little flaps that I use to connect everything else to a little bit hard to see. My Cricut didn't seem to score it very deeply, but that's okay, they're still coming up nice.

I like to go down the Score lines with my brayer tool just to get a really crisp fold. You could do the same with a bone folder if you've got one or just your regular Cricut scraper tool or the side of a ruler would work well, too.

And now I'm going to turn that back the right way around again and look at my flaps. We've got two shorter flaps and two longer ones. Make sure you stick them to the right pieces.



You can use glue, but for envelopes, I prefer double sided tape, especially in a tape runner. It just makes it a little bit quicker and easier, in my opinion.

Go down all four sides of your main piece and only go up as far as that score line. Don't put any tape or glue any further than the score lines on each side. Then just stick the flaps on.



It's pretty easy to tell which are the longer and the shorter ones. But just as an extra

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way to tell, the longer sides have got square edges on them, straight edges, which corresponds to straight edges on here. Whereas if you look at the one for the smaller bits, they've got more of a diagonal line. So it's just another kind of way to know which way to line them up.



There's my flaps done. And now I'm going to fold the envelope up. And there is a right way and a wrong way to do this.

So we'll just try folding in the small bits first and then the big bit over the top. You see, that looks really nice. It's neat. We've got a nice neat envelope shape.



If you were to do it the other way around and put the bigger ones in first and then the smaller one, it just doesn't line up as well and it looks a bit messy.

So we're going to do it this way around. Put my two flaps in, smaller flaps, and then with my tape, go along the bottom and the edge of those flaps.

And if you do what I've just done and get the tape over the edge of the flap, just fold it back on itself so that you don't have any tape overlapping, otherwise your card might get stuck inside the envelope. I did not do a very neat job there.

All right, now I can fold that up and stick it down. And there's my envelope.

THE MOMENT OF TRUTH

All I'd need to do once I've got my card and placed it inside, let's do that moment of truth, just to check. It's going to go it's a little bit. Just be careful on his beard where it pokes out.



So there's my envelope. I put my card in and just slide nicely in and out. And all you need to do once you've put the card in, is just add some more double sided tape to the top. Or you could seal it with sticker or a wax seal or something like that.

And of course, you'll need to write your name or your address on the front.

If you've used paper that's quite busy, like mine is, or maybe it's a darker color it might be difficult to get the address to show up. So what you can do in that case is to write the address on a separate bit of card and then stick it onto the front of the envelope like I've done for this example.



But now we've got our lovely envelope to match the Gnome Christmas card. I hope that you enjoyed this video on how to make an adorable Santa Gnome greetings card and envelope with a Cricut machine.

Now, I don't know about you, but when I'm making Christmas cards, I can get a little bit fed up if all the cards I'm making are exactly the same. However, I still like each year's Christmas cards to match in with the same theme and look like they belong together.

If this sounds familiar to you, don't worry, I've got you covered. If you purchase the VIP all access pass, for Get Organized HQ virtual, you'll get nine additional side edge cards included as part of your purchase. They all follow the same side edge pattern with the snowflake backgrounds, but each one features a different image on the front. This is a lovely way to make matching greetings cards for all your friends and family this Christmas.

And in case you need it again, the link to download the free phantom card shown in this video is craftwithsarah.com/Gohqcard. Thank you so much for watching this video presentation on card Making with a Cricut. I hope you have fun making your own little gnome cards this Christmas. Bye.



Surviving and Thriving with Chronic Illness

SARAH MCDONALD • TRANSCRIPT

Hi, if we haven't met before, my name is Sarah and I am so excited to be here with you at Get Organized HQ. I am a professional organizer and declutter expert. I'm also a mum of five and I live with my family in sunny Queensland, Australia. And I also have a chronic illness.

CHROINIC ILLNESS IS A LOT OF THINGS

And that is exactly what I am here to talk about today. So whatever your chronic illness might look like: whether it is a disability, a diagnosis; if it is just an intermittent physical disorder that sometimes is there and sometimes is not, everything in between; as well as any mental health challenges, whether it's depressive episodes or bipolar, or just dealing with a traumatic experience; back pain, migraines and everything in between.

All of those things have the ability to impact our lives and our ability to function the way that we used to. And I know all about this because I have been through and walked through this journey of chronic illness. I was diagnosed at 21 with two disorders, an autoimmune pancreatic disorder, as well as a digestive disorder called sphincter of Oddi dysfunction. And so for a very long period of time, I have found out what it's like to live in chronic pain.

And some days I feel really good and I feel like I can conquer the world, and other days I just can't. And so I am here to tell you today that there are some really easy, practical ways to make your life easier.

A TOOLBOX OF ADVICE

I wish I had a magic wand, that I could make everything all better and I totally would do that if I could. But because I can't, sometimes we just need to adjust and have a toolbox of things that we can use when we are struggling. And so I'm going to give you all of my practical advice and tips.

I was remembering back to when I was a very young mum who had lots of little children and was really struggling in chronic pain. And I remember thinking to myself, I am going to find a way out of this, even if I have to crawl out on my hands and knees for my children and my family. I was going to find a way out and there is a way out.

It might look really different to how other people do things, but please don't lose hope. I really hope that all of this encourages you and makes you feel a little bit more confident in your illness journey.

NOT ALL JOBS ARE EQUAL

I am going to kick this off with a hot take. Not all chores or jobs around your house are equal. What does that mean? Well, let me tell you something. If you don't make your bed today, it will look exactly the same tomorrow morning. And if you don't clean your floors today, it will take you the same amount of effort to clean them three days

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from now.

And so, when you are feeling unwell or walking through these challenging seasons, it's really important to reprioritize your physical and mental energy onto what is going to give you the biggest bang for your buck.

WHAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

For me personally, it's the things that are going to be significantly different if I don't do them today, and that is things like laundry and dishes. For me, my laundry is going to be significantly worse if I don't wash for a week. My dishes and my kitchen is going to look significantly worse and take me a lot longer to fix if I let them get on top of me.

So those are two things that I am going to focus on when I'm walking through those really hard days. That even if I get nothing else done, maybe if I can get a load of washing done, maybe if I get my kids to help me anywhere, it's going to be with one of those two things.

THE BIGGEST BANG

Now everyone is different and it might look really different for what's important for you. But thinking about it like this, that not everything is equal and that what is going to help me the most today, what is going to look really different tomorrow if I don't do it today? And what can I reasonably achieve in the time that I have and do that and don't feel guilty about it?

We can't do everything all the time, even when you're in perfect health. But finding those things that are really going to give you the big bang, the big payoff, that's where you start.

CONVENIENCE IS SURVIVAL

Convenience sometimes is survival. In an ideal world, I know that it would be great to be zero waste and to do everything in the best possible practice all the time. But if you are in a challenging season of life, sometimes it really is just not possible.

And you know what's more important than getting everything right is making sure that we are meeting our own needs and the needs of our family in the best way we possibly can. And that might look like paper plates and paper napkins for a short period of time while you're feeling unwell, and it's going to mean a lot less mess after dinner.

It might also look like single packaged snacks so that your little ones can access that without making a giant mess. Anything that you can do that's going to keep your head above water is totally worth it.

IT MAY LOOK DIFFERENT

And depending on what your season of life is, it's going to look really different for me. I am an avid user of cleaning wipes when I'm feeling sick because you know what? I can send a child off with a cleaning wipe to wipe down a bathroom sink. I can have cleaning wipes in those areas. So if I happen to be standing there, there's a cleaning wipe right there. I can wipe something down without having to go to another room.

Because sometimes your physical pain is the difference between being able to do it in the room that you're in and not being able to do it if you have to walk down the hall. So whatever that looks like, totally do it and think about it in the times where you're not feeling so bad.

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PUT THINGS WHERE YOU NEEED THEM

Can I put something here? Making sure that those things are where you need it. Because ultimately, if you wait till you're unwell, those things are no good to you. At the grocery store, have some paper plates in the top of your pantry so that when these times come up, you're prepared. You're prepared that things aren't always going to go to plan and that we have a plan B. Although it's not perfect, it's what it's going to help us get through.

And even if this season is really long, honestly, it doesn't matter. It's not forever. You can always go back to doing those things that you used to do. I know it's really hard to grieve that person that you once were that did do things in a more eco-friendly way.

But whatever it looks like, I hope that this has given you the confidence to do what you need to do in order to get by in those seasons.

SIMPLE DOESN'T MEAN BAD

Simple doesn't mean bad. This was a concept that took me way longer than it should have. And I think it's because subconsciously we think that if we simplify things that they're somehow inferior, that we're taking away the good stuff and just leaving the bare bones basics. But what is actually happening is you're getting rid of all of the fluffy stuff that maybe doesn't matter so much and leaving the really important things to shine.

And once you have this concept down pat, whatever your life looks like, whatever commitments you have, you can continue to keep applying these same strategies across your life. So when you're thinking about simplicity, you're thinking about, what are the main reasons I'm doing something? And what are the things I need to do it?

So it may look like decluttering your whole house, but it may also look like way smaller things, like just getting out those things that you use every single day in your morning routine so you can work through toothpaste, deodorant, the makeup you use every day, and then everything else can just go away.

It also can look like reducing those amounts of extra activities, whether it's for your kids or things that you volunteer for, all of these things that take up time and energy in our lives. It's having a think about what is the most important and what can I cut back on?

STREAMLINING WORKS

I promise you kids have been surviving for eons without every single activity under the sun. And that you might find that your kids not just thrive with less activities, but that they are actually happier about it. So if you can have a think about, what can I do to make this simpler? How can I reduce the amount of things? How can I make this more streamlined so that when I'm feeling awful, it's really easy for us to move through it?

Another thing you can do is applying it to things like family traditions. It doesn't have to be a giant Christmas. It doesn't have to be a birthday party every year. It can be a simple family movie night. And all of those things that actually make you happy can still happen without you being exhausted and tired.

One of the huge game changes for me in

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simplifying was just simply writing a list of simple meal ideas. This worked two ways for me. One was because I didn't have to have mentally all of these things running around in my head. I had them written down. But it also meant that we were actually eating healthier. It was really simple for me to grab stuff from the fridge and make something really quick and easy [rather] than going and eating out. But it was simple, quick and easy.

THE CORRECT AMOUNT IS BEST

I'm going to let you in on a little minimalist dirty secret. Yes, less stuff is easier, but the correct amount of stuff is best. And what that means is sometimes when you follow organizers, we're telling you to get rid of all of your stuff, how many mugs do you really need? All of those things.

But when you're unwell, sometimes the amount of things that you need is really different. So perhaps you aren't going to get to washing as often when you're unwell. So having enough socks for everybody for a whole week or two weeks is really important for you. Making sure that you do have some extra dishes so that if you have to go a couple of extra meals without everything being cleaned up, it's going to be okay.

It also might mean that you have a few more items in your home so that you have backups. Because when you're sick, going to the shops is sometimes not an option. And the amount of barriers to leave your home is significant.

SOMETIMES YOU NEED EXTRA

So making sure that you have the things that you need, it's totally okay to have plenty of deodorant and soap. That stuff's not going to go bad. You will use it up, Keep some toilet paper on hand, all of those things that you need. The amount of stuff that you need is what's best.

Yes, less things make it easier to tidy. Yes, you can live in a smaller space, but at the end of the day, sometimes we throw the baby out with the bathwater and we are not having enough of the things that we need in our home to make sure we can see through these harder seasons.

So don't be worried if you need some extra clothes, if you can't live on a capsule wardrobe right now. And you need to have two or three weeks of clothes so that everyone can function and get out of the house really quickly every day, even if you're not in a place to do the laundry.

It is more important that you have the stuff that you need than having this perfect amount of minimalist items that is not actually going to help you in the day-to-day.

WEIRD BUT IT WORKS

Something I tell my clients all the time is "weird, but it works." And what that means is functionality and accessibility are queen. And that just means that it doesn't matter if people don't get it. It doesn't matter if it seems weird to everybody else. If it's what's going to work best for you, that is what you should be doing.

I don't care if you need to keep hair ties and a hairbrush in your kitchen because that's where you are when you're doing your kids' hair. I don't care if it looks like making sure that you have everything you need in your bedside table so that on those days where you're feeling really terrible, every single thing that you need is there. Thinking about what is going to help you in those really hard seasons and having those items where

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they are the most accessible for you and your family.

Maybe that looks like having things down low so that kids can do more things themselves. Or maybe that means that you clear out a big section of your bathroom so that all of those medical things you need are stored there and you store your towels or your skincare somewhere else where it's less important, whatever that looks like.

ELIMINATE ROADBLOCKS

And I think just changing our opinion on where things are supposed to go. Seriously, I don't think that things are supposed to go anywhere. If you need something somewhere, put it there. If it means you don't have to walk downstairs, it's totally worth it.

Because when you are feeling sick, any roadblocks you come up against are going to be one more thing you have to overcome. So if we can make it super easy for us to get through our day, for our family to get through their days, and for those things to run super smooth, do it. Who cares what anybody else thinks?

PLAN FOR SICKNESS

Plan for sickness. Now, I know what you're thinking. You're like. Sarah, I'm already sick. It's too late for that. But I also know that there are probably times where you feel a little bit better than others. And during that time I want to challenge you.

Instead of running around your house trying to get everything perfect, I want you to think about making a plan. And the reason I'm saying this to you when you're feeling a little bit better is because I think that sometimes we discount the mental load that running a house has on us. That we think about the physical things and we can see those really easily.

THE MENTAL LOAD IS HEAVY

But the mental load is just as heavy, if not worse. And when you are feeling sick, it's really hard to know what the next best thing to do is. And so by putting a plan in place before you're at your worst, it will make things flow smoother when things do go pear shaped.

So what I would encourage you to do is just start with some simple things, writing down what your weekly schedule looks like. If there's any reoccurring things like activities or appointments that come up, have them written down. Also write down a list of all of the meals that your family like to eat so that if you are struggling you don't have that huge mental load on top of everything else.

MEAL AND GROCERIES BACKUP

I actually have a grocery list saved on my click and collect so that if I'm really struggling, I know that all of those things that we buy on the weekly that over and over again we need to have in our home are saved right there. I can select them all without actually having to think and that we will at the very least have those basics in our home for the week when we need them. The more things that you can set up in advance, maybe if you're feeling really good, you could precook some meals and have them in your freezer.

But all of these things are going to not just help when you get sick, but they'll also give you a little bit of peace knowing that the next time you have a flare or knowing the next time you're walking through a really

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dark season, it's going to be okay. Because past you has left you some gifts that are going to be really helpful.

PLAN FOR HELP

This brings me to the second part of this point, which is helping others to help you, help me help you. Now I know it is really, really hard to accept help and you feel like a failure and you wish that you could do it all yourself and maybe there are some days where you can, but it's completely okay that you can't and it's completely okay that you hate doing it.

And I just want to validate all of your feelings but also give you some control if you do need to ask for help. So by having this plan in place when things are really hard, you can say to people, it would be really helpful for me if you could do X-Y-Z and you will know what that is because you've already put it into place for me.

It's not necessarily someone coming into my home and cleaning for me, but maybe it is they're picking up my groceries. Maybe it is someone coming and taking my kids to the park to run around with them because I physically can't. And for them to get that energy expended and for me to know that they've had a great time, that is the most beautiful gift.

THE BEST HELP FOR YOU

So whatever will be the best help for you, write it down so that when you are in those dark times when you are in really bad pain, you will know what the next right thing is to do and you will know how to get people to help you, what they can do for you. That's going to be the best help.

If you have a partner, this is also something you could talk about with them. Show them where the plan is. Show them where the grocery list is so that if they are really without you, if you are hospitalized or out of the home, that people can help you by picking up where you left off and you have given them all of the tools that you have to carry them through while you're not there.

It has been a sort of fun to hang out with you today and be part of Get Organized HQ. I know that there are some amazing speakers that are going to have so many fun things to tell you. If you would like to hang out with me again, I am over on YouTube every single week. We have a great community of like-minded people and I would love to see you there.

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How to Organize Your Home for a Multi-Generational Living Household

SHANICE BANNIS • TRANSCRIPT

I wanted to first say thank you to the Organizing HQ team for having me here today. In case you don't know who I am, my name is Shanice Bannis and I am from Toronto, Canada. I am an organizing expert and content creator for my blog, City of Creative Dreams and founder of Inspired by Organizing which is a custom e-design organizing service.

SHANICE'S STRUGGLES

So a little bit about myself. I've been organizing all my life for fun, but started off as a blogger when I first had my son because I wasn't 100% loving my apartment and I was tired and embarrassed by it. It helped my blog and became a source for my audience to organize all aspects of their life, from weddings to help.

One of my struggles was getting my family on board for organizing. It is easier for me and harder for them to not only see my vision, but to maintain my vision. It took a long time and a lot of trial and error, but I had to realize that they aren't like me so they can't organize the way I like.

I was too focused on making our home perfect, like the homes I saw on Instagram and Pinterest. I was hooked on that instead of realizing that I was aiming for perfection in an imperfect space and aiming for perfection instead of adapting to our perfectly imperfect home.

FAMILY FOUNDATION

It wasn't until I looked at our routine as a family, as the foundation for organizing our multigenerational home as well as what each person needs instead of just my routine, that is what has made a huge difference in our life.

I know that you are here watching a boatload of amazing experts and gaining so much knowledge and this video may or may not be a fit for your lifestyle. I understand it's all about the imperfectly, perfect organizing journey, which means that some tips will work for you and some will not, which is okay. I am all about making it your own and customizing it to the journey of who you are today and where you are today.

MULTIGENERATIONAL HOUSEHOLDS

Many of us don't have the luxury of having our own place. Many are living in a multigenerational household, like our favorite shows Family Matters and Jane the Virgin, which have two or more generations that range in multiple age groups. In fact, according to Pew Research Center data, more than 64 million Americans currently live in a multi-generational home. And from global News, nearly 1 million Canadians have multiple family generations under one roof.

Whether you are in this situation because of your culture, the cost of high living, or even

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because of a divorce, it is not easy. Although multigenerational living has the benefits of saving money and built in childcare, there are still a lot of members in a household, which means it can be hard to organize the way that you like and well, lack of privacy and personal space too.

Trust me, I know me. I live with my mom three siblings, my son and my husband. Not to mention both my sisters and my son are on the autism spectrum. So how do we keep a small apartment with a multigenerational family organized? That is what I'm going to share with you today.

ORGANIZING PERSONAL SPACES

Let's first discuss the personal spaces in your home because that is where you have the most control over your organization. Your space, your rule. Creating home zones for each family members is essential. If possible, designate a private bedroom space for each generation to keep their individual belongings combined to their designated area. One way is to create a mother in law suite or simply a designated bedroom.

If you have smaller children, consider getting the adults a lock for their door or putting a safety door knob cover on it to prevent from possible damage. I learned that the hard way. However, if family members sharing a bedroom, you can create personal spaces by creating separation, whether with furniture or a room divider, so there are clear areas dedicated to each person.

When my siblings were younger, I created a desk on top of my sister's bunk bed so she had somewhere to work on her art. I organized all her crafts and all the supplies. Underneath. I created a closet for my brother where I was able to organize his clothes.

Another example is my room. So it changed from my son a lot. It went from a crib to a bed and ultimately ending with a bunk bed. As he got older, providing space for his clothes underneath the bunk bed divider is something I created just to create some privacy.

DECLUTTER REGULARLY

Decluttering regularly and not seasonally is my favorite tip. Clutter can add up quickly with the amount of people, so starting with your personal spaces matters. Create a designated donation zone in your room by setting aside a decorative hamper or tall basket. It can be as simple as a reusable grocery bag. It doesn't have to be difficult. Where you can place your unused or unwanted items at any time.

QUICK YES OR NO

So to declutter quick yes or no items like the no brainer ones for like clothes. You know when you love an outfit, a dress or shirt, it gives you like superpowers and confidence and passion when you wear it. You use these items all the time because you love them, you see them and you want them, and you can't wait to use them.

The ones that you don't like or love tend to collect dust or stay at the bottom of your drawer or back of your closet for years, or you just don't wear them. You get the opposite feeling when you don't like your clothes. If itches or makes you uncomfortable, then you're not going to wear them. In that case, you should donate it.

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YOU DON'T NEED PERMISSION

If you have an item you no longer love or you need or use, remember that it's okay to let go of these items. You don't need permission to let go of items that you own. Don't hold on to all the maybe later items. You know, the item that you might use again one day or might fit into one day. Give yourself a limit if you must keep some of those items.

When the bag is full, you can transfer into another bag and then toss into the car and drop it off at your local donation area. When you're doing errands or have the place pick it up or the center pick it up for you. Be honest with yourself. Don't keep things that you don't actually wear or not truly planning on wearing. Make room for clothes and items you love and will wear when decluttering.

GET INTO THE F.L.O.

I always like to start with a clean slate because you want to see what you're working with. Remember, each person in your home is different, so find a flow that works for you. We all have our own kind of flow.

I like to use the acronym F. L. O. So Full Force, Little by Little, or One by One. Full force means take out everything and make a pile on the floor or bed to store. Little by little is this is where you're going to take it out section by section at a time. And then of course, one by one is when you choose a drawer or shelf. You just take the items out one by one and sort it that way.

For sections once you have taken care of other items, you can now start creating sections. Think about categories such as if you are working on the top drawer with your undergarments, you can use storage bins to divide your clothes, your bras and your socks. For clothes themselves, you want to keep your tanks, your tees and your long sleeves in their own sections. You can create separation by using wooden or plastic dividers in drawer bins or baskets, or creating your own by using a flap of a box and some adhesive wallpaper. I do that one all the time for hanging clothes in your closet. I personally love velvet hangers to maximize space

TRY FILE FOLDING

Folding. If you haven't already considered file folding, believe me, it makes a difference because you can see all of your clothes without having to search through them. Nothing is hidden. Before you tell me that you don't have the time to file fold, I want you to fold as you usually do and then when you put them away, turn them to the side instead of laying them flat in the drawer.

LABELING FOR DRAWERS

Lastly, if you want to take it a step further, you can label your drawers. I've seen it done many ways. My favorite is the front facing labels for kids' drawers with like you could put a photo of it or you can just label with words. But I also really love labels that are hidden. So you can put in the top inside part of your drawer. These are easy ways to label your drawers and you still get an organized look that you're looking for or going for.

ORGANIZING SHARED SPACES

Now that we have discussed the personal spaces, we can talk about shared spaces in your home. Savvy solutions: when creating an organized system for yourself and your family, you will want to make sure that

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you are matching your family's needs and lifestyle.

Look at your daily routine and adjust your belongings to match it, such as having frequently used items front and center for easy access.

DECLUTER EVERYDAY CLUTTER

Declutter everyday clutter. Encourage all to remove easy everyday clutter such as garbage or recyclable items from your surfaces. By removing the quick grab items, you are instantly reducing the clutter in your home.

Start with the easy stuff. Remove the trash. Grab your garbage bag or bin and remove an item that you know is trash or garbage from your space. Don't think twice about it. Grab and put it into the bag or bin and repeat. Do the same thing when you see snack wrappers, tissues and more.

Collect recyclables. Grab your recycling bin or bag and repeat the same process you're looking for. Pop cans or unneeded papers that you don't need.

Electronic recycling. You can look for items that are not working or outdated. There's many companies out there that would happily take your broken electronics. You can also recycle batteries at certain locations.

When you do decide to do a big seasonal or yearly decluttering session, use this time to really go through your items. Decluttering doesn't mean you have to get rid of something. It can simply be as relocating an item to another area that is better. What does everyone use all the time? Sometimes, and not at all. Use that to determine where it goes.

ZONES FOR SHARED SPACES

Zones for shared spaces: unless you create each person a mother in law suite, you're going to have to create zones in shared spaces. These spaces include the living room, the kitchen, and in some cases, the bathroom. When you make it clear what goes where in your home, it'll make life so much easier to work with.

Here are ways you can do this create zones for items within each shared space so it is clear that this spot is designated for these items, such as cleaning areas, remote control areas, snack areas and more. The goal is to keep everything that is the same together and create an essential home for it.

For example, if you're working on the kitchen, create a zone for all your bake items for your cooking and prep utensils, and one for your daily coffee needs and keep the process going. Use bins to break down these zones further into categories. For example, the cleaning area can be broken down into sponges, trash bags, recycling bags, dish soaps, and cleaners.

LABEL IT

Use labels to identify where everything needs to go and where to find it. This will make it easier for anyone to put groceries away or items back to where it belongs. It doesn't have to be fancy. Use the label maker, mailing, return, Staples, even Post Its, return labels. You can buy labels from Etsy, Amazon, use sticker paper, Cricut, everything.

For personal items, put a label on so you know that these snacks are just for you and no one else. You don't want anyone to use it, so if you have the space, have a labeled

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bin or shelf dedicated to your items within your shared spaces like your pantry, your fridge, bathroom and so on. When you set up your home this way, you will find and put away your things much easier.

PUT IT AWAY

Put items back when you're done with them. Find time each day to put things back in the proper places instead of throwing items in junk drawers, shelves or cabinets. This is going to save everyone in your home and household the trouble of having to search for items. We've all been there.

Maximize your space. Rotate your items seasonally, especially for the entryway, so only items that belong to that season is out. You can use a storage bin or vacuum sealed bags. Utilize wall space under your bed is what I use and so much more.

SURVIVAL TOOLKIT

Here is a quick survival tool guide for your sanity.

HOUSEHOLD RULES

Household rules. Have a family meeting. Take the time to create clear household rules that the whole family can agree on. This keeps everyone on the same page. Here are a few things you can discuss: noise levels, curfew, cleanliness expectations, roles in regards to responsibility (example cleaning, cooking, contributing to financial roles), set roles and expectations that are fair and appropriate for the ages of those who are living in the home.

HOUSEKEEPING ROUTINE

Housekeeping routine: When creating a housekeeping routine, consider the preferences of each family member and make sure that it works for everyone. Determine which chores needs to be done regularly, decide who will do what and take turns completing them if needed.

Create a chore list and put it somewhere in your home where everyone can see it. That way, there is a clear list of who does what in your home. As your kids grow or routines change, so will your list. It will evolve over time, so be flexible and willing to adjust as needed.

SHARED LIVING EXPENSES

Identify living expenses that will be shared. Make sure that everyone is comfortable with this arrangement before coming to an agreement. This agreement should include things like groceries, rent, internet, cabling or streaming platforms, water, electricity, bills, and more. If a bill is too costly for one family member to cover alone, then consider having it divided for members of others who can chip in.

ORGANIZING PAPERWORK

Multigenerational households contain a lot of paperwork. Personally, I recommend keeping your paperwork for yourself in your separate bedrooms. That way it is not mixed with everyone else's. Of course, parents should keep their children's files along with theirs by creating a separate folder drawer or filing box just for them.

If your kids are on the autism spectrum, consider using a binder style file system for your files so that you are able to grab them on the go. Also, digitalize your files as much as you can to reduce the amount of paper. I use my phone to scan paperwork all the time using OneDrive.

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You can use the same idea for kid's arts. Keep only the essentials by putting them in a keepsake box. You can do this by dividing it by child as well. I use a scrapbook bin and organize it by grade. There is really no space for large art, so snapping photos of these larger projects and creating a photo book later is a great idea.

Another tip I recommend is to designate an area for important medical information so it is easily available for emergency situations. In my family, we also have an emergency bag. I have one for my family and my mom has one for her and my siblings. That way, if there is a file in it that we need, it is easily accessible and in an area that we can grab when we need it.

FOOLPROOF DIVIDING

Foolproof dividing: make dividing your things foolproof by organizing. Since there is a lot of things you need to keep track of, let's make it very easy for yourself and others. For example, you may share one bathroom with many people. In that case, you should have designated bins for each member to have to put their bathroom belongings in.

For example, our bathroom. I have a designated shelf that I share with my husband and my son. The next shelf is for everyday essentials for everyone to use and so on. By containing my items in a bin or within assigned shelves in your bathroom, shower area or tub area, it is easier for me to bring down the items that I need without causing any clutter.

Under the sink of our bathroom used to drive me crazy, but once I found a system that worked better for us, it became a less stressed area in our home. I find that having clear drawer bins at the bottom with an open bin on the top really helped us to maintain this area. When my siblings need products for their hair, they can pull out the entire drawer and bring it with them to do their hair instead of holding all the products in their hand or going back and forth. It is an easy and simple thing that we can do to make our life easier and it has everything we need or they need in it as well.

Another example would be the medicine cabinet. That is a shared space in our home that we have broken down into categories so that everyone knows where the items are and where to return them. Any personal prescriptions or medications can be placed in a bin with their name labeled on it. This is such a simple thing to do that really helps families out.

DOUBLE DUTY STORAGE

Double duty storage: since the spaces in your home are limited, whether that is your personal spaces or in your common spaces, make sure that you get storage that doesn't just do one thing, but also stores items too.

For example, ottomans can be used to store sheets, blankets or seasonal shoes, but also work as extra seating for your living room or space. It is great to have around and the best part is no one is going to see the items that you don't want your guests to see. Plus, you can get ottomans that match your style or you can get them in neutral tones as well.

MEAL PREP

Meal prep and assignments: after being at work all day to come home to cook can be a lot for one person. Therefore, assign responsibilities around meal prep. Use weekends to prep dinners. If you can make a large batch of dinners that will last you a

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week, freeze them so that it is easy to warm dinner every day. If not, prep your meals in advance. Like seasoning your meats at a time, popping them in the freezer and putting them out to defrost each day. Assign someone to do something to help out.

MANAGE YOUR TIME

Manage your time. Manage your time for your future self. Your future self will love it. Use weekends to prep lunches. It makes a huge difference in maximizing your time when you're prepping on the weekends. Sundays preparing lunches two to three lunches back in the fridge so then all you have to do in the morning is grab it with a drink. Put aside leftover dinners in a container for lunch the next day is also very helpful.

I'm exhausted at the end of the long day. I don't have time to have energy in the morning to make lunches every single day. If you can, you're amazing. Use weekends to prep groceries. Have a notepad on the door of your pantry or fridge to jot down grocery needs. It will reduce the urge to spend on takeout. Shopping for such a large household is exhausting. Consider ordering your groceries using companies like Instacart to free up your time.

ADAPT/CUSTOMIZE TO YOUR HOUSEHOLD

Adapt/customize to match your household. We don't stay the same forever. We grow and we change. Therefore, your organizing will change as well. What may have worked for your kids when they were younger may look different for them as they get older. You may need to reorganize as you grow and you change. That doesn't mean you did something wrong.

It means that you're adapting and customizing to the person of who you are today. If an organizing system no longer works for your family, don't be afraid to change it to match to how the family is right now. "When we know better, we do better." That's by Maya Angela.

What does organizing look like for you and your family right now? Today? You need to be clear on that. Does everything in your home need a bin or are you willing to decant? You won't get to your goal unless all of you put in the effort. It is going to be messy. You're going to make mistakes. It is going to take time for everyone to adjust to the system.

GIVE YOURSELF GRACE

Give yourself grace. There will never be enough time, money, resources, the right answers, the right perfect bins. And you don't need to wait until you get a bigger place or when your kids are bigger to start organizing. Continue and make the effort and change. Organizing for you is different from organizing for others or with kids.

Be realistic. Don't fall into the trap of comparing yourself to Pinterest. As much as I love it or Instagram, do the best you can. If a system is not right for you, it won't work for you. It will work against you. Plus, your energy towards a project matters. You have control to get organized, feel organized and be organized.

TO FIND OUT MORE

To find out more about organizing all aspects of your life, you can check out my blog, cityofcreativedreams.com. It has a jaw dropping free resource library filled with organizing principles and my favorite organizing resource lounge with all my

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favorite things.

If you want to stop hiding your clutter and make your home break worthy, check out my custom home organizing design service called Inspired by Organizing. It is not your average organizing service. I've leveled up the way you think professional organizing looks like by creating something more custom for do it yourself organizers out there.

And the best part is that I can organize your space in your home without physically going into your home and only using photos or videos sent by you. All my social media accounts are under the same name as City of Creative Dreams or Inspired by Organizing. So feel free to say hi.

Happy organizing. Thank you.

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10 Ways to Repurpose a Bookshelf Throughout the Home

SHANTAE DUCKWORTH • TRANSCRIPT

Oh, hey, y'all. My name is Shantae Duckworth, and I am the owner of Shantaeize Your Space, a home organizing business based out of Seattle, Washington. And today, I'm here to give you ten tips to be able to maximize your use of a bookshelf.

Yes, this is one of my favorite pieces of furniture in any home because I am the queen of repurposing items. I love saving money, and if I can reuse this bookshelf in a different way or in a different area of my home, I'm all about it.

1. CLOTHES STORAGE

So, number one, clothes storage. If you have small kids, get some bins. It's perfect for them to put their underwear and socks in, or even for adults, too, if you need to maximize the space of your bedroom, if you don't have enough closet space, or if you're like the average person and you have a lot of clothing, bookshelves are perfect.

You're able to, like, file . . . You can file, fold your clothes. Again, socks and underwear and bins, whatever you want to do is perfect for that.

2. GAME STORAGE CONSOLE

Number two, a game storage console. This is perfect if you have gaming systems, if you guys have gamers. It's a great way to have everything nice, easily displayed, easily access to, as well as board games as well.

The height of these bookshelves are amazing, especially if you have adjustable shelves, kind of like the one that I have here. You could move it up and down to maximize the height and maximize the space for board games as well as gaming consoles. So it is pretty cool. Put this back. I could move this in the living room right now and put all that stuff on there.

3. ARTWORK DISPLAY

Number three, and this is actually a really creative way if you have a lot of artwork, even if it's your children's artwork or artwork that you have collected from various areas of the world or art shows or whatever, a bookshelf is a perfect way to display that, especially some nice, beautiful frames.

It kind of gives its own art show as soon as people walk in, and it's kind of like a nice standout piece for when people are visiting and they can kind of look over their artwork and you can have a nice conversation around that.

4. TOY STORAGE

Number four is going to be perfect for toys for kids, either in their bedrooms or in a family room or in the living room. If you have a designated area for the children to have their toys, especially not even just this bookshelf, but even like the cubed bookshelves that come by two by two or three by three or even the four by twos where you can put them long or you can

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stand them up, they are perfect for kids toys that way.

Again, the kids know exactly where their toys are. They know exactly where to put them away when they're done playing with them. And everybody's happy in the home, right?

5. END TABLE

Number five is using your bookshelf as an end table. If you had a smaller bookshelf or even like a cube that just is just one giant cube bookshelf space, it is perfect. You can put your books at the bottom and then you could put your lamp or your candles or whatever on the top in your bedroom or even in the living room.

Just a nice different kind of a different piece than your typical end table. And again, you're reusing things that you already have in your home or if you're looking for a least expensive option, especially if you're starting over or moving out, those smaller end table bookshelf pieces are perfect for that.

6. SHOE STORAGE

Number six, one of my personal favorites that I have gotten to do in a couple of my clients' homes is turning the bookshelves into shoe storage. You guys, especially as ladies, you know how we are with our shoes. We like to have a lot, we got to have all different kinds of shoes for all different kinds of occasions and sometimes your closet just doesn't have the space for that.

But if you had an extra bookshelf, you can definitely display your high heels, display your nice specialty shoes, your designer shoes, designer purses, all that good stuff. You can go on one of these bad boys and it will look like you're walking into a department store.

7. ROOM DIVIDER

Number seven is if you are living in a small space or living in a studio apartment where you necessarily don't have the walls to block off certain rooms, a bookshelf is going to become your best friend. I have seen this trend going over and over again where people are taking bookshelves, especially the really tall, nice big ones, and putting them in between two rooms, especially like a living room and a bedroom.

If you were living in studio apartment just to give that divider, just to kind of give that illusion of a wall. That way you feel like those two rooms are separated, and you're able to really just enjoy your bedroom for what it is and enjoy your living room for what it is or whatever you're trying to separate. So yes, room separators perfect.

8. BAR CART

Number eight is actually pretty creative as well, a bar cart. Now if you don't want to go out and spend hundreds of dollars on one of those nice gold bar carts that look really great, a bookshelf is also another great way to be able to display your alcohol, your wine, your nice glassware, your ice buckets, all that good stuff.

And that way it's easily accessible, easy to see, and easy for people to determine what kind of beverage they want to have when they're coming to visit your home. So yes, bar cart.

9. BATHROOM STORAGE

Number nine is going to be something I

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personally didn't really think about until I started putting this video together. And people have used bookshelves in bathroom for bathroom storage, for towels, washcloths, perfume, cosmetics, things of that nature. It really comes in handy if you don't have a lot of storage in your bathroom, if you don't necessarily have a medicine cabinet or a vanity that allows you to put those items into the bookshelf is the next best thing.

Again, you can get some nice bins to be able to put your things into if you don't want it displayed all out. Or again, just use it for towel storage, washcloth storage, things of that nature. I mean, the possibilities are endless in the bathroom when it comes to these bookshelves.

10. GALLERY

And last but not least, one of my personal favorites again, because it's just such a great talking piece when people come into your home, is to display your artwork if you are an artist yourself or, of course, your kids are always making stuff. Or if you're just a collectible of great art from either local artists, traveling, your travels, things of that nature, putting them in some nice frames and just putting it throughout your bookshelf, even rotating them here and there, is perfect.

Again, it's a great talking piece. When people come into your home, they're just talking about this art and then you can just kind of go down memory lane and discuss when you got it, how you got it, the artist that made that piece for you, things of that nature.

So again, those are my top ten tips on how to reuse a bookcase. Clothing storage, game storage, toys, using it as an end table, shoe storage, a room divider, bar, cart, bathroom storage, and as well also a display of your artwork that you have collected over the years.

Again, my name is Shantae Duckworth and it was such a pleasure to be on this call with you and I want to see how you all are reusing your bookcases. So please show me. I'd love to see them. And you all have a great rest of your day and enjoy the rest of the conference.

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Time Management for Women Working from 9 to 5

SOPHIE LARGEN • TRANSCRIPT

WHO IS SOPHIE?

Hi. My name is Sophie from Sophisticated Organization. Thanks so much for joining me for today's session where we're going to be talking about working a busy full time job and how to maximize productivity.

Now, in case we have not met before, I wanted to take a step back and introduce myself a little bit more so you know where I'm coming from with this presentation and with this session because I myself do have a lot going on in my life and do work a full time job.

So I am an attorney by trade. I have a full nine to five job, although being an attorney and in the job that I'm in, it most definitely bleeds outside of those nine to 5 hours quite often. And that is where I spend the bulk of my work day. Really focused on my day job.

But on top of that, I also started my own professional organizing company in 2017. It has since evolved and expanded. I am now all over social media so you can find me on YouTube and on Instagram as well as other platforms.

But in addition to that, I'm also a mother, I'm a wife. Like most people, I have an interest in maintaining my relationships with friends. And with all of that going on, it can feel like a lot to juggle it all.

JUST LIKE YOU

I'm sure you can probably relate to that feeling as well. We all have things going on outside of our full time jobs. We all have homes to maintain, our living spaces to maintain. You maybe have meal planning to take care of. You could also be a parent and have those types of responsibilities.

Whatever it might be, there's always something on top of that full time job that's also taking up your time and then this whole other laundry list of things that you need to get done. And figuring out how you put those puzzle pieces together can be really difficult.

And I know a lot of the resources online might not be geared towards those who work full time jobs. So that's why I wanted to focus on that today. And that is where we're going to start, why it's important to break it down and have this separate segment for those who have full time jobs.

TODAY'S AGENDA

I want us all to think through what our schedule is on a weekly basis and a daily basis before we move on to to-do list strategies and potential pitfalls. We're going to take those two things, put them together and talk about routine, how you can take your schedule and the things that need to get done and create a routine that works for you and close out talking a little bit about the work life balance idea.

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WORKING 9-5

So why is it so difficult to get things done with a nine to five job? You may be working 40 hours a week. You could easily be working more than 40 hours a week. That's a significant chunk of your time. And it's not to be underestimated how much that can take a toll on you and your energy that you have left over for the other things that you have in life that you need to take care of.

And again, what I mentioned before is I've seen a lot of things talking about time blocking and how if you just block your time, that can be a really effective way to get all of the personal tasks off of your to-do list. And you have a block where you run errands and a block where you do this and a block where you do that.

KEEPING WORK AND PERSONAL TIME APART

When you have a full time job, oftentimes, depending on your industry and what you do, your schedule may be out of your control. So what we're going to work through today is really preserving work time for work and personal time for personal time. When the two blend together, oftentimes it can pull your focus.

So I'm using a larger concept of time blocking and not necessarily time blocking in the middle of your workday to get done your personal tasks, because your priority when you're working needs to be your job. But it's more so focusing on the task at hand. You are focusing on your workday when it is work time, being as efficient as you can. Maybe you can finish early.

If you are in your personal life, really trying to stay away from work, if possible. If there are deadlines that are flexible that allow you to not bleed those two together, trying to keep that line as firm as possible.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR SCHEDULE

Let's talk a little bit more about our schedules. And I want you to think through your daily schedule as well as your weekly schedule. Maybe grab a pen and a piece of paper, write down some notes for yourself so you can use this as a guideline as we work through the next stages of this process.

WORK HOURS

But what does your day look like? Do you have a job that starts at 8:00? Does it end at 6:00? Do you have a little bit more of a varied schedule where you aren't necessarily doing like Monday through Friday, nine to five type of thing, and you have weekends that you work or evenings that you work? What does that schedule look like and write it down. Then I would also look on a weekly basis. Is that consistent? Does it vary? Take note of all of those types of things.

SETTING

Another thing that's really important in today's day and age is the location, the setting. Where are you working? Are you somebody that's working from home? Are you working in an office setting? Another location? Maybe it's some sort of a hybrid where some days you're able to work remote and work from home, other days you have to go to a physical location that is outside of your home.

All of those are key components to understand for a variety of reasons. Number

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one, there can be travel and commute time added to your workday, especially if you are traveling somewhere that's not necessarily right next to your house. It can also have an impact on your mental state, on your ability to get done different tasks. If you are working from home, maybe you can throw in a load of laundry or something, depending on what your job is, if you're working from home. Whereas if you're in an office every day, that's not a possibility.

MORNINGS/EVENINGS/ WEEKENDS

And again, mornings, evenings, what other things are scheduled into your routine that are on a daily basis? I have a child, like I mentioned, so I have maybe daycare drop off and pickup that I have to go take care of. We have swim lessons on the weekends every Sunday, so that's a period of time that I have to have blocked off. Maybe you go to church regularly or something else that has a fixed, specific time to it and you have to be at that location at that time.

Let's not worry about routines in the sense of maybe you like to work out in the morning, so block off your mornings to work out. That's not a must because there's no specific time to it and I want to hold off on those things until we work on creating routines. So again, just jot down for a bit what is in your schedule, what is non-negotiable, what has a time frame to it, both your workday and personal things outside of work.

TO-DO LISTS

I found this statistic so interesting and multiple sources and sites stated that 41% of to-do list tasks never get completed. That is both mind-blowing to me and actually quite understandable. When you think about maybe the last to-do list you made, did you accomplish everything on your to-do list? I know I am guilty of not always completing everything on my to-do list, but I want to work with that concept and try and think of a way that we can be more successful in crossing things off of our to-do list and really set ourselves up for a to-do list that's going to be functional and work for us and to make the most productivity of those precious hours that we have outside of work.

ADDING TOO MANY TASKS

One of the biggest reasons that the 41% of tasks are not getting completed is because people are adding too many things to their to-do list. They're just being unrealistic with what they think they can accomplish and just loading up the list. I encourage you to have everything on your to-do list that needs to get done because the to-do list is a great resource and way to keep track of things that you actually need to do.
I would hate for you to not write something down in your to-do list because you don't want the list to be too long and then forget that you actually do need to do something and something needs to be taken care of. So it's okay to opt for a longer list.

FAILURE TO PRIORITIZE

But pitfall number two is not prioritizing that list. So if you have this really long laundry list of things that need to get done, you need to have some way of denoting what is more important or what has a deadline attached to it and what are your priorities.

Maybe it's a little star next to it. Maybe you have a separate column for the due date or if there's anything that makes that more urgent than another item. I would also

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consider adding another column or again, some other way to mark how long you think that task might take. Is it something that's going to take five minutes or is it going to take five days for you to accomplish? Those types of things will help you conceptualize what's an easy item to quickly cross off versus what's something that you need to get started on ahead of time.

If you have an item on your to-do list that has a deadline that's five days away and it's going to take you five days to complete, or approximately five days to complete, then you're going to know when you look at your to-do list, oh, my goodness. I have five days before this needs to get done. I factored in the fact that I thought it was going to take me about five days to do this. I better get started right now.

Whereas if you don't have those two factors included in your to-do list, you could find yourself with late nights, working on something and just procrastinating and really running up to the deadline, which is something that you want to avoid so you can cross those things off of your list.

NO ADAPTABILITY

The third thing is having no adaptability in your to-do list. You need to be able to reprioritize things. There's going to be life circumstances that happen and you might need to shuffle things around. You might need to unexpectedly add something to your to-do list and therefore you might need to take something away.

NO CATEGORIES

But keeping in mind the fact that things are going to happen and you need to have a to-do list that is malleable and adaptable to all of those life circumstances, the last thing is not categorizing and this is going to take us down to our routines.

Categories are so extremely pivotal and vital to your success with your productivity, especially when you're trying to get personal tasks done in a small amount of time, which we know we all have with a busy full time job. So I would categorize both broadly and then bring it into more of a granular level.

PERSONAL VS. PROFESSIONAL

I spoke earlier about separating out personal time from professional time. I think it is key to having separate to-do lists that are for personal time and professional time and then within each of those to-do lists, you want to have further subcategories. We're not going to go too much into how to categorize your work to-do list. Everyone could be in so many different industries, so that's really hard to speak to all of you about how to do that.

But in terms of your personal to-do list, categorize home things that need to be done, communication that you need to have, whether it's responding to emails or returning phone calls, again, you could have those communication tasks in one group. And then even further subcategorize into emails and phone calls.

But try to take your to-do list into as many groupings that you can. Don't kill yourself over this and don't take it into too many too many fine groups unless you feel that's something that's really going to help.

CREATING ROUTINES

So now that we have gone through what our daily schedule is, our weekly schedule, those things that have set in stone times

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that we need to be at physically present or we need to be there via phone, whatever the case might be. And we've also gone through how to break down a to-do list a little bit and what some of the pitfalls are. Let's go into that more, put it together and talk about how we create a routine with our schedule and with our to-do list.

I keep telling you that it will be helpful to have a pen and paper and I think this is the most pivotal time to grab that pen and paper if you have it available for you. And take a weekly calendar spread. If you haven't already gone in and written down all of those times that you have as part of your schedule, your work schedule and any other things, go ahead and do that right now.

KNOW YOURSELF

And then before we start looking at your to-do list, I want you to start thinking about where you have those gaps. When do you have the most time to accomplish things, but also thinking about yourself and what you know about you and when you have the most energy.

Are you a morning person? You're most productive in the mornings and it happens to line up that you have a little bit of free time before work where you can do maybe a couple of things, knock off a few things off of your to-do list.

Are you a night owl and you'd rather stay up late? Maybe you like to get a few things done right after you finish your work day? Are you somebody that prefers to spend your weekends getting a whole bunch of things done and being as productive as possible over the weekends?

Or maybe you're a social butterfly and you hate having to do things around the house and do all of the tasks on your to-do list over the weekend and you'd rather knock it out over the evenings during the weekday. Take some time to get a little introspective about that and keep that in the back of your mind.

REPETITIVE TASKS

As we're putting our to-do list items into this schedule, the easiest place to start is going to be repetitive tasks. I think cleaning tasks are such a great example of a repetitive task that needs to get done on a weekly basis that you can schedule into your weekly routine.

I've done this myself with our cleaning routine and it has been so immensely helpful. I've gone through and created a list. I have my to-do list of things that need to get done and need to get cleaned in my home. And I have personally taken it upon myself to assign days of the week that I want to get things done. It's helped not only me to get things done, but it's also helped my family to know when the towels are washed every week, when the light laundry is washed every week, so they know to have their laundry in the laundry baskets. If it's not there, it's not getting washed.

And then I know what to expect every single day of the week. I know what my tasks are for that day and I've broken it up into these bite sized chunks. So I'm not spending an entire day doing laundry. We're not spending an entire day cleaning all of the floors. I'm doing a little bit at a time.

And frankly, that strategy, I think, has been the reason that I have been able to run a full business on top of being an attorney and having a full time job is because I am blocking those times to work on my business and to keep chipping away at

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things. I'm taking those repetitive tasks, I'm saving them up and putting chunks of time onto my calendar.

So, for example, I make custom labels on my website that are available for purchase, and it can be really time consuming to make them. So I have specific days of the week that I wait for orders to flow in, and then I take those days, work on all of the orders at once, and then send them all out on the same day and have this routine. Instead of disrupting my flow and saying, oh my gosh, I got a new order in, I better switch to that and get that done. Which I know can be tempting, but it's a repetitive task. So I'm going to assign it a day of the week, maybe a time of the day when I am either most productive or my productivity is waning a bit because it's a task that doesn't require a lot of productivity. You're probably getting the idea a little bit here.

ONE OFF TASKS

If you have tasks that are considered less repetitive, they're not, I need to wash our sheets every week or something like that. Those non repetitive tasks are still able to be categorized. So when we worked on our to-do list and created categories within our to-do list, use those categories that you have in your to-do list and find times to add those into your schedule.

I hope you still have your pen and paper in front of you and you can start working things in like this puzzle piece. And with all of these things we're talking about, they're going to vary whether they're things that need to be done every single day or more of a weekly basis.

DAILY VS. WEEKLY

I would encourage you to try and push yourself towards doing some of these things on more of a weekly basis, maybe twice a week, depending on what it is, because we're trying to lump those things together. We don't want to switch our brain from task to task too often.

LEAVE A BUFFER

And also, don't be afraid to schedule some time on your calendar and part of your routine that's just time to work through your to-do list. Leave yourself a buffer. I'm telling you, you cannot underestimate the importance of having some sort of a buffer.

Whether you're calling it just time to work through my to-do list or backing off in general of your expectations. That is what we talked about earlier. One of the reasons that your to-do list can fail is just loading too many things on your list, not understanding the timing of how long things are going to take.

And if I'm being honest, I always underestimate how long things are going to take me. Probably happens to you as well. It happens to most of us. So giving yourself some blocks of time that are just to catch up on things is going to be extremely helpful to making sure you work through your to-do list, but also to creating a sustainable routine, which we're going to talk about in just a second.

THE GLORY OF A ROUTINE

But before we move on to that, the idea of a routine and why I've put the schedule and the to-do list together and had you work through all of this and create a routine is because of the glory of a routine in itself. The repetition of doing things over and over and over again daily and weekly, creates automation to the point that you don't even

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think about it anymore. And then that in turn is going to reduce stress.

When I first created my cleaning schedule and cleaning routine, trust me, I printed that thing out. I had it posted on our refrigerator. My husband kept asking like, what day are we supposed to be doing this? What's happening this day? Now I don't even have to look at it. It is like a well-oiled machine over here.

And I know that's going to happen for you with whatever you choose to put into your routine. It just might take some time. So give yourself a little bit of grace. Keep that schedule you're writing out near and dear to you. Don't be afraid to adjust it if you try it out for a few weeks and things don't work. Our lives are constantly changing just as we talked about our to-do list being adaptable. The routine needs to be adaptable as well because there might be things that come in and throw everything out of whack.

And to keep hitting on the same point here, that is why you don't want to overdo it with the scheduling of your routine. Keep that breathing room for the unexpected. Thinking through all of that, you might be extremely overwhelmed. I do not expect you to have all of this perfectly written out on a little calendar right now like oh, thank you so much for helping me create my routine in just a few minutes. That's not the expectation here.

WORK / LIFE BALANCE

I just want to give you some ideas on how you can create something that's sustainable, becomes automated and does help you reduce stress. But I also want to touch upon the fact that this whole idea of work life balance can be really daunting and you don't want to take your entire personal life and try and go as hard as you can and be as productive as you can and forget to enjoy your actual life.

ALWAYS SHIFTING

I don't want you to stress too much about this idea of work life balance because, I know this is hard to hear, but it's not going to be balanced. Things are going to be out of balance and they're gonna tip both ways.

Sometimes things are going to go on your life where your personal life kind of takes over and work needs to take a little bit of a backseat because of whatever is happening in your personal life. And other times work might be really busy and your personal life, you might have to cut back on a few things to accomplish a goal at work. Or just the sheer volume of time you spend at work versus at home might not be an equal balance.

And especially if those things aren't an equal balance and then you're trying to make everything 50-50, that's potentially setting yourself up for a little bit of disappointment. And it's not even about where you spend the majority of your time.

KEEP YOUR PRIORITIES STRAIGHT

You just want to make sure you have your priorities straight. I hope that we all value friends and family and those types of relationships but also I know some of us are very career motivated and career driven. And just keeping those priorities in mind when you're thinking about work life balance but not forgetting about yourself in the shuffle of all of it.

Productivity is one of my favorite things. I feel great when I'm being productive. I

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tend to feel kind of down on myself when I have a lazier day thinking that I could have done this and I could have done that. But that being said, I know something that I personally need to work on is taking that time for myself and I want to encourage you to do the same thing whether it is at work or in your personal life. I would suggest both.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF YOUR TIME

Take advantage of maybe paid time off that you have with your job and spend that time with your family or do something in your personal life to take care of yourself. Maybe that is exercising and finding time to fit that into your routine that we just created, and blocking off the days of the week that you want to exercise and when you want that to happen.

Or asking for help from family and friends when you might need help with something in your life. Draw those boundaries for work and personal life and make sure you are taking time for yourself on top of trying to be the best you that you can be at work and then the best you that you can be at home. I know it's overwhelming, but I have so much faith and confidence in you.

IT WORKS!

These quick tips that I've shared with you on creating a schedule is something that has worked for me and has helped me to balance and juggle all of the things going on in my life: having a YouTube channel and a small business and being a full time attorney and a mom and a wife and all of those things we talked about.

And I can sit here and tell you because I have this routine that has become so repetitive and now automated, I don't feel that daily stress as much anymore. Of course, there are things that are going on in my life and at work that can be extremely stressful, but the general flow of the to-do list piling up is not one of them because I have this schedule in place.

So I encourage you now that we're wrapping up, to take some time, maybe later today, later this week, and really fill out that schedule, work with it over the next couple of weeks, maybe the next couple of months. Continue to adapt it and have it be flexible over time and as things change. And I truly hope that it does for you what it has done for me in my life.

CONNECT WITH SOPHIE

And I want to thank you so much for joining me for this session. I would love if you want to connect further on social media, feel free to send me a DM on Instagram. Let me know that you joined me today and that you're working on creating your routine. That would make me so happy to hear.

I have lots of videos on these topics on my YouTube channel, that cleaning routine that I talked about. I have a video where I break down that process. So head over to my channel if you are interested in more of that.

But I again want to thank you so much and I hope you enjoy the rest of your day.

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Folding 101

SOPHIE LIARD • TRANSCRIPT

Hi, everyone. I'm Sophie. You might know me as the Folding Lady. If you don't, I am the lady that folds the clothes. Thank you for choosing to watch my part of the event. I'm very excited to have you here.

So I'm going to talk to you about how I got into this space, why I think it's important that clothes are folded and what it brings for your customers or yourselves. And then I'm going to show you how to fold. I've put some videos together. At the end, all my basic folds, everything you'll need to get started.

SOPHIE'S STORY

So to start, I'll tell you a bit about my background. So my background is not in organizing, not in professional organizing anyway. I started working in a department store at the age of 16, and it was through my love of merchandising and organizing, all our sort of displays and all our stockrooms out back, that I really, really developed a passion for organization. And this is because it gave me some real after value.

So let's take the stockroom, for example, something that the customers didn't see, but it was so important for the staff and the customers to have the stockroom with a good system, really well organized, and the clothes folded. Because that meant if a customer did ask for something we didn't have on the shop floor, any one of us could go up to the stockroom and find that item in the quickest time possible and serve our customers on the shop floor, ultimately making a sale and keeping our customers happy and creating return in business.

SELF SERVE

So that is the whole after value that we would get from just having a well-organized stockroom on the shop floor. What it meant to be organized was that the customers could serve themselves. We used to call it silent service, and I think this really translates to the home as well. So this is when a customer, which could be another person in your house, can get what they need and be independent without asking for your help.

And I think that's a real key element to think about when you're setting up systems and when we set those systems up in the store. And customers didn't need to ask our help, because maybe they didn't want our help, maybe they were shopping on their own, maybe they were being quick, they knew what they wanted, they wanted to come in and out. Then they could just go and grab what they wanted.

And I'll give you an example of this on the denim section. To create that sort of silent service environment, we would make sure the jeans were by brand. We would label the jeans by their style. And then the pile of jeans would be in size order. And then it's the details, such as the size of the jeans, if they turned around the pile, they would see the label with the size of the jean. They didn't need to mess it all up to try and find

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the size. They were all there. The labels were all showing.

So it didn't just allow for the customer to serve themselves. What it did was it also kept everything tidy as well. So that's really important.

A NICE AESTHETIC

And I think silent service is something to really think about, and it translates really nicely into the home in terms of aesthetic. I also really believe aesthetic is important and a nice aesthetic that suits the person and also the home. I don't think it should be top of anyone's list, but it shouldn't be something that is not a goal to achieve.

Because when things look nice and I know this because when the store looks nice, we would sell more things. And this is the same in your home, when things look nice, you might bake more, or you might be more motivated to keep them nice, or you might be more motivated to, I don't know, put things away straight away.

So there's a lot that comes from having a really nice aesthetic to the home. But I think the one thing to remember about creating a really nice aesthetic is that it can take time, because it's the aesthetic that might cost the money. So if we're thinking about things that I absolutely love, a drawer divider, so they're quite expensive. And what I used to do when I first started using them is just buy one pack a month, and then I'd slowly build this aesthetic up.

MOTIVATING YOURSELF

But like I said, it's really important, really important to think about what it looks like in the end. Okay? It doesn't have to be Instagram perfect, but I think there's a little bit of what's the word, like shame around these Instagram perfect homes. And of course, let's use our common sense, they don't look like that all the time. That's just a moment on the camera.

But there is something motivating and important about creating a nice aesthetic in your home. So that is something to think about as well. You can sell more to yourself through a nice looking wardrobe.

INSIDER SECRETS

So folding clothes, I mean, I have folded clothes for the best of the best. So if I think back to the store, brands had their own folds, and what people didn't see is that the brands would come in or send us worksheets of how to fold their clothes, where the logos wanted to be, where, how the jeans needed to be piled. And this was for a number of reasons, actually.

I mean, there was reasons they wanted to stand out. They wanted to look different from the other brands. They wanted to look really cool. They wanted to have the wow factor. The only thing this taught me, really, is, one, how to fold, but two, that there's many different ways to fold.

AWARENESS OF YOUR SPACE

The other thing about folding clothes is you need to have an awareness of your space. So I always say to my followers, don't change your space necessarily for your fold. You can change the fold for your space. So in the videos, what you'll see is me like let's take a t shirt. You'll see me folding the t shirt in on the sides to start with. Well, if that doesn't fit the width of your space, just fold the sides in a bit more. If you need it to be a bit longer, then fold the sides in a little bit less. You can always adjust the fold to

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fit the space and that's the cheapest thing to do as well. It means you don't need any money.

DRAWER DIVIDERS ARE KEY

But probably the best product that I can recommend, and I'm sure you use them yourselves, is the drawer dividers. You really don't need anything else. And let's talk about the drawer dividers for a minute because there's a couple of reasons why I think these are the key products for everyone.

First of all, they're sturdy, they're good quality and they will last a very, very long time. I've got drawer dividers in my house that have been here for years. But two, you can move them to change the space. So take the kids for example. The kids' clothes might be, might be they get bigger, they get bigger and bigger and your space could go from that. And all you have to do to fit the clothes and the bigger clothes is just move the drawer divider a little bit more, whereas if you had the clothes in the boxes, eventually they're not going to fit the box.

So I think drawer dividers are the most sustainable product to use and the ones that I would recommend. And although there is a place for little boxes and baskets, maybe if we're talking about shelves, I think keep it simple and just stick with the drawer dividers because they are literally the best. I love them so much.

FOLD ALONG WITH SOPHIE

Anyway, why don't we get into the videos? A couple of things, if you do want to. I know you've got this video for a little while, but if you do want to view any of my slow folds so you can follow along, they're all available on my YouTube channel or on my website, thefoldlady.com. Or if you do want to read more about my philosophy and more about after value, you can read that in my book which is available in all good bookstores and also has a folding guide in the back.

So you can fold along step by step if you need to, or maybe if you are professional organizer, these are great for your clients as well. So thank you again and happy folding.

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Daily Task Looping - How to Create Gentle Routines that You Will Actually Stick With!

STEPH GEISBRECHT • TRANSCRIPT

Hey, there I'm Steph. Welcome to Get Organized HQ 2023. Thank you so much for joining in my session this year. I'm so excited to show you what I've learned over the last year and hopefully help you get your home a little bit more organized.

A SECRET SLOB

Alright, so if you don't know me, again, I'm Steph. I have a YouTube channel called The Secret Slob that I started about five years ago to help me get on track and get organized. And really, over those last five years, I've dedicated my life to figuring out how to create systems within our house that help it stay clean, organized with as little effort as possible.

Because I'm not going to lie, I'm still pretty lazy. So if you have a daily routine that you stick to every day and it keeps your house clean, and your whole family's on board and you've got everything running like clockwork, this video probably isn't for you.

I mean, that's amazing. That's really the goal here is to figure out what's going to work to keep our house clean, organized, and without us losing our minds, right? If that's not you, you're in the right place.

A SMIPLE WAY

I'm going to show you a really simple way to get your daily routines in check. Especially if you have a crazy life, if you have kids and pets and a job and things going on and there's just no way that you can check off every box every single day.

I started using this system about a year ago. I kind of made it up, but I think I've seen little bits and pieces other places. I started using it a year ago when my life just felt crazy. I had too many things going on, too many balls in the air to juggle, and just too much stuff to keep track of. I couldn't get my daily routine done every single day. And I was always feeling really discouraged that if I wasn't doing it every day, I couldn't do anything. And if I wasn't going to do anything, why do anything at all?

TREAT YOUR CHECKLIST LIKE A LOOP

It was a mess. So I started over, scrapped everything I was doing, well, most things, and started from scratch with something called task looping. And really, it's so simple. All it means is that instead of trying to get through a checklist every single day or every single week or every single month, you treat your checklist like a loop.

And you're always just working on what you can, knowing that the next thing is right around the corner. If you don't get to something one day, not a big deal. You just do it the next day or the next week or the next month. Because hey, we all have crazy days and crazy weeks and crazy months and crazy years.

So this is just a really gentle way for us to

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stay on track, remember where we've been, what needs to be done next, without feeling like everything's piling up on us.

CUSTOMIZE FOR YOU

Before I get started, please remember that your life is different from mine. Mine's different from everybody watching. So what I'm doing every single day isn't necessarily going to work for you and your life. So you can just kind of tweak and customize, you know, what you have to get done every day, you know what your house looks like. I could say we got to clean five bathrooms, but if you've only got one, hey, that's really nice. And don't worry about what I'm doing. I only have three bathrooms, though.

DAILY ANCHORS

Okay, let's get started. Within the task looping system, there are a couple of things I like to call anchors. And those are kind of these core, tiny little daily and weekly routines that you have to do, things that have to get done every single day.

So, I mean, I know I said you don't have to do everything every day, but there are certain things that just have to get done every day. Like you have to brush your teeth every day, and you have to do your dishes every day or else there won't be dishes tomorrow. So let's start with those daily anchors. Let's get started.

SELF-CARE

So we've got our daily routine, so every single day, things that we kind of have to get done to keep our house going. Number one we've got get dressed. Which I know seems crazy because we're all grown-ups here, but when you have little babies, it's not always obvious, along with self-care, which really just means washing your face, brushing your teeth, combing your hair, getting ready how you want, just feeling good about yourself, being ready for the day yourself.

Because if you've taken care of yourself, it's going to be a lot easier to take care of the other people in your lives. And trust me, if you're struggling to stay organized, it's probably because you have a lot of balls and people to juggle.

CLEAN/PREP KITCHEN

Okay. Secondly, kind of clean and prep the kitchen. So this means things like unloading the dishwasher, making sure that our dishes from breakfast go away. Essentially, there shouldn't be a lot to clean because you should have cleaned it the night before, but getting the kitchen ready for the day, if you have an empty dishwasher, you have a place to put dirty dishes, so it's really essential that you have a clean space to work.

PACK FOR THE DAY

The third one for me is pack for today. So that's looking at my calendar, making sure that I have everything on there that I know is going to happen, making sure that I've got my stuff set aside. I have always struggled with the last minute scramble for things like kids' sports, my activities, library books, finding my keys, all that horrible stuff.

Just get it done first thing in the morning. Put your stuff by the door. Even better, put it in the car, and then you've got it. And then you don't have to be feeling like you have to run around.

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FEED ANIMALS

The last thing on our list is feed our animals. So again, if you don't have pets, don't worry about this one. But we have pets and they like to be fed every day. So the last thing on our daily anchor list is to feed our pets.

All right, so you can see it's really basic. Just a couple of things you might be thinking, like, how is my house going to stay clean if all I do is get dressed and pack my stuff and clean my kitchen? Like there's other things that are dirty.

THE ESSENTIALS

These few essentials make all the difference in my life. And I think that's really what a lot of organizing is, is paring it down to the few things that make the biggest difference. It's like the 80/20 rule, right? 20% of the things are going to make 80% of the impact. The rest of it is all kind of superfluous and not as important.

You need clean dishes. You don't really need clean baseboards. So now we've got our anchors. I want you to think about and maybe write down your anchors. What are the things that just have to get done, and I mean have to get done essential every single day? You cannot not do that, right? I don't want my puppies and kitties getting all angry with me.

THE LOOPING PART

Okay, next we're going to move on to the looping portion. And this is the part where we can relax a little bit more. Still things we need to get done, but not in any kind of hurry or any kind of rush. All right, here it is.

This is my daily task loop. And so I'm not doing all these things every single day, but every single day I do the anchor things that we just talked about. So getting dressed, making my bed, cleaning up the kitchen, or feeding our pets, and then I do an extra thing. And the extra thing is going to be one of these things. So in the past, I would do Monday, this Tuesday, this Wednesday, this Thursday, this.

ANCHORS + THE NEXT THING

But I was finding that every single day I couldn't get to it. And then I felt behind or things would get skipped, and then they would get skipped for multiple weeks. Like, I had a crazy Tuesday where nothing extra could happen. And so the Tuesday thing never happened. So what I'm doing here is every day I do the anchors and then I do the next thing on the list.

TASK 1 - WEEKLY BLESSING/ RESET

So the first thing on my list is weekly home blessing, which is really simple. It's just a kind of quick, big clean of your house. And I'll just write down quickly what those things are. This is it. It's just six things done for ten minutes in the main areas of your house. This is not a super deep clean.

It's just running around, wiping down your mirrors and maybe your doors a couple of windows, quickly vacuuming the main areas of your house. So main walkways, main areas, not lifting furniture, not going into bedrooms. Mopping, same thing. Your kitchen, your dining room, your living room, your main areas, dusting, main furniture areas, changing out the garbages in your bathrooms, or if you have some garbages in bedrooms, stuff like that.

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MORE INFORMATION

And then in hers, she had changing out your sheets. I don't have that because I do that on a different time. So that's how the weekly home blessing works. If you want a little bit more information about that, I have tons of videos. You can just go to YouTube and put in Secret Slob weekly home blessing. I've got lots of videos where I'm doing it or explaining or showing exactly how it happens.

This is a huge game changer, though. If you want to add one simple thing into your weekly routine every week, try that. Some people call it weekly reset, whatever you want to call it, it works. Okay, so the first thing on my list is weekly home blessing. So say it's a Monday and I get it done. Amazing.

TASK 2 - DEEP CLEANING

Then the next thing on my list is a deep clean. So this is where the task looping gets a little bit complicated. But it's not because you're going to write it all down. So you're going to have a list with your task loops. You've got to have a list with your daily anchors, and then you've got your deep clean list. So I'll post that here and just show you what my deep clean list looks like. And it works the exact same way.

It's just a loop that I'm constantly looping through. So on the second day, I do my daily anchors, and then I come and I do my deep clean, and I usually do it for 30 to 60 minutes or whatever time I have. It's not about meeting any kind of expectations. It's just doing what you can.

So during that time, I reference my deep clean loop list and just see what's next. So maybe it's windows, maybe it's doing a really deep dust, maybe it's cleaning the appliances or the cabinets, just that deep cleaning stuff. And we're going to put it on a loop so everything gets hit regularly or at least in order. And hopefully that helps a little bit there. Again, I do it for 30 to 60 minutes.

BEST TIP FOR DEEP CLEANING

And the biggest tip I have for deep cleaning is group your things. I used to clean by room. I don't do that anymore. Now I clean by type of thing. So I'll run and do all my windows or I'll do all my dusting or I'll do all the baseboards. Instead of trying to do all the little things in each room, I have one set of equipment and I run around and do it all. And that's really helped me save time and get a lot more done.

All right, so deep clean and like I said, Tuesday is my crazy day. My kids have a million activities. I've got stuff going on. So we didn't do it that day, that's okay. But Wednesday I did. So I got it done on Wednesday. Good for me. I'm not going to try and do two things and try and play catch up. That's not how this works. It's doing what you can every day. So that's fine. Tuesday, nothing happened. No big deal.

TASK 3 – DECLUTTER

The third thing is declutter. So I put this on here because I am just an actual hoarder, hence the name of my channel, Secret Slob. And so I just need to constantly pay attention to how things are looking. So I also have a declutter loop list that just has all the different rooms in my house. And same thing, I'll spend 30 to 60 minutes focused on one little area of my house.

Maybe it's a bathroom cabinet or our entryway or a bedroom drawer cabinet or the closet. And that's kind of how I'm able

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to stay on top of that decluttering, making sure that I'm not just piling up stuff and gives me time to organize areas. I'm on a roll this week, so I did it on Thursday. Go me.

TASK 4 – OFFICE TASKS

Okay. Next thing I have is office tasks. So office tasks is basically paying your bills, organizing pictures. We all have that pile of paper that our kids have brought home from school with photo day and permission slips and report cards. And that all has to go somewhere. Maybe you need to file it or maybe you need to throw it away, whatever. This is the day we address this.

It's also a time that I look at my calendar, plan ahead, go through text messages and emails
and make sure everything's in the calendar. We use this big wall calendar in our family that everyone can see all the time. And it just helps us communicate with each other. And there's no kind of overlapping activities, especially now that my kids are doing more stuff. My husband and I have to be on the same page with where everybody is.

Actually, the other thing I add that day is my plants. So I wanted to give my plants a day, otherwise I just forget about them. So that way my plants are getting watered. Not the best plant mum, but I'm pretty good.

Okay, and let's say Friday we went out to a friend's house for dinner and we didn't get to it. So this happened on Saturday. No big deal.

TASK 5 - BATHROOMS

Okay, the next one on the list is bathrooms. And that's just cleaning the bathroom. So this one takes a little bit of time, but if you want, you could do a quick clean or a deep clean. Or maybe you can add deep cleaning your showers and bathtubs to your deep cleaning loop. You don't have to have it here, it's just when I go and address the bathrooms.

My kids do chores and one of their chores is tidying the bathroom in the morning. But they're little and they don't do the best job. So I did put it on here. It's just a time when I go in there and make sure the back of the toilet got cleaned, things like that. So I'm on a real roll. Sunday I got that done.

TASK 6 - FLOORS

The next thing on the list I have is floors. I know it's over here on weekly home blessing, but we have little kids and we make huge mess. So I do like to dedicate one specific day to doing a really good job of the floors and vacuuming upstairs because in the weekly home blessing I only spend about ten minutes and it's just meant to be a quick kind of interim fix.

I do have one day just dedicated to floors and I go around, I do every single room and I kind of get more into the nooks and crannies. Probably still not moving furniture but just doing a little bit better of a job. And I did that on Monday. Go me.

TASK 7 - LAUNDRY

The last thing you'll see that's probably different is I used to do laundry every single day. That really wasn't working for me. It was feeling overwhelming and it was piling up. Now I have a dedicated laundry day and I actually like it. It used to feel like things were like piling up on me, but really I just kind of know that all day I just can go about my day and I do laundry and then at the end of the day I put it all away and I kind of only

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have to address laundry once. So let's say Tuesday is my busy day, so I got that done on Wednesday.

ADJUST AS NEEDED

These are my daily task loops. You might have to rearrange them for you. Maybe you want to move floors up so it's a little spaced out from weekly home blessing. Or maybe you like having your laundry done every day and you're going to put it on your daily anchor list. That's okay, this is what I really found is working well for me, but the important part is that you make it work for you.

LIMIT YOUR LIST

So put the things on your loop that need to be addressed. I would recommend not having more than like eight or nine things on this list though, because these are all things that need to be addressed, at least kind of once a weekish. And obviously they're not because it takes me a little bit longer than a week, but I don't want them to be taking like 30 days, do my laundry and clean my floors and bathrooms more than once a month.

So the daily task loop, we're really sticking to things that have to get done every single week. So go ahead, build out your daily task loop of things that you want to get done every single week, or at least on a weeklyish basis.

JUST ONE WEEKLY ANCHOR

Okay, I forgot one thing, and I was just really excited writing on my whiteboard. So the last thing that I forgot to mention is on my daily loop, I have one anchor, and that is cleaning my fridge and meal planning. And that happens usually every Monday night because I like to grocery shop on Tuesday. So no matter where I'm at in my loop on Mondays, I don't do anything else. And I do this because my fridge has to get cleaned every week and I have to get food every week.

I can't put the food into the loop because I like to get it on Tuesdays. I don't want it to be whatever day it comes up on. Right. We run out of food on a weekly basis, so there is one anchor in the loop. So wherever I'm at in that loop of seven things, I stop when I get to Monday, come back to this, and then I start back on the loop when this is done. I hope that makes sense, and I'm very sorry for forgetting to write that down.

STAYING ON TRACK

That is Task Looping in a nutshell, instead of trying to get every single thing done that I've scheduled for myself for the day. This is just a really gentle approach to keeping your life on track, not feeling like you have to remember everything because that's the big one, and just knowing that things will get done in their own time.

I hope you use Task Looping and apply it to your daily routine. Even if you just want to make a couple modifications, I know it will make a big difference in giving you a stress free day and helping you get some of those tasks accomplished.

Thank you again for watching my session here on Get Organized HQ 2023. I hope you come over to YouTube and check out some of my other videos. I've got all kinds of things going on from my journey from secret slob to moderately organized person. I will talk to you very soon. Bye.

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6 Time Management Tips for Empty Nesters

SUZY MIGHELL • TRANSCRIPT

Well, hi you guys, and welcome. I'm so glad you're here. So I am Suzy Mighell. I'm a Dallas based content creator and social media influencer. But mostly I am the personality behind Google's top ranked empty nester blog, emptynestblessed.com. My passion and mission is to encourage, inspire and bless empty nesters of which I am one.

A BIT ABOUT SUZY

Well, let me tell you a little bit about me. So I was a stay at home mom when my kids were growing up, but, you know, I always knew I wanted to work once they were out of the nest. So in some kind of cruel joke, I became an empty nester on my actual 50th birthday, which happened to be the day we took our youngest child and dropped her off at college. It was quite a birthday. Maybe not the happiest birthday I'd ever had, let me tell you.

So adjusting to the empty nest is a transition for all of us. And I am no different in so many ways. There's a mixture of grief and sadness and saying goodbye to the past, pushing forward. There's a little bit of elation in that too. And it's that mix when it all comes together that makes this such a challenging time of transition. So we're going to talk about some of that today. Okay?

A little bit more about me. So, I've been married to my college sweetheart for 35 years. We have three adult kids. Two of them are married, one is in graduate school.

And I'm also a new grandma. Y'all, my grandma name is Lulu and our sweet little granddaughter is about six months old. She is such a delight to our hearts. If you're grandparents, I know you know. Well, okay.

WHAT GOT LOST

So I started Empty Nest Blessed when I became an empty nester nearly eight years ago. The reason I did it was because I noticed so many of my friends really struggling in this season of life and it scared me. So many of us were losing their way after kids left the nest.

Y'all, when our kids left the nest, I know I'm not alone in this, many of us looked around and saw that there were some things that had simply gotten away from us when we were focusing on that sacred task of raising our children. In some cases, our bodies had changed. Our looks had definitely changed. For many of us, tech had outpaced us.

Not only that, but some of us had neglected some things in our own lives that were big. Whether it was our health and wellness, maybe it was something as light as fashion. We didn't know what was in style anymore. We didn't know how to dress our new bodies. Maybe beauty or something like I said, even serious like marriage or navigating other relationships.

RETRAINING YOURSELF

Listen, learning to shift the whole parenting

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thing to adult kids and parenting adult kids well, can be a minefield. And it's all about retraining yourself as a parent. So let me tell you I'm right there with you. That is a topic I've written on a lot on emptinessblessed.com and you'll find a lot of resources there if you're struggling with it. So head to emptinestblessed.com and I hope it can help you.

FINDING SUZY

Okay, so emptinestblessed.com is where I share all kinds of things that are of interest to empty nesters. Empty nester women mostly. Fashion, beauty, travel, wellness tips, and encouragement for parenting, adult kids and even more.

So I hope you'll check out my website when you get a chance and that you'll follow me on social media sites like Instagram, Facebook and Pinterest. Y'all, I am embarrassingly easy to find. Just put Empty Nest Blessed into the search engine and I will pop up, you will see my smiling face.

SANDWICH GENERATION

Okay, well, I digress. As empty nesters, some, maybe not all of us, but some of us find ourselves in the middle of a sandwich. Have you heard that term before? Have you heard us refer to as the sandwich generation? So people in our phase of life are often called the sandwich generation, with aging parents on one slice of bread, so to speak, and adult kids perhaps even grandkids on the other slice of bread.

And guess what? We're the meat in the middle and sometimes it feels like we're the ones that have to hold it all together and try to juggle it all. That can be a challenge whether you're working outside the home, you run your own business, or you're just staying at home managing the household. All that has merit, okay?

TIME MANAGEMENT PROBLEMS

This can be a real time management conundrum when you're trying to juggle these things and y'all, it needs to be tackled with intention and thoughtfulness. I don't do any of it perfectly for sure, but when I started Empty Nest Blessed, I just decided that I would be brave, share my life and journey with others in the hopes of encouraging and blessing them. And that's exactly what I'm trying to do with you today.

So that said, today we're going to talk about a topic that I think often gets overlooked in the life of empty nesters. I'm coming to you from my home office. This is the international headquarters of Empty Nest Blessed and I'm just standing here and sharing my heart with you.

So I do think this topic of time management for empty nesters can get overlooked. But as we said, it is a huge issue in the lives of empty nesters. We are juggling a lot. That topic is time management.

KIDS PROVIDED STRUCTURE

So here's what happened when the kids were in the nest, their schedules provided structure for your schedule, right? Okay, so from meal times to weekend schedules, most of it was dictated by their activities and their commitments. Also, you had built in friends with their friends' parents, right?

Okay, now that the kids have flown the nest, finding structure, finding those relationships and accomplishing the things you need to do might be more of a challenge than you expected and thought it would be. I get it, you probably thought

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you'd have more time on your hands than you do. But the truth is, you guys, have you noticed this? We tend to fill up the time that we have.

PARKINSON'S LAW

Have you ever heard of the term Parkinson's Law? So it's the old adage that work expands to fill the time allotted for its completion. Have you heard this? So the term was first coined in 1955 by Cyril Northcote Parkinson. That's a name right there. Y'all, he wrote a humorous essay for The Economist in which he shared the story of a woman whose only task in a day is to send a postcard. Sounds quick and easy, right? But the woman spends an hour finding the card, another half hour looking for her glasses. Been there. Ninety minutes writing the card, saying just the perfect thing, 20 minutes deciding whether or not to take an umbrella along on her walk to the mailbox, and on and on until all of a sudden, guess what? Her day is filled.

So here are some time management techniques that I have found helpful that I'm going to share with you.

1. EMBRACE NATURAL TENDENCIES

Number one, know your natural tendencies and embrace them. Here's what I mean by that. So, my husband likes routine. Y'all, every day he does the same thing at the same time. He gets a lot done, but I don't know how he stands it. I need flexibility and variety in my schedule in order to stay engaged and to keep my creative juices flowing. So this has made our marriage very interesting.

At times I get kind of bored with his version of daily life, to be honest, and he gets kind of rattled by the dynamic version of mine. But over the years, we've learned to appreciate the value of others styles. So I love that Bob is dependable, he's steady, and, y'all, he's helped me see the value of that kind of consistency and self-discipline.

Likewise, I think Bob has come to appreciate that I'm more spontaneous, that I think more outside the box, and I'm more creative. This can be helpful when it comes to problem solving. In our 35 years that we've been together of marriage, yes, y'all, we've realized our styles are complementary to one another.

So whichever time management tendencies you have, my point is you need to understand them and embrace them, y'all, and see their value. Then you need to take a look at the different time management styles of the people you surround yourself with, whether it's your coworkers, your spouse, your adult, senior, adult, parents, whoever. So look at the differences in them in terms of time management styles and seek to learn from them. I think you will.

2. FOCUS ON GOOD DECISION MAKING

Okay, number two, focus on good decision making. That's a hard one. Some of us are better at making decisions than others. Have you heard the term opportunity cost? So that's an economic term that is key for investors, but you can apply it to all decision making as well. Opportunity cost is the potential loss from a missed opportunity. So it's the result of choosing one alternative and foregoing another.

Sometimes, y'all, it can be challenging to make a decision to do something we want to do. Not just because we're not sure if we want to do it, but simply because of what

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we might give up when we choose door number one and let the other doors stay closed. When we let those other options go, it can be challenging.

So I thought I'd share a couple decision making tips for you, kind of as a sidebar as we're talking about time management. Because time management truly is a series of decisions.

SHADES OF GRAY

So most decisions aren't black and white. You need to know that first. Most are shades of gray. So this is helpful to remember. If you're paralyzed by fear of making the wrong decision, you need to remember that very few decisions in life are truly irreversible if you're struggling to make a decision. So try telling yourself that blank whatever it is, is the best decision right now. And you can probably change your mind if circumstances change.

H.A.L.T.

Another tip is remember the acronym... I love acronyms. They help you remember things. Remember the acronym HALT. H-A-L-T. HALT. Don't make any decisions when you're Hungry, Angry, Lonely or Tired. H.A.L.T.: Hungry, Angry, Lonely or Tired.

Do not make any decisions when you're in that state. You'll make better ones if you follow that. Okay?

3. USE THE RIGHT TOOLS

The third tip is in terms of time management, I'm done with the decision making tips, okay? The right tools can help you when it comes to time management. So there are lots of time management tools out there that can help you manage your time. I've tried all different ones throughout the years. Have you? I bet.

So the key is to find the one that works the very best for you and then to use it. And if it doesn't work, switch to another one. Try it out. So if you're a simple to do list girl, I get it. You can use a simple yellow legal pad. Actually, I have some very cute pink ones. Or you can use a cute preprinted to do list. It doesn't matter.

Now, if you're a fan of paper planners, you want to find one that sparks joy in your heart and get busy filling it in with upcoming dates and scheduled events. Some people like to have everything on their phone, on the calendar on there. They might use Outlook, keep it on their computer, keep it on their phone and stay organized that way. That's great.

Whatever works for you. So what I tend to do is use a combination approach. I put my calendar on my phone and I make a fresh paper to do list every day. That's just what works for me.

PRE-SCHEDULE YOURSELF

So throughout our days, we're faced with a million little decisions. Things like what to wear to what to have for dinner, and of course, lots in between. So, decision making plays a crucial role in time management for empty nesters, which is why I wanted to share those tips with you. Okay?

Whatever method you use in terms of making decisions and scheduling yourself, calendar, phone, to do list, whatever it is, consider this. Make your list the evening before for the following day. I truly think that you will sleep with more peace. Okay?

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4. TAKE ONE DAY AT A TIME.

Number four, take one day at a time. So my husband has a favorite saying about the empty nest. And what he says is, we can go where we want, when we want, and we can stay as long as we want to. Which I always answer, empty nest blessed.

While of course those things are not literally true, of course we both have jobs and obligations, I do think one of the luxuries of empty nest is not having a bunch of little people that are always dictating your schedule and asking you where you are.

Like, I might have been at the grocery store and my kids would call and be like, where are you? I have other things to do than be in the house with you. It's different now, of course. So while planners and schedules are great, it's important to remember that reality will always look different.

MARGIN AND FLEXIBILITY

And so it's essential to give your schedule something we're going to call margin so that you can be flexible and adjust and improvise as you're needed. You want to build in that flexibility. People who age the best are the ones that embrace and understand they need to build flexibility into their lives.

5. FINISH STRONG

Number five, finish strong. So anyone can start strong. But y'all, not everyone finishes strong. It takes resilience and grit to finish well. So when it comes to time management, that is very true. Only start something like a fitness regimen, a volunteer commitment, or a new job if, you know, you can see it through to the end.

If necessary, make smaller commitments that are more doable for you. You want to keep your schedule realistic for you personally. Remember what we talked about at the beginning. We're all different. And you know what you can handle. And be sure to leave margin so that you don't get frustrated or discouraged. Very, very important.

Do not compare what you are capable of doing comfortably in a day, a week, or month or a year to other people. That is just down a very bad road. You may have restrictions or commitments that they don't have.

Even on social media, you're not seeing the whole of someone's life, you're just seeing a portion. And so it's important to know that.

6. LIVE YOUR PURPOSE

Number six, live your purpose. You can't do it all and you can't be everything to everyone. So it's essential for you to refine your focus, narrow down your purpose and really concentrate on where you can thrive and make a difference in the lives of others.

The key is to find that sweet intersection of your passion and your skills. So I told you I didn't start Empty Nest Blessed until I became an empty nester. Before that, I was a full time stay at home mom. I told you that. I love what I do, you guys, but learning to balance my job with my personal life has been kind of a challenge, I'll be honest.

If you are struggling to find your purpose in the empty nest, I get it. It can be challenging for all of us. It's okay. A lot of people do struggle with this. I've written and spoken on finding your purpose in the empty nest quite a bit. And I have lots of resources on emptynestblessed.com that

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can help you. So I hope that you'll check those out.

BETTER OR BITTER

Y'all, as we age, we have a choice. We can either become better or bitter. You have that choice to make and how you manage your time day by day has an important part to do with that decision. Better, bitter, what are you going to do?

FREE RESOURCE

I have a resource that I'm going to share with you today when you sign up for my newsletter and y'all, it's called Eight Ways to Encourage Your Adult Children. No matter where you are with discovering your purpose in the empty nest, managing your time well, figuring out how to work Instagram and Pinterest and TikTok or whatever you're into, learning how to encourage and love your adult children well is something that we all want to do.

So here's what you should do. Head to the description box below this video for the sign up link sign up and I will love it if you will join us on Empty Nest Blessed.

Thank you so much for joining me today. I have loved our time together and it was such an honor and a privilege to get to share this time with you. Thank you for joining me. No, I'm thinking of you. We are all in this together, my friends. We are all there together. I'm right there with you in learning to manage time.

Thanks for joining me.

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Effortless Interior Design: How to Create a Cohesive Home Without Even Trying

TASHA AGRUSO • TRANSCRIPT

Hey there. I'm Tasha Agruso, the founder and CEO of Kaleidoscope Living, and I'm honored to be sharing this get organized HQ session with you today. I am a firm believer that your home should make you happy. So on Kaleidoscopeliving.com, I share doable DIY projects and interior decor and design tips, all to inspire you to create a home you love no matter your budget. I also have a signature design system Designer in a Binder that has helped over 11,000 people so far create spaces that they love.

One of the things that I hear from my audience all the time is that they want to decorate their homes, but that they find it very overwhelming and really just aren't sure how to get started. So if you feel that way too, you are in the right place.

EFFORTLESS INTERIOR DESIGN

Because today I'm going to show you the easiest way to eliminate overwhelm when it comes to decorating. I'm going to walk you through a simple process that will help you design a cohesive home. Really without even trying. I call it effortless interior design.

Best of all, you don't need any special skills or design know how to do this. I have also created a workbook for you to walk you through the process I'm going to teach you in this session and you can grab it for free by visiting kaleidoscopeliving.com/effortless.

So that's it. Let's dive right into it again.

My name is Tasha, and my mission at Kaleidoscope Living is to inspire everyone to create a home they love, no matter their budget. So why? Why in the world is this my mission? Why do I care so much about helping people create homes that they love?

WHY IS INTERIOR DESIGN IMPORTANT?

Well, it's because home isn't just a place to live. Your home is really the foundation of your well-being. And this is not my opinion. This is actually really well studied science. So here's a quote from Lindsay Graham, who is a PhD at the Center for the Built Environment at the University of California at Berkeley. Dr. Graham says "Our homes can be incredibly important tools for shaping our daily experiences. How they are organized, decorated, and furnished can be curated to evoke a varied palette of feelings and serve as a form of emotional regulation."

Our homes are really important, y'all. When we wake up or go to sleep feeling frustrated with our cluttered or outdated homes, those feelings follow us around and impact every other aspect of our lives. But when you wake up and are surrounded by spaces that you truly love because they reflect your style and because they function well for you and your family, that positivity follows you around.

So I say, and I know it sounds dramatic, but

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I believe it, if you can change your home, you can change your life. So in the midst of crazy busy lives full of work, kids, homework, housework chores, and just life, our homes should be our happy place. They should be the one place we would rather be than anywhere else because it's where we start and end these busy days. It's where we must be able to rest and recharge.

TASHA'S STORY

So I founded Kaleidoscope Living in October of 2013 to document our DIY home renovations and designs and hopefully to inspire other people to do the same. But to say I was shocked when my little blog started getting traffic from people other than close friends and family is an understatement. But that's what happened.

My blog grew and grew, and then it started to get media attention. So though I don't have formal design training, my work has been featured in HGTV magazine and on lots of influential websites. I've even appeared on the Rachel Ray Show to talk about my laundry room makeover. And now I work full time helping people create homes that they love.

IT'S ABOUT YOU

So one of the most important messages that I share is that creating a home you love is about you. To create a home you genuinely love, you have to really identify and tap into your own unique decorating style. Mimicking interior designs that you see photos of is really never going to get you the same level of satisfaction that you'll get if you really tap into your true heart's desires and likes and decorate your home around what you are drawn to and love.

So what you're seeing on the screen is a peek of what our home looked like when we purchased it about two years ago. Very beige, not us at all. I felt like I was living in a stranger's house because it didn't reflect our style or our personalities at all. And while we are still very much in the process of making this home our happy place, you can see how much we've already changed it in a relatively short period of time.

A COHESIVE LOOK

So you'll probably notice something else if you look closely at these photos. All of the rooms in our house flow well from one space to the next. Another way of saying that is the design of our home feels cohesive. One room looks and feels like it relates to the next room.

So I get asked a lot about how I have achieved that cohesive look. Even though we work on one space at a time and I create a design plan for one space at a time, I didn't sit down and create a plan for every single room in my house at the same time because that would be super overwhelming and hard.

So I'm going to teach you my process in this session and rest assured, it will help you no matter your design, style or preferences. I know that not everyone loves color and pattern as much as I do, and it doesn't matter. This is going to work for you, even if your style is very different from my own.

IT TAKES TIME

Okay, now you're seeing photos of our last home. It was also fairly neutral and beige and not our style when we moved in and it took us eight years to renovate it. Eight years. That is normal. That is totally okay. These TV shows that renovate an entire home in a matter of months are just not

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realistic for 99% of people. So know that this process can and should take time.

Here are those exact same spaces before we sold our home. And again, I hope you can see by just glancing at them that there was a cohesion in the design throughout our entire home. Each room feels like a friend to the other rooms in the house, right? Nothing feels jarring or out of place.

WHAT IF I DON'T KNOW?

So here's a crucial tip. Please remember this creating a home that feels cohesive is actually really easy when you go with your gut in finding what you love. All right, but some of you are going to be wondering, well, this sounds great, but what do you do if you don't know what you love? A lot of people struggle with this.

I think it's actually become more difficult because we are so bombarded with interior images on Instagram, Pinterest, magazines, TV shows. There's no shortage of inspiration out there. There's actually too much inspiration if you don't know how to channel it and use that inspiration in a way that's helpful. So understandably these days it's hard for people to really tap into what they love and what they want to do in their own homes.

STUCK IN A STYLE?

Or maybe this is you. Maybe you have labeled your style for years because that's what you were loving at the time, and now you feel kind of stuck. So I see this a lot, too. Let's say somebody has decided that they love farmhouse style and they stick to that style pretty rigidly when making design choices. But now they're eight years down the road and they look around their home and they feel like the style doesn't entirely suit them anymore. But they're not sure how to pivot.

This process will help that situation as well. Because the most important tip I can give you is that you have to embrace your own unique style. If you do this, your entire home will feel cohesive, even if you work on one room at a time. That's why you don't have to come up with a plan for every single room in your home all at once. Again, that would be like real hard and very, very overwhelming.

FINDING A STYLE YOU LOVE

So how do we do this? How do you know what your style is? How can you discover what you absolutely love without getting overwhelmed in a sea of inspiration images?

SECRET WEAPON

Well, the first thing you need to know is that Pinterest is your secret weapon. If you don't already have a free Pinterest account, set one up. It's free y'all, and it's essentially what I think of as an online bulletin board. So you pin or save images that you find onto digital bulletin boards so that you can collect ideas. And then what I want you to do is identify a room in your home that you want to work on. And then you're going to create a new Pinterest board with the name of the room you're working on.

So for example, if you want to gather inspiration for your bedroom, you might want to call the board primary bedroom. For this session, I'm going to work on the example of a master or primary bathroom. But it's easy to create a new board. You just click the little plus icon and then select the board option. And then you're going to enter the title of it and you're going to click the red create button.

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SEARCHING PINTEREST

Okay, next, use the search bar. There is a search bar at the top of Pinterest and some people who use Pinterest go on and they just scroll through their home feed. And I do that some too. It's fun. But if I'm really trying to find something, I use the search bar. Because Pinterest is a search engine, much like Google is. So if you are looking for ideas for a master or primary bathroom, you might type in bathroom ideas. And if you're like me and you know you love something specific, like I know I love colorful interiors, you might even want to start with colorful bathroom ideas.

But here's the most important part of this step. You want to quickly pin images that you love. Do not edit your ideas. Don't question anything. If you love it, you're going to save it. It is that simple. And here's what I want to emphasize. If you edit or question yourself too much at this stage, this process isn't going to work nearly as well.

NARROW YOUR SEARCH

This is important to know about the search bar. If you don't find enough images that you're drawn to or that are speaking to you in some way, as you scroll through the results, get a bit more specific in your search terms. So for example, if you know you love color, try adding the word colorful to your search terms. Or if you have a specific architectural feature you're trying to work around, or there's something specific about your room that is unique, you can add those words.

So examples of that might be searching for living rooms with vaulted ceilings. If you have vaulted ceilings or small bathroom ideas, just get more specific until as you scroll through the results, you are seeing images that you think, yes, I love that, so that you can save them to your board.

NO SECOND GUESSING

All right, so what you're seeing on the screen is a peek at the images that I saved. After less than 15 minutes of searching and saving images, again, y'all, I didn't second guess anything. If I liked it, I pinned it. And that is how you should approach it. I didn't ask myself what I liked about it. I didn't give it a second thought. I liked it, I saved it.

It's almost like you want to approach this kind of like you would if you are going through a huge rack of clothes at TJ. Maxx, right? You're going to quickly, quickly flip through it. And if you think you see a dress or a top that you like, you're going to hang on to it for now, but you're going with your gut. That is how this works.

TOP TEN

All right, now we're going to go into round two, and at this stage, you want to narrow your images down to no more than ten of your favorite images. So at this point, I still don't want you to give it too much thought, but you can slow down and think, okay, do I like this image more than this image? Those images that are not your favorite, you're going to delete from your board so that you are left with about ten images that out of the 25 or so that you saved, you want to be left with your ten favorites of those.

Again, don't give it too much thought as you're narrowing it down as to what you like more about this image. And I definitely don't want you to think, oh, well, this image I love, but this could never be in my budget. You don't want to do any evaluation like that. Your sole evaluation at this point is,

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which are my top ten favorite images?

Okay, again, the more you go with your gut and stay out of your head about why you're keeping this image versus another, the more effective this process will be, I promise you. Okay?

COMMON ELEMENTS

So now once you've narrowed it down to ten or fewer images, you're finally allowed to really think about why these images might help you in designing your home, okay? Because at this point, it is time for you to study the images, like, really look at them and write down elements that they have in common. All right?

That's all you're doing. You're comparing the images and making a list of what they have in common. So, for example, if all of your images include a natural wood element, write it down. If all of them include an upholstered headboard because you're working on a bedroom space, write that down. Or if there are common colors, color palettes in the images, write it down.

So after you have completed this exercise, you should wind up with a list of elements that you are very drawn to instinctually.

DECIPHERING YOUR GUT FEELINGS

You have tapped into your gut feelings about what you love and are drawn to in these rooms. And that means that those are elements that are going to be very important for you to include in your own room as you bring it to life.

So here are the ten images that I was left with when I was looking for bathroom inspiration, and this was my list of what they have in common. They all had a wood element, and I noted that it was usually the vanity. They all have a cool color palette. It's all blues or greens. They all have some pattern somewhere. So they either have patterned tile and or patterned wallpaper. So I wrote that down and then this was really interesting.

When I looked at these images, I noticed that most of them, if not every single one, have what I would call interesting mirrors. The mirrors are not just run of the mill, builder grade, standard mirrors. There is something interesting about every single one of them.

And if I had never done this exercise, I guarantee you, guarantee, I never would have thought, well, I think it's going to be important to include interesting mirrors. So even for someone like me who now really designs spaces for a living, this exercise, I still do it every time you all and every time, every time I do it, I discover something that I really believe I never would have realized if I hadn't gone through this process.

AVOID LABELS

Okay, I do want to say here that I believe it's important to avoid putting a label on your style. In my opinion, it's too restrictive and it can get you in a design rut. But if you follow this process, every time you work on a space in your home and you go with your gut, you will be surprised that you will kind of just nail it every time.

And the best part is when you do this consistently, every time you work on a space in your home, your home will have that cohesive style without even trying. Because when you go with your gut, your gut is surprisingly consistent. And so even if you work on your bedroom this year and

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your living room two years from now, there are going to be consistent elements and colors and styles that your gut is drawn to. And when you trust that and go with it, that is how your rooms from one room to another will feel cohesive.

IT'S UP TO YOU

Now remember, creating spaces that you love means you have to love them. You only you and the people that live in your house. It does not matter what anyone else thinks. So I have an example for you. Lots of people have said for years that typography is out in home decor. Y'all I still love it. I don't care. I love it.

I have this big collection of A's because our last name starts with A, both of my daughter's names begin with A, and I've collected these large A's over the years. And if I listened to all the design experts who say, typography is out, don't do it anymore, it's not on trend, it's not cool, I never would have hung them up in my house again after we moved.

But when we redesigned our bonus room in our current house, I said, you know what? I just don't care. I love it. I hung the entire wall. What's funny is I really thought other people would hate it, right? Because I've been told by design experts that everyone's over it and that it's not cool anymore and that we shouldn't do it in our homes.

ON TREND? WHO CARES?

But I did it. And because part of what I do for a living is share my projects on my site and on social media, I shared the picture of it thinking here was going to be this huge fallout. If you believe the quote experts, I just created this big design faux paw and then guess what happened? HGTV Magazine featured it in their magazine.

I got an email one day saying, hey, we love what you did with this letter wall. We would love to publish it. And it was published in a section called it was something about taking design risks, fearless design, something along those lines. So, though I don't care that HGTV Magazine loves it or that people who see the photo on social media love it, it just goes to show you that sticking with what you love is always a good idea.

And that there's really no such thing as on trend or off trend when you are decorating in a way that matters to you and when you are just tapping into your own gut feelings so that you can be surrounded with things you love in your home.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Okay, so hopefully you are excited to try this process, but you might be thinking, okay, but then what? What's next? Because discovering your style with this process is the first step you should always take when designing a space in your home.

But obviously there are many things that come after this process in order to create a cohesive design plan. But that doesn't have to be hard either. So once you have an understanding of the style that you love and the elements you want to include, you need to really flesh out a cohesive design plan before you get started.

Y'all, it will save you hours, it will save you a lot of frustration and it will save you a lot of money. If you start just buying things, painting walls and moving things before you've really planned it all out, things probably aren't going to turn out as well as you want them to.

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CREATE A DESIGN PLAN

So you do need to take the time to think about what you want to change in your space. You need to make a plan for what stays and what goes. You need to create a budget. I know it's not fun, but it's necessary. You need to pick a color palette, decide on what patterns and textures you want to include, and only after you do all of that should you start the actual physical transformation of your space.

Now, obviously I can't go into every aspect of creating a design plan for your home in the session, but I can tell you that I do have something that will help you. The fact is that most people don't come up with a design plan because it feels overwhelming, right? There are just so many decisions that need to be made.

Choosing a color palette, selecting furniture, choosing art and accessories that are the proper scale for the room, and hiring an interior designer to help you is always a great option, but it is an expensive option. Interior designers generally charge between $100 to $200 per hour for their professional services, and the average job takes 20 to 25 hours to complete. So if you do the math, that's between $2000 and $5,000 in design fees per room. That is not affordable for most people, including myself.

DESIGNER IN A BINDER

So after getting countless requests for individual design services, which I do not offer, I finally created Designer in a Binder in 2018. It is my exact process from start to finish of decorating spaces for my home. I have used this system for years, and I finally put it down on paper. And so far, we have over 11,000 happy customers using it. It is not a replacement for an interior designer. It is an affordable alternative for those who may love the idea of hiring an interior designer, but it's just not in their budget.

And the system works no matter your style. I do not teach you how to replicate my colorful designs or anyone else's designs for that matter, because that shouldn't be the goal. The system walks you through the design process, and then the workbook portion is full of questions that I would ask you if you hired me to design a space for you. So you'll discover how to choose a color palette, how to mix patterns, how to create a space plan, and how to choose art and furniture that is the appropriate size and scale for your space and so much more.

And it costs a fraction of the price that it would cost you for just a 1 hour consultation with an interior designer that would have barely got you started on your design path. Best of all, you can use it over and over again for as many rooms and spaces as you want. So by completing the worksheets that are included, you'll actually be creating a design plan for yourself one step at a time. You'll also create a budget, a to do list, a project timeline, and more. And the printed binder includes enough worksheets to complete four rooms in your home.

SPECIAL OFFER

But you also get a digital copy, so you can print more worksheets as needed. And as a thank you for watching this session, you can save an extra 25% off Designer in a Binder by going to designerinabinder.com and using the code GETORGANIZED at checkout. The code is good for the next 48 hours, so if you want to order it and save some money on it, don't forget.

And the price for the design system is a total deal itself. But you also get access

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to a private Facebook group where there's an incredible and large community. At this point for you to ask questions and get design feedback so you're never going to feel stuck. We will help get you unstuck and help keep you motivated.

OTHER OPTIONS

If Designer in a Binder isn't something you're interested in, but you do still want some additional guidance on decorating your home, I would love to invite you to join the Kaleidoscope Living community as a VIP member for free. You get access to our subscriber hub, which includes design and decorating guides to help you create a home you love.

And to join us in that community, just visit kaleidoscopeliving.com/subscribe. Thank you so much for watching and a big thank you to Laura and her team for the big honor of allowing me to speak at Get Organized HQ this year. I hope you have found this helpful and that you're excited to try it when designing a space in your home.

Now, don't forget to grab the free workbook that recaps all of the steps that I taught in this session in a really helpful workbook format. You can grab it at kaleidoscopeliving.com/effortless and I'd love to connect with you on social media. You can find me on Instagram or TikTok. I am @Tasha.Kaleidoscope and if you have any questions, just send me a DM and I'll get back to you as soon as I can.

I hope to chat with you soon. Thanks again for watching. Bye.

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How to Fit Your Household Routines into Your Busy Schedule

TAYLOR FLANERY • TRANSCRIPT

Hello, and welcome to this session of Get Organized HQ. It's all about how to fit your household routines into your busy schedule. And I'm going to be leading you in this particular session. My name is Taylor Flannery, and you can find me at a couple of different websites, but the main one that I really work on a lot right, these days is called Home Storage Solution 101.

IMPLEMENTING WHAT YOU LEARN

So I know you're going to get a lot of tips and information in this session, but you're going to get a lot in this entire conference. That's why I really love Get Organized. HQ. The trick for all of these things you're going to learn - the ideas, the tips that you're going to be getting today and also throughout the whole conference - is that you really need to learn how to implement them, right?

Because we can learn all kinds of things, but if we don't figure out how in our busy schedule to do the things we've identified that are going to help us in our home or in our life, it really doesn't do us any good.

USING A TIME BLOCKED TO-DO LIST

So this is going to be a really great session for you. Not only is my promise during this session that you're going to learn how to fit your household routines into your busy schedule, but in general, this is more about making a blocked, time blocked to-do list.

And a time blocked to-do list is where you choose your priorities and what you're going to do, and then you can fit those things into your life, right? Not everything, but the things you decide are the most important.

So this is going to be a really helpful session for you, not only for making sure that your household routines get done, but also for whatever else you learn during the conference so that you can implement the things that are most important to you.

These are going to be my secrets that I'm spilling about how to do this. And trust me, I do a time block to-do list every single day. And the reason I do is because it works so well.

PICTURE IT

So at the end of this, I want you to imagine something. I want you to imagine no longer having to rush to clean the kitchen just so you can cook dinner. Imagine that you're no longer fishing around for those socks to find a pair that matches in the clean hamper, right? Like, you've got it all clean, but it's not put away. That's not going to happen anymore.

Imagine the fact that you can work, take care of your kids, keep your home relatively clean and tidy, and still have some time in the evenings and on the weekends to do something. You want to do something like

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a hobby or playing with your kids or just resting. So the goal here is that you're going to figure out how to use time blocking to-do lists to make sure you can fit household routines and anything else that you want into your schedule.

ABOUT TAYLOR

All right, so are you ready to get started? So before we get going here, I just want to tell you a little bit about me, because you're like, well, who are you and why should I listen to you? Right? So my name is Taylor Flannery, as I said before, and you can find me at a couple of different websites. The first one that I started years and years ago was called Household Management 101. And since then I've done a couple of additional ones, Stain Removal 101, and then the one I work on the most, recently, which is Home Storage Solutions 101.

But I want to tell you a little bit about myself because I'm just a regular person, just like you. I've been married for over 20 years to my husband Josh. We have three kids. Two of them are in college and one is in high school. And I'm a sports mom, so I've been going to tennis meets for years and years and years.

I do have some of my own hobbies. That's something I actually couldn't say a couple of years ago. I think when you feel really busy with your life, sometimes the thing that slips first is, yes, sometimes the household chores slip, but also just the time for yourself. And so this time blocking that we're going to be talking about today is going to help you to have some hobbies of your own.

So I like to go to Aqua exercise classes. I love to walk, and while I'm walking, I like to listen to audiobooks. Those are some of my fun things. Maybe they sound boring to you, but I really enjoy them.

And I am also now a work from home mom, so I run my business full time. Which are those websites that I was talking to you about. The one that I said I work on the most is Home Storage Solutions 101, and you're going to hear a little bit more about that in just a second.

DECLUTTER 365

So on Home Storage Solutions 101, I have a program called Declutter 365, and it's pretty self-explanatory, at least for the first part of it. It's really a three pronged program. And the first is, like I said, the Declutter 365 portion of it. One, you're going to declutter your entire home, and you can do that without overwhelm over the course of a year. The second part of the program is to organize and store what you've got left. And then the third part of the program is actually the most important in some ways, and that is when you're going to learn the skills and the habits and the routines that are necessary so you can maintain your home from now on.

I tend to call that the maintenance of your home, but it's not maintenance like you're fixing a broken toilet or something. It's the maintaining your home, like the types of things you've got to do to keep it relatively clean, keep it relatively clutter free to put away items on a regular basis so you're not tripping over things you use, but that should be put away, that type of thing. And that is what household routines and chores are all about. So that's what we're talking about today.

And this is part of really a kind of big overview of how you implement that third prong of my Declutter 365 program so that

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you can create the home that you've always wanted to live in.

So I already told you that my secret for getting my household routines done each day and also really for choosing what I want to prioritize and actually work on during the day, each day, is that each morning I make a time blocked to-do list. And I'm going to try to convince you that you should do this too.
WHAT IT TIME BLOCK CAN DO

I really do think it's going to be something that's going to affect your life in a really positive way and it's going to be worthwhile to you.

REALISTIC PLAN

The first reason that I think you should make a time block to-do list is that it makes a realistic plan for how you'll spend your time each day. And that allows you to do something that's really important, which is to not keep writing down things on your list that you think you're going to get done that day that you're never going to get done.

I don't know if you're a person like me that significantly overestimates how much I can accomplish during the day, but I'll write down like a whole project I think I need to get done. Well, the project would take me 12 hours. Why do I think I can do that and everything else I need to do all in one day, right?

So this is a way to make sure you get the most important stuff done. So you're really focused on the stuff that you've decided is your priorities and also to keep you from feeling guilty when you don't do everything on your list.

CARVE OUT A REASONABLE AMOUNT OF TIME

It also allows you to carve out a reasonable amount of time each day to deal with these kind of maintenance tasks that we were talking about so that you can continue to have a relatively clean, decluttered and tidied home most of the time with as minimal effort as possible. Now, that doesn't mean no effort, but it means minimal effort, right.

TIME ON OTHER PRIORITIES

It also allows you to figure out how you're going to spend the rest of your priority time. Including you have to work potentially, you want to spend some time with your family and you want to do some things for yourself. And this allows you to figure out how you can do all of those things.

ORDER TASKS

And finally, it really helps because sometimes when you're looking at just a general to-do list, you're like, I don't know what to do first. When you create a time block to-do list, it provides you a rough order in which you're going to do the tasks that can be really helpful. So, you know, oh, I'm supposed to start on this now. As opposed to which thing am I going to start on? Right?

And in addition, it helps you know when to start one task, such as if you have to go to an appointment at a specific time, or you can make your own appointments for yourself with a time block to-do list. Like, I'm going to start this particular task at this time, or I'm going to stop another task because sometimes I'll just get into something and I'll keep going, but maybe

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that's not the best use of my time, right? So you can start and stop using a time block to-do list a little bit more easily.

And these are the reasons I really want you to try to do this.

DOWNLOAD PRINTABLE

So to help you make this time block to-do list, I've actually created a printable for you that you can download and right from Get Organized HQ. If for some reason you're having trouble finding it, I want you to be able to contact me and you can get it. You can get that from me if you need to. Go to Home Storage Solutions 101 and go to the contact page and ask for this printable if you can't find it from Get Organized HQ itself.

In addition, I have a fillable version of this form that you can get along with a couple of other free printables if you will subscribe to my newsletter. So you can get the other form than just printable form, no matter what. And you can get the fillable form along with a couple of other promised forms, and I'll talk about those as needed later on, if you contact me or if you subscribe to the newsletter, right?

So I want you to get that form. This is going to help you to make your to-do list. And I'm using this little pointer here to show you an example filled out form. It's got a little bit of my daily life in it and also just tried to be kind of generic too, so that you could see how this would work for you.

TOP THREE PRIORITIES

But each morning you can fill out the date right here, right where and then the next thing I want you to do is actually fill out the right hand side of the page. I want you to list your top three priorities for the day. This is really important because even with a time block to-do list, sometimes things go awry right during the day. And so it's really helpful to know what are the most important things that you want to get done. They can be work things, they could be family things, they could be personal things. Whatever is the most important for you.

SEVEN ADDITIONAL TASKS

Then in addition, I want you to fill out any other additional tasks that you think you need to do this day. Notice that there's only seven more additional tasks here. The reason for that is because we just can't do as much as we think we're going to do anyway. And so I only have a total of ten here between the top three priorities and other to-dos that I want you to accomplish.

CHORES AND ROUTINES

Now in addition to that, because we really are focused on making sure that we do what we need to do for maintaining our home, I have a separate section of this time block to-do list printable for you that allows you to write down what chores and routines you want to get done that day. Now there are some things that you're probably going to want to do every single day.

For example, as long as you eat in your kitchen, even at all for a snack, you're probably going to have to clean it up daily. So every single day you can write on there kitchen cleanup routine, right, as something that you want to accomplish that day. I also for example, do a load of laundry every day so I might write that down every single day.

But you can also if you get the fillable version of this form, you can type those

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things out. So you only have to type them out once and not write them every single day if you don't want to.

So I want you to go ahead and write down what it is that you think that you want to accomplish to maintain your home that day. It can be things that you do just once a week or it could be things that you do daily. So for example, I don't vacuum my home every single day, but I have here listed vacuuming upstairs and down. My video is in the way a little bit but that is what that particular one says for example and that is something that happened to be something I think I should do on a Thursday for example.

MAGIC HAPPENS

Okay, so after you fill out this left side top of the page with the today's date and then you fill out the right side column with what you think you want to accomplish that day for just regular to-dos and also thinking about what chores and routines that you want to accomplish to maintain your home that day, then this is where the magic happens.

30 MINUTE BLOCKS

What you're going to do is you're going to look at all of these tasks that you have on the right hand side of the page and you're going to assign general times during the day that you're going to get these accomplished. I have this created for you where you're filling this out in 30 minutes increments. And the reason I've done that is 30 minutes increments are pretty good.

They're enough time to get something like reasonable accomplished, but they're not so large that you're thinking to yourself, well, it's only going to take me five minutes to do this task, so what else am I going to do for the next 55 minutes? Right?

REALITY CHECK

So I want you to then basically rewrite the to-do list in the order in which you're going to do them. And we're going to talk about this more in just a second. But as you can see, if you've got stuff on your right hand side and you don't have enough spaces in your day to do it, you already know you have thought that you're going to get more accomplished than you can.

So this is why I say this can be a really helpful tool because it allows you to be more realistic with what you're going to be able to accomplish. And also to make sure you know, you know what, I want to go to my kid's tennis match. I got to make sure that we can get enough stuff done that I can do that.

Or look here, I need to get a little bit more work done in the evening because I've got these particular things that are happening during the day. I got to go to this tennis match. I'm going to go to my aqua class, right, so you can see what needs to happen and you can fit in whatever your priorities are for the day, using this time blocked to-do list.

PLANNING TIME

Now, I'm going to give you more instructions on that here in the next slide. All right. So here is an example of the blank version of this principle. Make sure you grab it. It really is helpful. And each morning, or maybe the night before, if you prefer, I do it in the morning, I will plan how I'm going to time block my day.

And so the first thing I want you to do is we've already talked about how you're going

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to be filling in all of the things you think you want to get accomplished on that right hand side of the page.

BOOKENDS AND ANCHORS

Now, I want you, when you're first looking at that list of the stuff on the right hand side of the page, I want you to start by filling out on the left hand side of the page where you have the time blocks, the book ends and anchors for your day.

So what do I mean by that? The bookends are the beginning and ending of your day. You can't start the day until you've gotten up. Right? So that's why I like to do it in the morning. I might think I'm going to get up at 6:00 in the morning, but in the morning I don't get up till maybe 6:30 or seven. Well, that changes when the book end of my day is at the start, right?

So write down when you're getting up, when you think you want to quit work for the day, or when you want to quit doing household chores for the day. When do you want to go to bed? Those are good bookends for your day.

In addition, you want to write down some anchors for your day. Things you got to do. You're going to have meal time. You might have appointments that you have to go to that day, or you might have to write down when you got to get to work. So those are your book ends and your anchor times.

MARGIN

After you write down your book end and anchor times, I need you to put in a couple more parts that you might need to make sure you can do those anchor tasks. You need a little bit of margin. We're going to talk about margin again in a little while, but what margin basically is, it's just giving yourself some grace. Sometimes things take a little bit longer and it's nice to just have a little bit of wiggle room in your schedule so that every time you get maybe five minutes behind, the whole day doesn't feel like you're just so behind now, right? So giving yourself some margin in your day and in your plan is helpful.

TRANSITION TIME

The same thing for transition times. We will be talking about those again as well. But basically what transition time means is if you say, I'm going to eat breakfast and then I'm going to start work, you know that there's a little bit of a transition time that any brain needs to take between I'm eating and I'm working. And it might take you about five minutes to do that transition. But you just need to keep that in mind.

TRAVEL TIME

And finally, you're going to need to put in travel time. So if you need to go somewhere to an appointment, to travel, to work, to travel home after work, you need to put those times in the schedule. You can't say I'm going to quit work at five and I'm going to start hanging out with my family at 5:01 because you got to drive home, right? So make sure you put all of those particular things into your time block to-do list.

FREE TIME

Then to the extent that you have time blocks that are still blank, after you do all of that filling in, that is where your free time or the time you can assign to actual other tasks is. So that's where you're going to figure out how when you're going to rest, when you're going to parent, or hang out with your kids or with your husband.

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It's going to be when you do your self-care and it's when you're going to do some of those household chores and that's how you're going to allocate that time out, however you choose.

I really don't want you to only put in chores and then be like, I don't know if I'm ever going to be able to hang out with my husband or hang out with my kids or do my hobby. I want you to write time in there for those types of things too, because they're important, right?

ELIMINATING ITEMS

So the items on the right hand side of your list, if you can't fit them all in, you've got to either delete them and say, I'm never going to do this, I can't fit it into my time block today and it's just not worth it. I'm not going to do it, period. Or you might have to postpone it to another day.

So that is how you fill out and start the process of making your time in your daily time block to do your household chores. Remember in the last slide how I told you that the blank time that was left after you filled out your book ins and your anchor times were the time that you had left that you could devote to your chores? I bet you're going to have more time than you really need to just be doing chores.

In fact, I'm pretty sure I want you to be doing other things besides chores with any of that additional time you have. That's the goal. We're not here trying to have the cleanest house. We're not here trying to fill up all your time with lots and lots of additional work. We're here to make it so you can maintain your home in a reasonable amount of time and then you can move on with your life and do whatever else you want.

HOW MUCH TIME?

So how much time should you really be time blocking within your time blocked to-do list for these household chores? That's something I get asked a lot and so I have been trying to figure that out for myself by time tracking how long it takes me. I'm kind of using myself as an experiment and in addition, I've been trying to ask people that as I'm doing coaching or so forth as part of the Declutter 365 program, to hear lots of feedback from other people.

DAILY TASKS

And this is what I have learned. Once you are doing this regularly and consistently, these are the times that it's going to take you and it's going to help you to do this amount of time blocking. And the first thing is the daily types of activities, chores, routines that you need to do. It's going to take you about an hour a day on average. And I suggest putting one of those blocks in the morning because remember, the blocks are really 30 minutes increments and also one of those blocks in the evening. The things that you're going to want to include in the daily version of your chores. Include things like whenever you're going to figure out how to do your daily tidy up routine, when you're going to clean up the kitchen, and also if you do a load of laundry each day, for example, you may also do some cleaning tasks during that time.

ADDING IN WEEKLY CHORES

And then in addition to the 1 hour per day of just kind of daily things that need to get done, we do have some weekly tasks that we know we need to accomplish at some point. You can spread them out over the course of the week or you could do them all on one particular day. So for example,

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the ones I think are most important are meal planning and grocery shopping. That should take you about 2 hours total, I think, and that includes traveling to and from the grocery store and putting things away.

Now, you could do that over the course of two different days. You could meal plan on one day and then do the grocery shopping on another, for example, but that would be about 2 hours or four time blocks that you would need to accomplish. Same thing weekly cleaning and laundry tasks, that could be an additional hour or plus because it really depends on the size of your home.

And also if you're doing everything in one fell swoop, like maybe on Saturdays you decide to clean the whole house, versus if you break up the tasks a little bit, which is what I personally do. And I do, like I've mentioned, vacuuming on Thursdays, for example. So I vacuum on Thursdays, I clean bathrooms on a different day, et cetera, and I spread it out. So it's really your choice, but that helps you to identify how many time blocks you're going to need for that.

BREAK IT UP

And then the last one is what I call the weekly paperwork and life administration routine. And basically this is your time to pay bills, deal with mail, make those phone calls that you need, maybe check your bank balance, all the typical stuff that you need to do for life administration. And I would suggest that that should take about an hour a week, which is two time blocks. So that is the meat of how you're going to fit in your household routines into your time blocks and into your life on a daily basis.

And you don't have to do each of these tasks every single day. Some of them are weekly tasks, but if you can do them regularly and consistently and really pull, be able to find one 30 minute time block in the morning and one 30 minute time block in the evening to do your daily tasks, boom. You have the ability to really make sure that you've got your time blocks done and then you can do the rest of the things that you want to do with the rest of your time.

GET HELP

Now, I considered whether I would even put this particular slide into this presentation or not, but I have told people in the past about how I suggest doing about an hour's worth of chores during the day at some point, morning and evening, about 30 minutes each, and a couple of other weekly tasks. And people are like, it's going to take me so much longer than that. And I hear you.

First of all, I just want you to know that unless you're the only person that lives in your household, you don't have to do all the household chores yourself. I certainly don't. And I don't encourage you to try to take all that on for yourself. It's a lot of work, we all know that.

So other people do chores in the house, other people help clean things up, other people help cook or go to the grocery store or whatever. And I think that you deserve that as well. So one of the things that's nice about time blocking is you can show yourself and others.

I now know that I have a really busy life and I got a lot of time blocks filled. Look, everyone else in the household, here's what I'm doing and this is how long it takes. What could you do to help?

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GIVE YOURSELF GRACE

Or you can give yourself grace and know I'm really busy. I'm not going to be able to spend 4 hours scrubbing the grout in the bathroom because I really need to also make sure we get this and that and the other done as well. And so I can forgive myself for not having time for that, right? I don't want you to be doing that stuff anyways.

DELEGATE

So your time blocks can be a real kind of wake up call to see how much time you really do have available. And you can ask other people to help or put them in charge of things. So you're still not even being involved very much. "You're in charge of grocery shopping now," and you can just step out of that particular task. Just remember that when I'm telling you these time amounts.

DECLUTTER

In addition, as you work through the decluttering and organizing portions of the program that I have declutter 365, it does make it much easier to keep your home maintained because the less stuff you have to clean, to move around, to organize, to try to put away over and over again, the faster all this goes. So the more time you do invest in decluttering and organizing, it will help you to shorten the amount of time you need to maintain your home from now on.

REALISM 101

Now, as you use the free printable that I've got for you and you're filling out a couple of your first time block to-do lists, you're going to notice that they may not be very realistic and that's okay. But the key to really using a time block to-do list well is to make it as realistic as possible.

The reason is the more realistic it is, the more likely it is that you can actually follow it. So this is one of those things where you're going to jump in with both feet. You're going to give it a try at first. You may not be following it very well, but I want you to learn from the things that you've made as a mistake and you're going to be able to make.

Them more and more realistic as you go along. And I wanted to give you some really practical tips from a person that does do a daily to-do list, that is the time blocked version to really help you make it as realistic as possible.

TIME TRACKING

The first thing is, at first you will not have good estimates of how long stuff takes. That is just something most humans don't know how to do very well. And that's okay. So what I suggest for you is that especially for things like household chores and things like that, that you're doing on a daily or a weekly basis, I would love for you to take a little time to learn how long it's actually taking you. That makes it a much more realistic time frame.

And you can do that through time tracking. So time tracking is where you just do a task and you write down the time you started and the time you ended, so you can see how long it took. So if you're paying bills, for example, excuse me, and you're trying to figure out, well, how many time blocks should I give myself when I'm paying bills? You can figure out, oh, look, Taylor is right, it's about two time blocks. It takes me about an hour to get through all of those

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life administration tasks. Or maybe for you, you can do it a lot more quickly than that. That would be awesome.

Or you can figure out, oh, I got a lot of complications here. It takes me an hour and a half. So I have another free printable for you that you can grab when you're a subscriber. It's the time tracking printable and it basically is just, again, 30 minutes increments. You can write those down and you can write down what you are doing. It gives you helpful hints to help you understand, oh, this is how long it takes me to empty the dishwasher or to do the daily kitchen cleanup routine. Or here's how long it takes me to drive to work every day so I can make sure that some of those travel times that I have are realistic, whatever it is.

And I have this particular printable available to newsletter subscribers and it actually does have fillable forms in it. So not only could you write in it, you can type in it as well, if that is something you prefer. So that's the biggest thing I can tell you for how to make this as realistic as possible, which is just do time tracking so that your estimates for the future become better and better.

TRANSITION TIME

But here are some additional things. As I said, you can make your time track excuse me, your time blocks more realistic by also adding in that transition time we talked about that previously.

MARGIN

And also giving yourself margin within your time blocks. So I will often, if I'm not sure how long something will take, I will maybe before lunch and maybe before dinner I will give myself a time block that's just blank and I'm going to leave blank that's 30 minutes. That allows me an additional amount of time to just be like, well, if something took me five minutes longer and it was three different tasks that took five minutes longer each than I anticipated, then I'm still on track for the day, right? So that margin and those transition times really do help.

SET TIMERS

The next thing that can help you make your time block realistic and also so you can follow it, is I suggest setting timers and alarms for yourself. This is really helpful as I make my time block to-do list in the morning, if I have a specific appointment that I need to attend or I need to be at a specific place at a certain time, or I realize I'm likely to just keep working on this particular task, but I need to stop for some reason. Like I've got to go somewhere else or I've got to start something else I will set on my phone timers and alarms for myself in the morning.

And then I can stay on track because it'll be like, oh, it's time to eat. Or It's time to get ready to go to Aqua aerobics class, or It's time to go walk, or It's time to go pick up the kids, or It's time to start making dinner. Whatever it is that I've got to do, this can help significantly to keep you kind of on track.

GOOD ENOUGH IS GOOD ENOUGH

The next thing you can do to kind of make this realistic is figure out how to do the task within the time allotted. Good enough is good enough. What I mean by this is I don't want you to spend all your extra time cleaning up your house or doing household chores. So a reasonable amount of time to

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maybe get your kitchen cleaned up is 30 minutes in the evening, or a little bit less actually, if you've been cleaning it up as you go along and you get assistance from other family members who also help.

So go ahead and do a pretty good job of cleaning up your kitchen, but don't necessarily do additional tasks that would make it last and take an hour because you don't want to devote an hour to it. You just want to figure out how to get it good enough to get it done within that time block. Okay?

CROSS IT OFF

The next thing that can make your time blocks more realistic is to cross less important items off if you can't find a time block for them. I've mentioned this several times, but it's because I have to get real with myself on a pretty regular basis and say, no, Taylor, I cannot do all of those things on the right hand side of my list because I cannot fit them all onto the left hand side of the list in the time blocks.

So go ahead and be realistic with yourself. And it's nice when you can be realistic with yourself in the morning, for example, instead of by the end of the day feeling like you have failed because you didn't do those things, when in fact in the morning you knew if you looked at your time blocks, yeah, I can't do those things today, right? So go ahead and just cross some things off and then make yourself feel better about it.

A BIT AT A TIME

The next thing that can help you make your time blocks more realistic and also make it where you can actually follow them, is to do this thing of breaking tasks down into chunks. So you might have, for example, this idea that you want to declutter all of your kitchen drawers, for example. Well, that's great, but I don't know that you have time in your day to do all of the kitchen drawers right now.

So instead if you said to yourself, I'm going to break it down into smaller chunks and today in the time block, I do have an extra 15 minutes or whatever amount of time that you want to devote to this task to do just a little bit, that can be helpful for you.

So sometimes, as you might notice, I've said before, I said figure out how to do the task within the time allotted. That can be true if you're trying to be kind of perfectionistic about it and you're trying to take a long, long time to get it done. Now, the other side of that coin is maybe the task really does take longer than the amount of time you have.

Don't be a person that says I can't start this until I can do the whole thing. Because as you know, if we say that to ourselves, sometimes those particular projects never get started because we never have 4 hours or something like that all at once where we can get it done.

But if you break it down into chunks, then you can go ahead and say, I'm going to spend 30 minutes on it today. And after, let's see if I said the project was 4 hours. So after eight of those different 30 minutes sessions, you should be done with it, right? And so that's how you can get that accomplished.

Now, if you're going to use that particular strategy of breaking down things into chunks, please remember that you should have, as part of your transition time of that particular task, a cleanup of that task to at least let you stop in a non-messy way until

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the next time you can start again. That way you haven't pulled all the stuff out of every single drawer in your kitchen and now you don't have time to deal with the rest of it. And it's all a bigger mess than it was previously.

You would instead say, I'm going to only pull out stuff from this one particular drawer. I'm going to do that and I will clean up that particular drawer before my time limit is up and then the next time I can work on the next drawer. So that way you are giving yourself the benefits of doing it in small amounts without the detriment of making a huge mess, right?

DELEGATE AGAIN

And then the last thing to make your time blocks realistic and also so that you can follow them, is exactly what I mentioned earlier. Delegate. Just because it needs to get done does not mean you always have to do it.

So if there's something on your to-do list on that right hand side of the page and you know it needs to get done, but on your time blocks, you can tell I am not going to have enough time to do that, you can go ahead and spend just a little bit of time making sure someone else does it and then it gets done. But it didn't have to be you.

So those are things that you can do to make it as realistic as possible and also make sure that you're following it because that's the most important part for making sure you're actually getting done the priorities you want to accomplish.

GOING OFF THE RAILS

Now sometimes you are going to do all of the things that I told you earlier about making your time block to-do list as realistic as possible. And this day is still going to get away from you and your day is not going to go as planned. That happens to me less frequently now because I've learned some things about time blocking and that's what I was telling you about in the previous slide. But it still happens because sometimes things just go completely off the rails.

Maybe we don't feel well, maybe some emergency happens, maybe something takes a lot longer than we anticipated and we weren't able to know ahead of time because it was the first time we ever did it, right? These things happen.

LESSONS LEARNED

And so I first want you to know that when you make a time block to-do list and things don't go as planned, it's okay, you're not a failure. What I want you to do is learn lessons from that and that'll help you plan for next time and just give yourself some grace.

This stuff happens sometimes, right? The plan itself was still valuable because you figured out what you wanted to be, your priorities. And if more days than not, you can at least head towards the things that you wanted to make as priorities, you are winning at life, right?

Even if each specific day doesn't go quite as planned, if you're headed in the direction you want to go, that's good. So making the plan is valuable even if it doesn't always 100% work out.

GETTING BACK ON TRACK

The other thing I want you to know is that if you get off track with your plan, your

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time blocks, and all of a sudden you're like, I'm an hour past when I should have been doing this particular thing, you can stop at any time and get yourself back on track. You don't have to wait till the next day or anything like that.

You can just go ahead and say, right now, I'm going to get back on track with my time blocks to the best of my ability and let's just see what we can accomplish for the day. That's perfectly fine.

START OVER

You also have permission to just scrap the entire plan. There are days I've done that where what I thought was going to get accomplished in the morning by like midafternoon, I'm like, that was hilarious. Morning Taylor had no idea what was going to happen today, and Afternoon Taylor needs an entirely new plan. I can't just get back on track. I need to start over. That's okay. Just print out a new printable right from where you are and start following that plan.

IT'S A TOOL

And that is okay, because the idea is this is your tool. This is here to help you. It is to help you meet your priorities. You control the time blocks. The time blocks do not control you, right? So it's going to be okay when it doesn't always work out, but most of the time, especially as you keep working through doing a different time block to do list every day and learning and practicing the skill, it's going to get better and better and you're really going to see some positive results from doing this.

Not only for making sure you have time to get your household chores done, which is what we talked about a lot specifically in this session, but you can use these time block to-do lists to make sure you're working towards whatever you decide is most important for you. So I hope you're really excited at this point about trying to do your first time block to-do list and how you think it's going to be helpful for you in the future.

MAKE SURE YOU HAVE THE PRINTABLE

So I want to make sure that if nothing else, you grab the free version of this form. I'm going to be working with Laura to make sure that this gets into the Get Organized HQ, but if for some reason you're having trouble finding it, I want you to go to my website, Home Storage Solutions 101. Go to the contact page and just go ahead and write me a little note that says, please send me that printable and I will make sure my assistant or I do that for you. My assistant is my husband, by the way, so it's just our family, but I will make sure you get that printable.

OFFERS FROM TAYLOR

Now, if you want the fillable version of the time block to-do list, also the time tracker that I mentioned, and as well a free version of the yearly Declutter 365 calendar and introductory packet, which is like a $20 value, I would love it if you subscribe to my newsletter. When you do that you're going to get all three of those different printables there as a free gift to you. So you can go ahead and go to my website, it's called Home Storage Solutions 101 and you can go to the Declutter calendar page and basically any page of the website. You can sign up for my newsletter and get that.

Again, if you're having trouble, you're like, I don't know where I'm supposed to find this.

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I know this isn't clickable on the screen for you. Make sure you just send me an email through the contact form on the website and I will be happy to help you. I want you to get those free printables.

So this has been really fun for me to share how I do my daily time blocking to-do list and I hope you've gotten a lot out of it. I had to talk a little bit high level during this about different parts of the household chores and routines that we discussed. I've really just scratched the surface where I was talking about, well, do your tidy up routine and then make sure that you get your kitchen cleanup routine done. And here you should do your weekly paperwork routine.

DECLUTTER PREMIUM 365 OFFERS

So if you were like, I would like more information about those particular things, I couldn't tell you all about it right now, but that's exactly what we talk about in the Declutter 365 Premium group. That is a private and exclusive Facebook group that I host. And each month we have a group coaching session where I talk to you about one habit or routine each month that helps you maintain your home.

Some of those have already been filmed for this particular year, but they're available on video replay once you become a member. And we will also be discussing additional topics each additional month this year. Plus there's a lot of other videos that are in that group that you get over 250 actually that you can watch as soon as you're a member.

So we talk about things like the daily decluttering habit, how to organize, what I mean by a daily tidy up routine, we talk about cleaning and laundry routines, we talk about meal planning, the weekly paperwork routine, et cetera, et cetera.

So if you are interested in learning even more about that and learning exactly what you need to do for each of those routines so that you can figure out how to get those things into your time blocks each day, I would love for you to become a Declutter 365 Premium member.

So go ahead and you can go to the Home Storage Solutions 101 site to also learn about that. You can just type into the search bar Declutter 365 Premium to be able to look at that and find out if there's any current discount codes for that group. Also, if you can't find it, remember, go ahead and just send me an email through the contact form so I can help you further. I would love to be able to continue this discussion with you in that Facebook group and be able to get to know each of you a little bit better.

So thanks so much for being watching this on Get Organized HQ and I hope that you will be using a time block to-do list from now on and feel like you have better control over your schedule and can accomplish the things that you want to accomplish. Thanks so much.

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How to Use Trello to Digitally Organize Your Entire Life

TONI ANN MAYEMBE • TRANSCRIPT

Hey there and welcome to this presentation on how to use Trello to digitally organize your entire life. I am so excited that you are here. I am Toni-Ann, the podcast host of Real Happy Mom, the space for busy working moms to get time management and productivity tips so that they can reach their big goals and dreams without pulling their hair out.

TRYING IT ALL

And I know all about juggling all the things in life as a full time dentist and a reservist in the Navy, as well as a mom and a wife. I get it when moms say that they're busy. And I have tried many ways to get my life organized. I have done all the things from doing the Pomodoro technique, doing time blocking, which is something I still do. But I've also tried the fancy planners and the bullet journaling and still couldn't get myself organized. Not until I tried Trello.

So, a little backstory. I tried Trello in 2017 and then in 2018. And let me just tell you, I felt like I wasn't doing it right or something just wasn't working. And then I tried it again in 2020 and something just clicked. Everything just magically started coming together. I was able to create these boards which therefore allowed me to get organized and get these tasks completed that I had to do for these various parts of my life.

So I went from completely overwhelmed and feeling like I was about to snap because I had so much going on and didn't know how to keep it all together to feeling like a boss because I am knocking out tasks and accomplishing my goals all with Trello.

WHAT IS TRELLO?

So you've heard me talk about Trello a couple of times already and you're probably wondering, what is Trello? So basically, Trello is a digital project management tool that is going to help you with tracking workflows and different tasks. Now, a lot of times when people hear Trello as far as a project management tool, they think it's just something for work.

But let me tell you, Trello can be used for so many different things. You can create a plethora of boards to help you with getting your life, getting your home, getting your business super organized. And here are a few things that you can create with Trello. All these different ideas. Here are things that you can create within Trello to get yourself organized. And here's a few more things here.

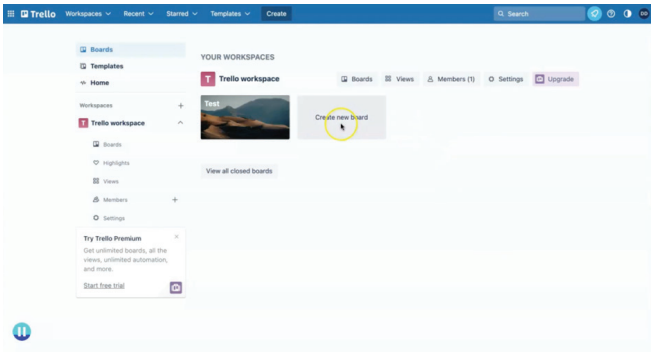
So, as you can see, there is so much that you can do with Trello and so many different ways that you can utilize Trello to get your life organized. Now, if you are very new to Trello, don't worry, we are going to go through some of the basics here right now.

GETTING STARTED

First, we're going to start by heading over to trello.com and coming here to this

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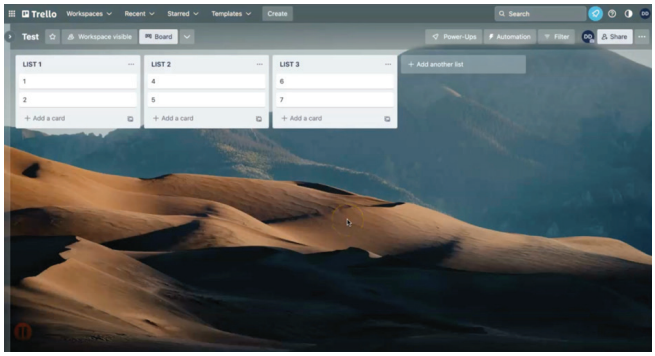
page. You want to go ahead and set up a Trello account for free. You can go ahead and enter information and then you'll be brought to this page once you've created your account and you are inside of Trello. Here is where you can start to create some boards. So you'll go over here to create new board and here you can create the title and I'm just going to put in test here.



And also here you can go ahead and change the background of the board. But I will show you another place that you can change the background as well. Then you're going to go ahead and hit create.

LIKE PAGES IN A NOTEBOOK

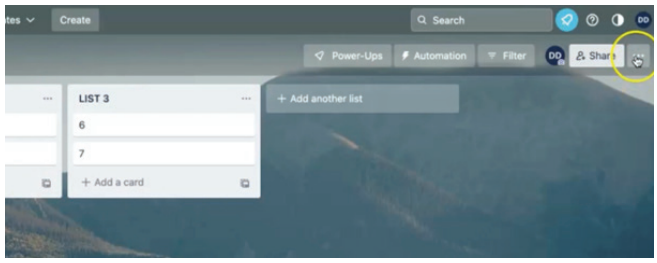
So here is just a test board for me to show you just some of the basics of Trello. So you always start with a board, which is what we have here and this is where you're going to keep track of all of your projects and all of the workflows that you are working on. Then inside of each board you have list which I have listed out here, three of them. And these lists are going to go inside of the board just like pages in a notebook.



So think of the board as a notebook and the list are the pages in the notebook and within each list they're cards. And this is where the fun and the magic happens. So these cards hold a lot of different information as far as the task ideas and checklists that you want to keep track of. But before we jump into the cards, let me go through a couple of things with you over here.

MENU ITEMS

So if you click over here, you'll be brought to the menu.



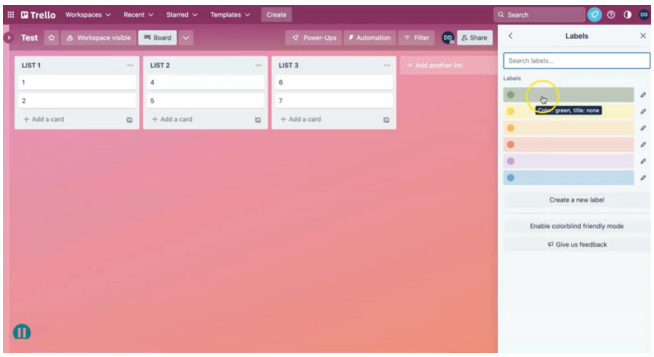
So really quick you can add a description about your board here by clicking there. You can change the background of the board by clicking here. So you can go to photos and just search for different photos that you would like. So let's search for stars. I want to change this up a little bit. So see you can quickly change the way that your board looks with these different backgrounds or you can use different colors.

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Also within this menu there are custom fields that you can create, but this is more so for the paid version. And then there are also some fun stickers that you can use and this can make your boards even more fun to look at. So here is one sticker there that you can put on your cards and lists.

LABEL IT

And under more we also have the settings and then labels which is one fun thing that I really do like to use. Labels will really help you with keeping track of different things and then also categorizing things. So if you hover over here, you can give these things different titles. So let's just say urgent. So we have these different labels that we can utilize on the cards to keep things organized here.

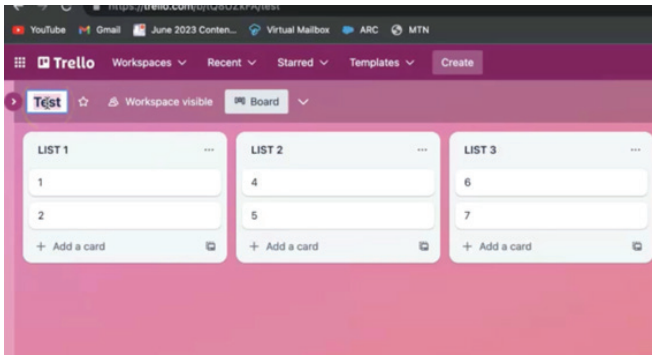


Then also we have this area here where archived items so you'll never delete anything off of your board, they will always be archived, which is really great because if you accidentally delete something, you can always retrieve it here in archived items.

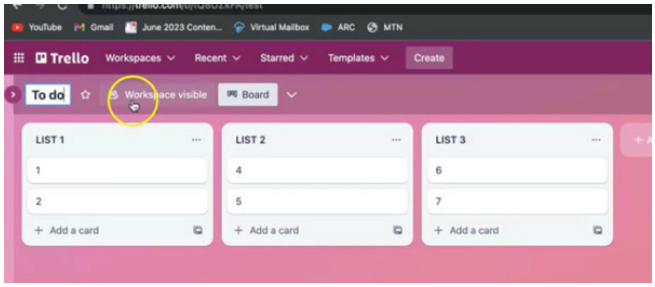
Then email board settings. You can email some things if you have a board that you're sharing with others and then also copy board. If you want to make a copy of something, say that you already have a workflow that you don't want to want to recreate, you can hit copy. And then print and export, another way to transfer your board to someone else. And then lastly here close board. Now this is if you have a board and you're like I no longer use it, don't want it, you can actually close the board and then you do have the option to delete it.

SOME OTHER TWEEKS

A few more things I wanted to show you here is right here. You can change the name of the board here. So if you want to change it from Test to To-Do, you can do that here.



Workspace Visibility. You can set this so that you can have it public, so anyone who is searching on Google can find it or you can make it private so only you can view the board.



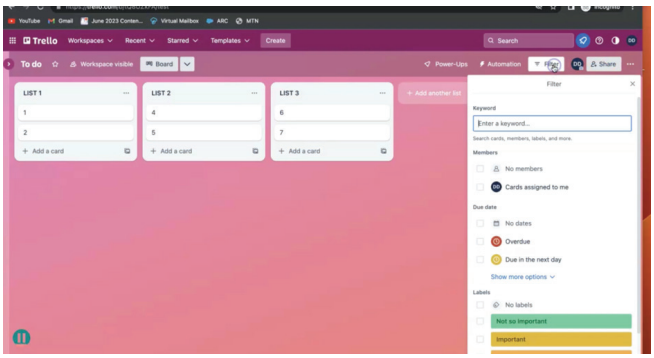
Then here we have the different views and this is when things get really fun, when you have the calendar view and actually the timeline is another fun one to utilize. But this is one that you will find with the paid version, the Trello Premium.

MORE FEATURES

Over here we have power ups and this used to be only for the paid version but it is now available for everyone. These are a couple of different things that you can add to your cards to really take things up a notch as far as integrating things and then as well as adding some other customized features to the cards and the board. So this is one of my favorite things to play with, but this is more advanced. But I want to let you know that this is here.

And then automations. This is when you're really trying to make things advanced by creating certain rules so that when certain cards or certain times happen, different actions take place and you can utilize these different things here to create those automations.

And lastly here, if you have a lot going on your card and you're trying to look for something specifically this filter is really helpful for sorting things out by either labels, due dates, even by keywords.

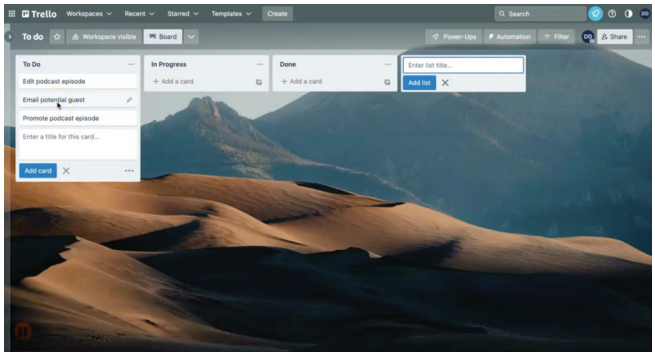


And then lastly here, if you want to share your board, you can do so by clicking this button and then entering in the name or just sharing the link to your board.

UTILIZING YOUR BOARDS

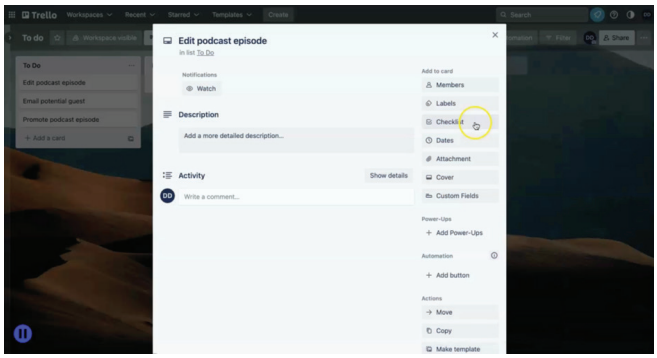
So I've created a new board to really show you and help you to visualize how you can utilize these boards. So again, here's a board. I'm going to create a list. I'm going to name this one To-Do and this one is going to be In Progress and then Done. Within each list I'm going to add the different tasks that I need to do.

So I have three tasks here in my To-Do list. So I have edit podcast episode, or email potential guests, and then promote the podcast episode.



CARD FEATURES

So if I click on this card, there are a couple of things that you can do within the card. So one, you can add members. So let's just say that you want to work alongside someone. You can add them here by adding their names and then labels, we've already talked about this. You can give different color labels to actually track the different things that you have going on on these cards.



And then checklists, which is one of my favorite things to utilize here. On the

checklist, I can give a few more steps to this particular task. So editing the podcast episode, there could be multiple steps to this and I can put this within the checklist so that I can keep track of things here.

So let's just say I have a couple of items here on the checklist. I can again keep track of where I am with getting things organized. Here we have dates where we can put due dates on when things are actually going to be due. So we can click on a date and save it here. And not only will the due date show up here, it will also show up on the front of the card. So when you're looking at the board, you can keep track of where and when things are due.

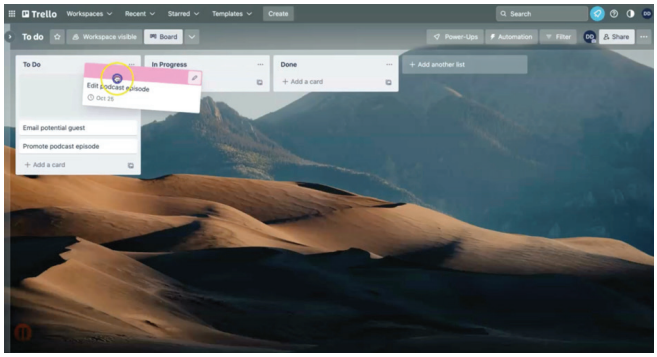
Here you can put attachments so you can attach things from your computer, from Google Drive, Dropbox or even attach a link. I love Pinterest and I pin a lot of things and they get lost. But here you can attach the links directly to the card so that they don't get lost on Pinterest.

And then here are covers. This is another fun way to make your boards look really nice. So you can pick out different photos here or you can upload your own. Or another thing is you can use these different colors here. And then lastly, custom fields. This is where you can get really creative, but you would have to use the paid version for this.

One last thing I want to show you here is in the description, you can add quite a bit here and put quite a bit of information about the card here and then just make sure to hit save.

FLEXIBILITY OF MOVEMENT

And once you have all of your tasks and cards filled out here, you can go ahead and start moving things around. And the beauty of Trello is you can do a couple of things. One, not only can you move the cards around, but you can move the list around. So let's just say you have certain things in a way that you aren't really too excited about. You can definitely move things around to make it work for you.



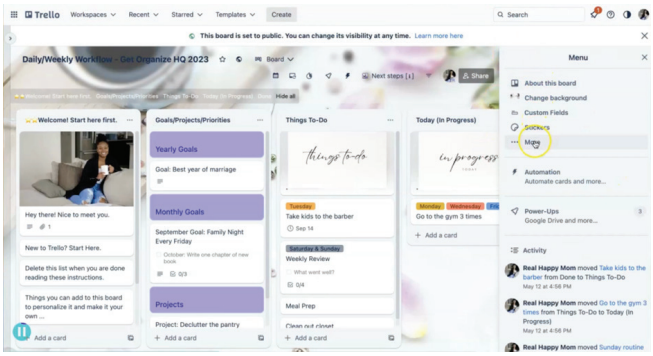
And then you can also keep track of where everything is by moving things along the board. And then lastly, I love how Trello, you can have a bird's eye view of what is going on just by looking at the board here.

BOARDS DESIGNED FOR YOU

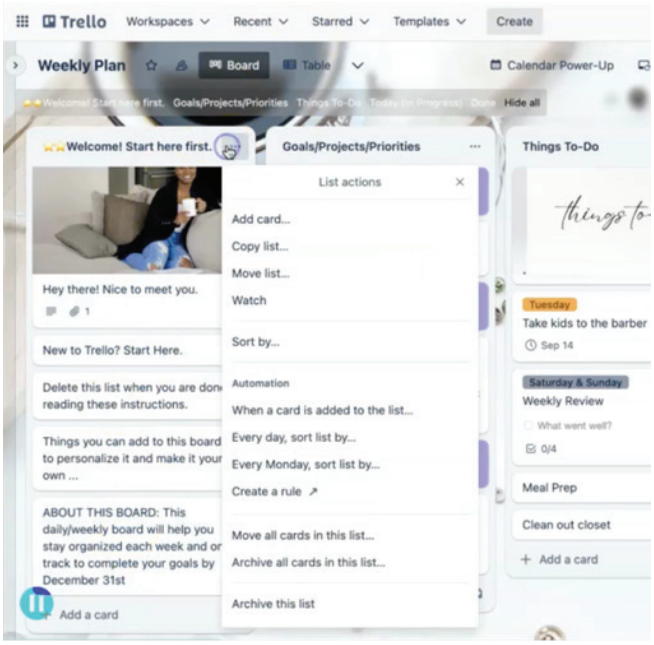
So now that we've got the basics down, let's go ahead and create some boards. I have created two boards that I am going to go through with you so that you can customize them and make them your own. First we're going to start with the Weekly Plan Board and the link for that board is listed right here [www.realhappymom.com/daily-weekly-workflow-GOHQ/]. So once you click that link, you'll be brought to this page right here.

Here I have the description right here we want to click out go to More and then Copy Board.

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And here you can name your board. Then you want to hit Create. So first when you come to this board, in this first list you will find some welcome information here. Feel free to go ahead and click over here and then go to Archive List to remove this so that you can have your board nice and clean.



So in this first list here, I have things broken up by Yearly Goals, Monthly Goals and Projects. So here you can list out your yearly goals up here at the top. You can also utilize this to keep things top of mind on what you are working on for the year over here in the monthly goals, this is one that you would keep track of each month and change out. And then you can also keep track of what you have done in previous months over here.

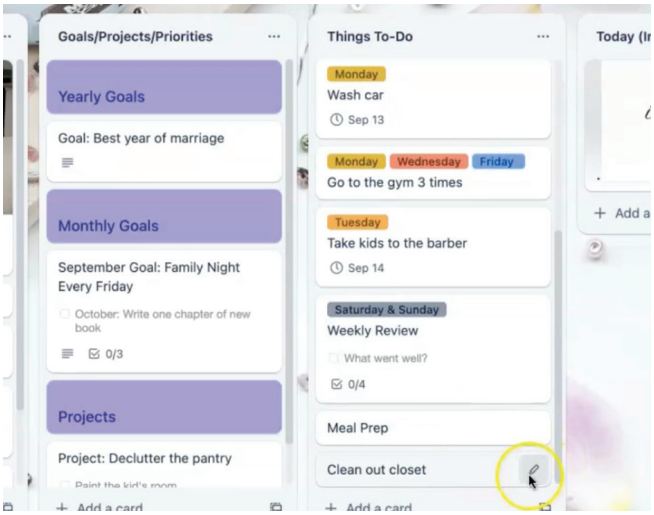
Then in projects here you can keep an eye on all the things that you are working on. Here I have things broken down by Home Projects and Personal Projects, but let's just say you're not really into the home projects. No problem, just hit Delete and you can delete that checklist.

DIGITAL TO-DO LISTS

Next up we have the To-Do list. So here we're just going to go ahead and type in a card for each task that we need to get done for the week. And here there's a couple of things that I have listed already. I'm actually going to move these things back so I have a few things listed already with labels already on them. And one fun short code that I use quite often is hover over the card and press the L button. And here you'll be brought to the labels so you can click on the labels.

So here I can quickly mark what I want to get done on each day so I can label things. Once I have my To-Do list written out here, then on each day, I'm going to make sure that I move the cards over to In Progress. So that whenever I'm looking at the board, I know what I'm working on or what I need to have done by the end of the day and then just move things over to Done once things are all completed. So simple and easy to use board that you can keep track of your to-dos on a digital platform.

So if you're ready to customize this board and remove some of these cards that are not useful for you, click on this button here and then hit Archive and that will remove the card from the board. So remember, you can't delete anything, but you can archive it.



And then also in the checklist, if you want to add any checklists, remember you can click over here. Or if you want to add items to your checklist, hit Add Item, type in whatever it is that you need to do and hit Enter on your keyboard.

HOLIDAY PLANNNING BOARD FOR YOU

So the next board that we're going to go through is our Holiday Planning Board. You want to use this link that is listed right here [www.realhappymom.com/holiday-board-GOHQ] to get access to the Holiday Planning board.

Once you click on that link, you'll be brought to this board. Make sure that you go over here, then click more and then click Copy Board to make a copy of this board. So I'm making a copy. I'm hitting Create. Now I have my board here again, another list in the beginning to just give you some more information about the board and some other resources. You can hover over here and hit Archive This List to clean up the board.

THANKSGIVING PLANNING

So the first list that we have over here is the Thanksgiving menu. I already have a couple of dishes here for you that you can utilize. And within each of these cards there are not only the card covers that make these cards look really nice, but there's also recipes. I just clicked on the green bean casserole and here are a couple of screenshots of this particular recipe that I've used and is really good. So you can do the same thing by going over to attachment and then copy and paste in the link to the recipe that you want to utilize for each of the menu items. So, Thanksgiving menu is all set, just make it how you would like it for your Thanksgiving dinner.

Next up is the Thanksgiving To-Do list. Again, we have some labels here, but this is just a list. Not necessarily a complete list, but a couple of things to start thinking about and get together so that you can be ready for Thanksgiving. And remember that you can also add due dates to these different tasks here so that you know when things need to get done.

And then also the labels, you can utilize these so that you know where you are in the process of getting this to-do list done. And remember, just hovering over and pressing the L button on your keyboard will bring up the labels that you can utilize for this particular card.

CHRISTMAS PLANNING

So over onto the next list, we have the Christmas menu. So similar to the Thanksgiving menu, we have different items on the menu list. And in each card, again, there is a picture and a recipe that you can utilize. So whenever you click on that link, it will take you directly to the recipe to create that dish. So, simple and easy way to keep track of all of the recipes that you're going

to be needing.

And if you again want to add yours, go to Attachments and copy and paste the link. Or you can upload a recipe, whether it be a document from these different places right onto this card so you can keep track of it.

In the next list, I have the Christmas To-Do list. It's broken down by three months, two months, and then one month before Christmas with various tasks and due dates are already in there ready to go. And in a couple of these cards, I have some resources here to help you.

So Plan 25 Days of Christmas. This is a resource that I use to plan out my 25 days of Christmas for my kids. And it was the best and the easiest way to do it without feeling stressed out trying to get everything together. So definitely check out this link in here if you want to do 25 Days of Christmas.

CHRISTMAS TREES

And then here in this card, another resource. Here I just have some pictures of Christmas trees that I found on Pinterest that I was pretty inspired by. And you can put in different pictures of Christmas trees to remind you or inspire you when you're getting your Christmas trees up. So, a couple of things here with again, some resources and some pictures and again, you can attach those things yourself to these boards.

CHRISTMAS CARDS

And in the next list we have the holiday card list. This holiday card list literally has saved me so much time. I literally just copy my board each year and just put the year in there. And having this list is so beneficial because a lot of times we think like, oh, we can utilize our phones. But I just have these cards with the addresses for each person that I want to send a card to right here, and it makes it so, so easy.

And again, I can go to the labels and mark it done once they are addressed and sent. So you can list out everybody that you want to give a card to and then put their addresses in there so you can keep track of everything.

CHRISTMAS GIFTS

And then lastly, in the gift list over here, we have different people that we want to give gifts to and then a checklist within each of these of different things that we want to purchase for these different individuals. You can simply check these things off once you purchase these items.

And then in the description, one way that I utilize the description for the gift list is I put where I have stored these different things that I've purchased because I have to hide my purchases from my children because they will find them and open it up. So here I'll just write in the closet in the guest bedroom so I know exactly where this item is. I just need to make sure I hit Save so I know where all these items are there in the guest bedroom or I hide them in the guest bathroom in one of the cabinets there. Either way I put it in the description, so one fun way that you can utilize those.

FREEBIE CARD COVERS

So that's it for this board. So I hope you've enjoyed those boards that we just went through. If you are wanting to make your boards look pretty and nice like the ones I just showed you, make sure to grab this freebie, which are card covers that are going to help you with making your boards more personalized and more attractive. I truly

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believe that if your boards look good and you like the way that they're looking, you will be more likely to utilize those boards and therefore make sure that projects are getting completed because you're going to be looking at them a lot more.

So use the link that is up here on the screen to get access to these card covers. And then there's also a template on Canva that you can use as well so that you can create your own card covers and make them specifically for what you need. And if you have the all access pass, you have access to the Year End TrelloTastic Power Pack. I know that's mouthful, but this Power Pack has

five boards that I really think are going to help you with ending the year strong. So there is an Ultimate Christmas Planning Board, there is an Ultimate Thanksgiving Planning Board, a 24 Before 2024 Board, a Year-End Goal Setting and Tracking Board, and then also a Journal Board that you can use to track of all the highlights and wins each day of the week.

So if you have the All Access Pass, like I said, you have access to get this Power Pack and if you don't have the All Access Pass, make sure you get it because you want to make sure that you have this Power Pack so that you can have even more templates to start utilizing Trello even more.

FINDING TONI-ANN

Now that's it for this presentation, I hope that this has been helpful for you. Definitely stay in touch with me by going over to realhappymom.com or going on to the podcast. And the Real Happy Mom podcast is wherever you listen to podcast, so if you're on Spotify, Apple, wherever you listen to podcasts, type in Real Happy Mom. You'll find me there. Just make sure you hit subscribe so that you will be notified whenever there is a new episode.

Now it's time to go out and make some Trello boards. Go and make them pretty, make them effective, and I cannot wait to see what you create.

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Connecting with God in Everyday Moments

TORI HEIN • TRANSCRIPT

TASHA: Well, I am so excited to be joined by Tori Mae Hein. She is a trauma informed story coach who runs the coaching program Work from Worth. And today we're going to be talking about battling overwhelm in your relationship with God. So thank you so much for joining us today, Tori.

TORI: It's such an honor to be here. Thanks for having me.

TASHA: Absolutely. So I think that sometimes whenever you say battling over in your relationship with God, it can be a little bit of a funny phrase. It's maybe not the first thing that people think of whenever they're like, oh, I'm so overwhelmed. But I think when I stop and think about it, at least it really can be the source of a lot of overwhelm.

Can you just maybe describe maybe from personal experience or situations that you've seen, like what kind of overwhelm we're talking about and where it comes from?

TORI: Oh, absolutely. I think depending on your background and depending on your story with God, whether that's been a lifelong story or it's been brand new, in a later season of life, each of us desires, who has a faith background, to live in alignment with God's purpose and with God's calling.

PRESSURE TO PERFORM

And in seasons of change and transition that are already extremely overwhelming, when you thread into it a pressure to perform or a pressure to sustain what a relationship with God looked like in the previous season, you can experience a lot of overwhelm.

And I've found that women who experience overwhelm in their relationship with God are often trapped in what we call behavior modification, rather than engaging in the true heart transformation that the Lord offers to us. A transformation that embeds itself and weaves itself through every single element and area of your life to sustain you.

A PERFECT IMAGE

Rather, we see women who are thinking their relationship with God looks like a perfectly curated quiet time in the morning with coffee in hand and their Bible laid out and all their highlighters and their pens, and they're like going to town. And although there's seasons for that and it's absolutely beautiful in seasons - when you just had a baby or you have multiple children at home and you're waking up in a haze of sweat and bodily juices and you're rolling out of bed, like wearing the same clothes that you've worn for the last three days, and you're heating up coffee that you literally made yesterday, but then never drank, It was still in the microwave from the day before, and you sit down and you look at your Bible and the words just kind of go like this . . . And you're like, who am I? Where am I? Does God still love me? Am I letting him down? I'm worried. And overwhelm is always taking in too big of a picture, something that we're

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not meant to care for as a whole.

A SIMPLE CHOICE

And a mentor of mine actually spoke these beautiful words to me. Gosh, it was when my daughter was just born, which would have been six years ago. And I had a four year old at the time, and my husband was traveling five days out of each week for work, and I was growing a business from home, and I was so burnt out and so overwhelmed, and I couldn't calm down. And my friend so beautifully summarized for me a simple refrain that actually changed the course of the way that I pursued my relationship with God and my relationship with the word overwhelm.

And she just simply said, being overwhelmed is a choice, and it's a choice that you don't have to make.

And at first when she said this, I was like, what do you mean? Because that's actually kind of offensive. Of course I'm not choosing to be overwhelmed, as if I like this. But what she was doing for me in that moment was handing me the dignity and the autonomy, back into my corner to say, your circumstances and your approach to your relationship with God and with others and even your relationship with yourself can be changed with changes in your choices.

A SYSTEM OF BELIEFS

And when we look at behavior modification and we trace it back, because nine times out of ten, if you're watching this podcast recording, you're watching this session, and you're like, I am overwhelmed in my relationship with God and you're leaning in and you're hearing us record this thing that you're like, give me the ABC and one, two, three diagnosis of how I'm going to change my relationship with God and never feel overwhelmed again.

I would lean in with you and go, actually, let's lean in a little deeper because beneath the surface of your emotions, beneath the surface of your behaviors and the stress that you're experiencing, there is a root system of your story with God, your story with others that thread together a system of beliefs about who you are, about who God is, about what your role in your relationship with God and others is that is fueling the behaviors that you really want to see change.

And so we don't begin by looking at the behavior and going, how do I fix this? What's the ABC, one, two, three? What are the actions that I can take to perform my way out of this overwhelmed feeling? What my encouragement for you is to lean in with me a little bit in the next couple of minutes that we have together to begin to get curious and compassionate about why you're feeling overwhelmed in the first place and what you're believing about yourself and God and others that is fueling the state of overwhelm.

THE FOUR B METHOD

I liken it with my coaching programs and whether I'm working one on one or whether I'm working in groups, we use a four B method. The first is behold. The second is believe. The third is behave. And the fourth is become.

BEHOLD

And behold requires your full attention. So beholding God. Beholding. Even like this problem of feeling overwhelmed in your faith. Beholding it all through Scripture. You see this command, behold, behold. And it's

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usually like an announcement, and it's also a requirement of your full presence. And it's not a glancing toward it's, not a moment. It's an enrapture of your full attention.

What is occupying your mind the most right now? What is the center point of your attention? What are you beholding? And often, when I ask myself this question, sometimes I'm beholding God or I'm beholding truth that's eternal.

But then other times, I'm beholding some girl on the Internet who seems like she's got the whole thing together. I am dwelling on her, her opinions, her thoughts, her words, her results that she's producing through her life.

BELIEVE

And by beholding her, what happens is that then my system of beliefs begin to be transformed by what I'm beholding. I'm creating a set of beliefs about myself, about the results I'm producing in my life in comparison to this person or this thing or this thought or this circumstance that I'm beholding.

BEHAVE

And those beliefs without them being addressed, whether they are in alignment with truth or out of alignment with truth, fuel the systems of behavior. So then, all of a sudden, I'm cooking elaborate four course meals for my family because this girl on the Internet did or because I think that I'm supposed to. Right? But the thing is, from there, anything that whatever you behold, you will believe. Whatever you believe, you will behave accordingly.

BECOME

And then however you behave actually changes and transforms who you become. And so then when I'm standing in the kitchen and I am absolutely overwhelmed by the mess in my kitchen and the things that I'm trying to perform and do and to satisfy this role that I think that I'm supposed to be meeting, this comparison is now breathing competition and also a conformity to an image that was never mine to carry.

REDIRECT YOUR GAZE

And it requires us then to cycle back through it. Wait, what if I redirected my gaze? What if I fixed, as Scripture tells us, my eyes on Jesus, the author and the perfecter of my faith, who for the joy set before him, he endured hardship that was very overwhelming. Praise God.

That the Garden of Gethsemane was recorded in Scripture, that we see Jesus, God in flesh, having an overwhelmed night, dark night of the soul crying out before His Father. Is there any other way forward? Isn't it a comfort to know that the feeling of anxiety, the feeling of fear, the feeling of overwhelm is not sin? Jesus experienced these things, and yet he was sinless.

It gives us great comfort to know that the presence of anxiety in our physical bodies is a result of this intricately and beautifully created nervous system that God created us with, that is designed to keep us safe and secure. And throughout your entire life, from the beginning of your life through now, your brain has been creating neuropathways to help you define and understand and protect yourself from the danger and the presence of sin that your bodies were never meant to encounter, your

life was never meant to encounter.

INVITE GOD IN

So every presence of overwhelm and the feeling of fear, we have an opportunity to then invite God in. Sometimes when we're overwhelmed, we step back and we go, okay, I'm feeling overwhelmed. God, I'm just going to let go and I'm just going to let God. And although these Christian clichés, they sound nice, the difference is that I'm not letting go and letting God take care of something that's like way outside of me.

What he has always asked us to do is I want to invade within it. I want you to invite me in. I want you to get honest. I want you to redirect your gaze from your phone or from your friends, or from all the standards and expectations and your story that you've compiled throughout your whole lifetime.

JESUS THE VINE

I want you to redirect your gaze toward me. Let me define the pathway forward of what you're believing, how you're behaving, who you're becoming by beholding me. In John 15, there's this beautiful refrain that Jesus is speaking to his disciples and he's offering them one word. He's like, if you just remember this one thing, this is going to be enough. And we all know this scripture if we've walked with the Lord for a while.

And yet all of a sudden, in my thirties, the scripture came to life for me because I . . . backstory have always been a really black thumb.

I don't know if you're a black thumb . . . when it comes to growing things like cactuses. You don't even have to water them. And yet I still killed them. So maybe there's another module in this whole session where you're going to get some pro who's going to be like, here's how to grow things. I'm not your girl. I'm here to help you centralize Christ and maybe grow with God in your soul. But when it came to growing plants, I tried and I failed.

THE DYING FLOWERS

And in my early twenties, I had a young, my son was young, my husband was traveling, I was bouncing multiple part time jobs. And I had this beautiful . . . I was feeling overwhelmed in my faith. And I had this in my mind beautiful idea of how I was going to revamp my relationship with God, right? So I'm like, there's so much imagery of plants in scripture and all these things. I'm going to go down to Home Depot and I'm going to get one of those, you know, like the hanging pot plants that are just like you walk by them and you're like, I could definitely keep that alive there's . . . definitely like, it's so beautiful, they already grew it. We're good.

It's like $40 for a pot of flowers. And he's like, go to Home Depot, pick my favorite one. And I'm like, this is what's going to happen every morning. I'm going to go out onto my front porch, and I am going to read my Bible, and it's going to be a beautiful watering time for my soul. And then after I read my Bible, I will water my plant. And me and this plant, we're just going to grow. We're just going to flourish together. It's going to be great.

Well, you probably already know where this story is going. Two days later, I walk out onto my porch, and that hanging pot of beautiful flowers is already dead. They're, like, shriveled up and, like, please water me. And I'm like, you know what my response was? They sold me a diseased flower pot. How dare they? And so I pull it off my porch,

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I put it into the car. I'm like, kids, get in the car. We're going back down to Home Depot. And I had the audacity to bring this dead flower pot back to the guy at Home Depot.

And I was like, sir, you sold me diseased flowers, so I'm going to need my money back or exchange for a new flower pot. And the guy's like, you know, you're, like, supposed to water these every day, right? And I'm like, I know, but I only skipped, like, two days, and it's dead. And I paid $40 for this. I'm a very convincing person. So he gave me a new pot of flowers. I tried again, and it maybe lasted a little bit longer, but I still killed those.

BOUNTEOUS PEONIES

And fast forward, though, to about ten years later. We now live about an hour south of Nashville in the rolling country hillside. And I live on a 40 acre property that was maintained by a couple that built this home, established this garden, and lived here for 50 years before I moved in. When I was buying the house, the matriarch of the family was taking me along a journey of her garden. And, I mean, it was so sweet to watch this, like, 85 year old woman go, that's the magnolia tree that me and my son planted in the house. And we grew it from a seed, and now it's a towering magnolia tree that's over 50 years old. In the front yard, she's like, here's where I planted the tulips. Here's where I put the garlic. And in my mind, I was like, well, I hope I don't kill all this stuff.

Number one, don't tell her. But number two, my second thought was, I wonder if I could grow some of my favorite flowers here. This might actually be a place where I could grow things. And I thought specifically, it would be so wonderful to grow peonies. They're my favorite, obviously. They're so beautiful.

And I'm walking around and thinking about this with her, and we end up purchasing the property, and six months later, a new bush. I look outside my window, and I'm like, what is that bush?

It just came up out of the ground. And I go over there and there's these buds, these flower buds there. And sure enough, a few weeks later, right at the very end of April or beginning of May, they bloomed. And they were an established, two established peony bushes. These peony bushes take three years, you plant them, and three years later is when you see the first bud.

IN NEED

And you know, I think I was onto something when I took that flower pot back to Home Depot, as silly and as funny as that story is, because I think my spirit knew that this sort of answer to our spiritual lives that hinges on us showing up every day to water something is unsustainable.

You will have seasons where your quiet time doesn't look like that, and there's seasons where you're stretched so thin and you're in need. And I was in need. And my answer to my questions that I was laying before the Lord were answered by my own strength and my own ability and my own behavior in the hanging pot. Flower pot answer.

But when I came to this property and these flowers grew without me even striving to make them grow, they were the results of somebody else planting them before me and nurturing and cultivating them. And every year I tend to them, I prune them back. And actually, when you think of a peony bush, you only get to enjoy the blossoms on that peony bush for about a week, maybe two. And the whole rest of the year, that bush gets trimmed all the way

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back. And in the winter, all the way down to the ground, you don't even see it. And the next year it grows back, bigger than the year before, more blossoms than the year before.

ABIDE IN JESUS

And this is true for what spiritual formation looks like when we abide. And I'll bring you back to what John 15 said when Jesus selected his disciples. And he says, I am the vine, you're the branches. My Father is the vine dresser. Every branch who is in me that does not bear fruit, he takes away. Every branch that does bear fruit. He prunes so that it could be more fruitful.

And he goes forward and he says, remember that this is, remember these words that I've spoken to you. This is the one word, abide in me. Remain in me, you guys. He says this eleven times. Remain. Remain. Remain. Remain. Remain. Remain. Remain. Remain. Remain. Remain. Remain.
Remain. If somebody is repeating that eleven times, if Jesus is repeating that eleven times, then it causes our ear to turn.

CENTRALIZING HIS PRESENCE

It means that your spiritual overwhelm is present there. Probably because Christ isn't centralized in everything. You think he just needs to be prioritized. There's a difference between prioritizing God and centralizing his presence in everything.

So that when you're waking up in the morning and you're like, the baby is already screaming, and the day started sooner than I expected and I have a long list of things to do. It's no longer a got to get that Bible check mark off my list and make sure that I stick with the plans. And the Bible study is coming up on Thursday and I didn't read all of my homework and do anything last week and I don't know, maybe we turn it into behavior modification.

And you hear the voice of the Holy Spirit say, remain in me. I'll wash the dishes with you.
I'll change the dirty diapers with you. I'll drive with you to work. I'll help you get all the work done that you need to get done today. Let me eat lunch with you. Let me cook dinner with you. Let me sit in that coffee shop with a friend with you. Remain in me.

Take my presence everywhere. The very last words that Jesus spoke to us before he ascended into Heaven were the words, behold, I am with you always, with you always. I never leave you. And so what battles overwhelm in our relationship with God is being surrendered all the time. Rather than trying to curate a perfect quiet time, it's centralizing his presence, not prioritizing his presence.

NOT JUST SOMETHING ON THE SCHEDULE

If his presence is simply prioritized, then he's just another thing on your schedule that you have to make happen. When he's centralized, there's an overflow. And when you think of like a center point, like my peony bush, I'm looking outside window and I can see it's planted into something. And that at the end of the day is what the Father's talking about.

Like abide in my love. And what happens is when you invite the love of God in and when you centralize his presence, then the words in I John 5, when he says perfect love casts out fear, begins to make sense. It's not a don't be afraid, clench your fist or ever feel overwhelmed or afraid ever again. It's not what it's talking about.

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It's that any presence of fear that is alive in your body is evidence of you encountering shattering and brokenness in your story due to sin that needs a fresh encounter and molding and forming from the love of God. Literally.

REWRITING THE STORY

The neuropathways in your brain that were created by fear need to be tended to by the love of God that invades and is welcomed into those places to rewrite the story that we get to live with God, to experience freedom. It's not until we receive love that we actually have something to exchange our fear for. And this love casts out the feeling of overwhelm because it's defined by joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Imagine having the presence of a loving God who is all those things when you need them. I used to think these are the things that I need to grow and I do. But before I grow them, I actually have to receive them. Like, imagine being like a child who wakes up in the middle of the night in a panic because they had a nightmare. And if I just sent my daughter back home to her bed, and I was like, just don't be afraid. Just you're fine. Just go lay down. Don't be afraid. What happens? You stay afraid.

It's the same thing as if an overwhelmed woman comes to me and goes, I feel so overwhelmed in my in my relationship with God. And my response is like, just read your Bible. Just pray more.
You go, thanks.

Instead of, for my daughter, I go, yeah, I'm sorry that you're feeling afraid. I hate when that happens for me. Validation, empathy. Can I come back to your bed really quick and just rub your back and help you calm down so that you can go back to sleep? And just that five minutes of care, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control contains that feeling of fear enough to where fear is cast out and love then invades.

SEEKING GOD'S PRESENCE

So for you, as we wrap up, instead of being critical of the way that you're feeling in your relationship with God, what if you got curious and compassionate instead? And what if you invited a loving father? Because it's literally the same sort of thing. You're a child being woken up by a nightmare of overwhelm and anxiety, and you do get to come into you have direct access to the presence of God.

And when you come into his presence and you go, father, I'm overwhelmed. I'm afraid. I'm afraid because I actually miss you, and life is crowding in so much, and I feel so overwhelmed, and I miss you, and I feel like I'm doing something wrong, and I feel like I'm letting you down, and I feel like I'm letting other people down. Help me.

His response to you will always be defined by those fruits of the Spirit, and in order for you to grow those things in your life, you have to receive them from Him. Behold, I am with you always. Let me rub your back. Put your Bible plan down. Put the prayer journal down for a second and just be with me. Let my presence come. Intend.

I will prune whatever needs to grow. I prune the things that I love, and I cast off the things that are not meant to be a part of the growth in your life. You can trust me. Remain, remain. Remain.

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HIS PROMISE

And Jesus has promised us in John 15:11 is I've spoken to you so that joy may be in you, and it may be full, not will, but may. It requires a partnership with Him and abiding in Him, and it may produce a full and abundant joy over the long term, lifetime, that we are called to live with Him for eternity and until on earth as it is in heaven, invading your world now.

So in application, behold God today, come before Him and receive what you need. And allow that change of your directed attention. Dictate the way you behave or the way you believe about yourself and others, how you're behaving toward yourself and others, and who you are becoming in a lifetime process of growing with God.

TASHA: Yeah, I mean, there's so much packed into that to just meditate on and go back and rewatch and take notes and all of that.

FINDING MORE

So I know you share so much more online. Where can women go to just find more out about what you have to share, your coaching programs, all of that?

TORI: Absolutely. I mean, the easiest place is to find me on Instagram I'm torimaehein, and say hello. I always respond to my DMs personally and do my best to connect authentically with the people that I get the privilege of meeting. And we can figure out what is the best resource for you, whether it's a course or our six month mentorship programs or any of the programs that I run through our nonprofit Freedom Movement.

TASHA: Awesome.

TORI: Blessings to all of you guys.

TASHA: Yes. Thank you. We will leave links to that down below. And thank you so much for your time today.

TORI: Of course. Thank you so much.

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Best Organizing Products to Use

TRACY BOWERS • TRANSCRIPT

We are in my warehouse today to talk about product. If you want to have that perfect space that is so beautiful and so organized, yet really functional, having the right container is key. It's huge. It is so, so important.

SHARING SECRETS

But I know it can be so confusing and so overwhelming because there's so many products out there. That's why I'm here. I'm here to help you today. Today I'm going to share with you just a few of the products that are our favorites, the basics, the products that we use in almost every single home that we organized.

And I'm going to share with you why we use those products and where to get them, the best place, because there's always the best place to get them. And I'm going to share those secrets with you.

DRAWER ORGANIZERS

I'm going to start off by sharing the number one product that I think every household should have. It doesn't matter how big or how small your household is. This is something everybody needs and that is having drawer organizers.

We get ours from the Container Store. And I know you're thinking, oh, but the Container Store is so expensive. Yes, they are. There's a lot of things that are very expensive there. But this is something that is actually really well priced for what it is. There's a lot fancier ones out there. There are ones that have like little metal balls at the bottom of them and thicker plastic. And you don't need all that fancy stuff.

AT THE CONTAINER STORE

This is the Everything Drawer Organizer. It's the Container Store brand. And it's thinner plastic. It doesn't have the metal in it. You don't need any of those things. This is all you need. And what we really love about them is that they come in eight different sizes when you get them at the Container Store. They have some of these for a great price on Amazon, but they don't have all the sizes. And it's so important to have all the sizes.

Let me tell you why. To create a perfectly organized space, there needs to be a home for everything. So you don't want to have one big container and throw a bunch of miscellaneous things in it. You want a container, if you have a little teeny bit of something, you put it in a little teeny container. If you have something really long, like a pair of scissors, you want it in a long container and then pencils in another, pens in another. Every single thing you have should have its own container.

In some homes, we even label every single individual drawer organizer so that the family can be on board and see what goes in that container. So Everything Drawer Organizers are fabulous and it's the best place to get them, is at the Container Store.

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MUSEUM GEL

There is a tip that I need to share with you though. If you are using drawer organizers, you want to get some museum gel. Just something you can get on Amazon or when it's on sale at the Container Store is what we like to do, then it's an even better price. And it's just this gummy little stuff. It's so fun to play with. You just want to get a couple big balls and put it at the corner of each of your drawer organizers. You don't have to put it at every single corner, but on all the outer corners of the drawer organizers that are in your drawer.

And then you just push them down and it's going to keep it from sliding back and forth when you're opening and closing the door.

M DESIGN ACRYLIC CONTAINERS

Okay, I'm going to share with you a big secret. We also shop at M Design. It's another one of our favorite stores. It's an online store. It's not a storefront, but you can find those things online. Some of the things they have are half the price as what you would get at the Container Store. There's just a couple of things that they have, the exact same things, and you absolutely want to get them at M Design.

And first of all, these are ten inch acrylic that we use a lot. They're super reasonably priced. Container Store now has this size. They still don't have this size. M Design has both of them. And you want both of the sizes because we use these for like medicines or anything that's in a small cabinet that's twelve inches deep. Most cabinets are just twelve inches deep. So these ten inch acrylic fit perfectly in them.

And so we will put cleaning supplies in here or medicines or just different things that you're trying to create a home for in your cabinets. These ten inch acrylic are great and half the price if you get them at M Design.

DIFFERENT SIZES

These are the other two sizes that we get that you can get at the Container Store, but don't. Get them through. M Design began because they're almost half price. Usually the prices change all the time, but often they're half the price and containers add up. They're so pricey. But these are 16 inch long acrylic. And oh, I didn't bring up the wider one. This is four inches wide. They have another one that's six inches wide, so it's a little bit wider.

But these we put above the fridge, anywhere where you have a deep cabinet. And it kind of creates a little drawer where you can slide the acrylic in, pull it in, pull it out, and it just keeps things nice and tidy. It creates a home for things. A home for things that are in deep cabinets.

CONTAINER STORE PANTRY BINS

When it comes to acrylic, we have a new favorite, though they are a lot more expensive, but they're so beautiful and we love them. And these are the pantry bins from the Container Store. This one, it's like close to eighteen, twenty dollars, I don't know exactly, right now. And it changes, but very expensive. But they're so beautiful.

What I like about them is that they don't have the hole like these. It's just nice and smooth. So you can put a beautiful label on it and it just fills the space of the cabinet more so it just looks more beautiful. They have a divider in it that you can keep or you

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can pull out, but it helps you divide things. So this is something that we use in cabinets as well. When you have a little more money, they're just so pretty.

AMAZON DRAWER DIVIDERS

We need to talk about drawer dividers for just a minute. This is something that you're going to use again, every household, we always use drawer dividers. It is definitely a basic. The bamboo ones tend to be a little bit longer, and this is what we usually use in a kitchen, but they come in different sizes.

CHECK YOUR SIZE

The cheapest place to get them is on Amazon, but you have to be really careful as far as what size you're buying, because you may think, wow, this is a great deal on drawer dividers, but they're super short and they won't fit in your kitchen. So you have to measure how deep your drawers are in your kitchen and make sure that the drawer dividers you order are going to fit in your drawer.

So there's three different sizes. One is just barely bigger than the other, and then they have one that's smaller, but three different sizes. Look, to see what the cheapest one is on Amazon, I would tell you a brand, but they change all the time. I'm just looking for the best price with the size that I need, and it changes. So you're going to have to do a little bit of homework on it. But just know Amazon is absolutely the cheapest place to find them.

When you're organizing your drawers, your dresser drawers for your clothes, usually you're going to want. These are the DreamWorks drawer dividers. And they just get a lot smaller than the bamboo ones. They're a lot smaller, and then they're deeper because you want it deeper in your dresser drawers. So you want to find something like this.

And again, the best price to find them is absolutely on Amazon. And you just have to make sure that it is the size that works in your drawer. But one more thing. You just want this simple spring loaded one. They have some that have like, little clips in it, and you push it and then lock it. Don't get those. Don't get those. Even though they're way cheaper, not worth the money. This is the type. This is the kind that you want.

CONTAINER STORE MULTIPURPOSE BINS

Another favorite, something that we use in almost every single house we go to, is the Container Store's multipurpose bins. I did see a large size at Walmart once. It was something like this, but they didn't have any other sizes. And then I looked it up online. I couldn't find them. Like, I've looked everywhere. Nobody else has them.

And what's great about it is, again, they come in four different sizes. And you want something that you can have in different sizes because sometimes you're going to put notebooks in here that are really thick. Sometimes you're just going to have just a little bit of cardstock and you just really need the different sizes.

Here are some pictures of the different ways that we use them. Sometimes we have them in a garage. They're perfect for all your spray cans and chemicals and things. There's so much of that in the garage and this just keeps them tidy. It's also great in the garage for kids, things where they can just easily grab what they need and it doesn't have a lid on it.
You're not stacking bins. It's using that

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vertical space on a shelf, but keeping it contained and keeping it easy for the kids to get to.

We often use them in storage closets to store all your overflow bathroom and household items. And again, it creates a home for everything. It keeps it in a tidy, nice line, just looks neat and beautiful.

GENERIC STORAGE BOXES

Another basic that you're almost always going to need in any household are just plain basic plastic storage boxes. So let me tell you a few places to get them, the best places to get them, and why. When looking for storage bins, you just want to try and really try hard to find bins that come in different sizes of the same type of bin. You just want to have that cohesive, consistent flow, and you want different sizes to choose from.

At Target right now, they have Hefty bins. They have a gray handle on them with some writing on it. I don't love that. I'm always looking for something clear and simple and clean, but you can't always have that and it's fine because they're really sturdy. They work great in a storage room, work great in a garage, and they come in a variety of sizes, which is just so helpful. So hefty bins at Target right now are a great place.

You can also get if we go back to Costco, if you like the solid black look, they have the black bins with the yellow lids and they only have them in the one big size. But you can go to places like Walmart and they have solid black bins, different sizes. So you can mix those, the Costco ones and the Walmart ones because they're all black and it's still going to look beautiful. So again, just find something different sizes, but the same, the same color.

OXO CONTAINERS

Okay, containers for everything. I know you're looking at this and thinking, oh yes, this is something that you put in your pantry, which it is for those of you who like to decant your food, that means you take it out of the packaging and put it in a container. We love doing that because then you can see what you have. You see when you're running low. This keeps it even more fresh than a box once it's opened because it keeps it sealed and it's not sitting opened in your pantry.

So, yes, we love the Oxo containers, but there's lots of different containers out there. You just have to use what you love, what works for you. I know Walmart and Target have ones that have the little latches on them and they clip down. They work great, and they're a lot less expensive. They're still clear. They don't come in as many sizes.

KEEP THEM CONSISTENT

And so for us, as professional organizers, we want to make sure we have all the sizes we need. So we stick to the Oxos. But there are lots of different brands out there that work great. So you want to find ones that work great that you love, and then you want to be consistent and only buy that exact brand. We come into trouble when we start buying a little here and a little there of different things, and then it starts looking messy and cluttered. You want to keep things consistent.

Our two favorite sizes of the Oxo containers are the 1.9 and the 2.7. We call these the snack containers because we always put snacks in them. The bigger bags we put in here. The smaller bags of things, we put them in here. But they're the same height,

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so they look nice on the shelf. It just flows and it looks beautiful. So we love them for that.

But you can also use these different types of Oxo containers in your bathroom. For feminine products, we put in there. We put bath salts in the laundry room, you can put laundry pods and all different powders and things that you use in the laundry room. We just use them in lots of places. And having a clear, clean container just looks beautiful. It's clean, it's neat. You can see what's in there. So those are our favorite. But again, buy something that you find that works for you and just be consistent with it.

BASKETS

Because I'm standing behind all these baskets, I thought I'd better share some tips with you about purchasing baskets for your organizing project. So once again, I'm going to tell you to look for baskets that come in a variety of sizes with the same type of basket. That's always the best thing to look for. It just gives you that variety and that flexibility that you need.

And I just love these baskets because of it. These come in actually five different sizes, and again, they got them at the Container Store. But you can find baskets like it on Amazon. I don't see that they're that much cheaper, though, or even cheaper at all. So I always end up going to the Container Store and just waiting for a sale. But they do have them on Amazon if that's a better place for you to buy them, you just have to kind of look.

STRAIGHT EDGE

Another thing to think about with baskets is that you want a straight edge. When you have a straight edge on your basket, you're able to fill it so much better. It just really utilizes the space well. And then you can nest them next to each other. Again, it just is utilizing the space really well. So I always want to make sure I have some straight edged baskets for my organizing projects.

But if you're organizing a pantry, you may want a little variety. So it is nice to have maybe a couple round baskets in there or something a little curvy along with these baskets just to give some interest. For example, these are some round baskets that I got on Amazon and they're great. And we've used them in corners in a pantry to just put fruit and vegetables in and it just ties together nicely with the other baskets we've got going on.

And things like this, all those different, unique things that I'm looking for, I just go to Amazon and search and they always have different fun things. This is one of them.

START SMALL

So that's it. Those are some of the basic products that we use in almost every home that we go to. And there are products that you'll use as well. So hope this is helpful. And just remember to start small. Don't get overwhelmed. Just think of one small project you want to work on. Possibly a junk drawer, something small. Once you do that, you'll feel successful, it'll feel good, and then you'll want to move on to your next thing.

But take it easy, one step at a time, and before you know it, you'll be organized.

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Organize Your Home and Life With a Home Hub!

TRACY LYNN • TRANSCRIPT

Hey there. Welcome to Organize Your Home and Life with a Home Hub, my simple approach to living each day chaos free. Today I will be sharing with you all the details about what a home hub is so you can streamline the daily activities of your family and eliminate a bit of the messiness of day to day life.

By the end of our time together, you should be able to set up a hub in your home in a way that fits your family and time of life. Oh, and for all my empty nesters out there, don't think a hub is just for families. Actually, it's perfect for everyone. And I will share tips on how you can use one throughout my talk today.

Now, before we get started, I would like to thank Organized HQ for inviting me back to speak with you today. I love being a part of this amazing group of people that want to help you live your very best life.

MEET TRACY LYNN

But maybe this is our first time meeting. If so, let me introduce myself. Hello again. I am Tracy Lynn. I am the founder of declutteringminutes.com, where I help folks break down super intimidating decluttering projects into ones that can fit into just minutes a day.

I am mom to four grown boys and Gigi to two little grandnuggets. And throughout the years I have raised an eclectic assortment of animals from dogs and cats to pigs, fish, chickens and even goats.

Needless to say, our home has been full of chaos and activity since day one.

But the truth is, our family is not unique. It seems that most families are far busier today than they have ever been with sporting events, work meetings, medical appointments, get-togethers and after school activities. The commitments that each family member has can keep us on our toes.

It's almost as if we are in charge of a busy airport like air traffic control. Imagine all those flights in the air and your job is to keep them on time, headed in the right direction, ensuring they all arrive with the people on board that need to be there, luggage included.

Lucky for us, we do not need elaborate computers to keep things on track. All we need is a hub. A home hub that will help to streamline your entire family no matter what the size, ensuring everyone gets to where they need to be on time with all the things they need to have with them.

WHAT IS A HOME HUB?

But let's back up just a bit and talk about what a home hub is. A home hub is a designated space in your home where you keep track of all the activities that your family is involved in, along with the basic tools needed to run a home.

If you were to look up the definition in the dictionary, you would find the word hub

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defined as the central part of a wheel. And that is just what a home hub is. The central part of your family home. And once you have one set into place, your entire family can use it to streamline their days.

LEAVING KYLE

So why did I start using a hub? Well, years ago, when my boys were younger, I was a hot, chaotic mess of a mom. I remember one super busy day, I was heading home from my boys' baseball practice when my phone rang. It was my good friend who was also the coach of my son's team, and he asked me if I had forgotten anything. I quickly looked around and said, no, I don't think so. He then started laughing and said, you may want to do a head count. That was when I realized my nine year old son was not in the car with me. It was just like that scene from the movie Home Alone, when the mom realizes she left her son Kevin at home. Only I had left my son Kyle at practice.

All right, I laughed. I was totally embarrassed and admitted that yes, I was short one kid. It was at that point I realized I needed to have a better system in place for keeping tabs. And by the way, my son was not harmed, as he never even realized I left him. At that point, he just went home with the coach and hung out with his son, who happened to be his close friend. So nobody was injured.

ALREADY USING ONE?

Okay, so who is a home hub good for? Actually, it's perfect for anyone. It could be helpful for a large family, an empty nester couple, or even a single college student living alone. The good news is you're already using a version of a hub. And that means leveling up to a more streamlined system will be easier than you realize.

Wait, did I just say you're already using a home hub right now? Why, yes, I did. I think I can safely say you have a calendar in your home, right? Well, that calendar is a mini version of a home hub. It is the tool that you use to keep track of your entire family's activities. And since you already have the key component of a hub in use right now, the rest will be relatively easy.

WHAT KIND OF CALENDAR?

With so many types of calendars on the market, you should be able to find a format that you are most comfortable with. That can be a flip wall calendar with one page for each month, a digital calendar on your phone or computer, or even a full year, all on one gigantic page. There is no right or wrong format. Just choose an option that you're able to use, and this part is crucial. Be consistent.

So I'm a visual person, right? And that means I like to see things in writing. This is just how my head responds best. But I also do not do well seeing more than one month at a time, because too much can easily overwhelm me. So my format of choice is a large calendar that shows only one month at a time, with enough room to write on each day to cover my entire family.

Okay, so just in case you're a visual person, we are going to do a little show and tell. All right, so let me jump over here and get myself on screen. Okay, so I have a couple of examples of calendars that you can use. The one that you're using right now isn't quite working like you want it to. These are different examples of what is available out there so you could pick the best option for you and your family.

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So first up are just free digital download pages, PDF download pages, that you can download and print out and put in your home hub. Now, this is actually one that is included in my home hub bundle, which I'll talk about later. But you can find free black and white ones that you don't have to pay for, and you can download one for each month. And a lot of them are pre filled, so you don't have to write in the days. So this is option number one.

Option number two is a flip wall calendar. I should have held the other one closer. Sorry. This is a flip wall calendar with wide open spaces on each day so you can write in everyone's name and schedule and see it easily.

SO MANY CHOICES

Okay, next is this version, which is also a flip wall calendar, but it has lines on each day. See all the lines? That allows you to give a line assigned to each person in your family if you have a lot of things you need to keep track of. So the top line could be for your husband, the next line could be for you, the next line, your oldest son, all the way down the line. It's just an easy way of keeping track of everyone and keeping things neat.

Next up is a magnetic aversion. So this goes on the front of a refrigerator. It takes up very little space, there's lots of room for everyone in your family, and it's magnetic all the way across. I got this on Amazon. So it's magnetic on the back, so it does not move, it doesn't slip. Right. The only downfall is you have to fill in each day at the start of each month, and you only have one month available at a time. Whereas these other options you can flip to a next month or a previous month if you need to check on what happened earlier or what is coming up.

And then finally, this great big desk calendar. This is what I use because I need things big. As you get older, your vision gets bad, for you young people out there. So you need lots of room to write your schedule in so you can see it easily. So this was bought at Staples, but I think I saw them at Target and Walmart, and they're $7 or less, very inexpensive. I just ripped the page out. I put it right on my wall. It is really big and easy for me to see everything clearly.

Okay, so let's get back to the presentation. Hopefully, that helps you choose exactly the calendar that's going to work best for you.

COLOR CODING YOUR CALENDAR

Next, let's talk about how to streamline your family calendar. Remember, your goal is to keep your family on time for each commitment. And no matter what size your family is, I believe color coding is your best option.

All right, so what do I mean by color coding? Well, you're going to assign a color to each person in your family. This way, they can quickly and easily see their own schedule. On the flip side, the colors will also help you to know who needs to be where and when.

A COMPLETE DIFFERENCE

So let me show you how colors can completely change the look of your calendar. All right, we're going to do another show and tell. Aren't these fun? Okay, so I need this one right here. All right, so remember this lined calendar that I showed you here? All right, I'm going to show you an example of how color coding can really streamline this calendar and make it easy for you to see. Sorry. Props.

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Okay, so you can see this is a normal calendar. Normally, when someone fills out a calendar, you just grab the closest writing utensil, you put their name down, the time, what the event is, and it ends up being a little bit chaotic. Right. There's a lot going on for a lot of people on this calendar.

Now, when you use colors, you assign a color to each person, and that same calendar now looks like this. Isn't that a huge difference? So now every person has their own color, and because they do, you do not need to write their name down, which makes it you need less space to write the activity.

So let's say Kevin is all in pink. So that means I can see instantly exactly when soccer practice is for Kevin. If Jamie is all in orange, I can see instantly exactly when Jamie needs to go to swimming lessons.

A GAME CHANGER

Those colors are a game changer, and they allow you to pull out whether it be the day of activities or that person's activities for the entire month. So you want to use colors even if you're an empty nester, colors are a huge way to streamline a calendar in a home hub.

Okay, so let's get back to it. All right, so no matter what size your family is, you will learn to see in those colors. So if your oldest son's color is red, you can see his schedule for the entire month without getting distracted by anyone else's schedule. This can be super helpful for you if you need to coordinate carpooling, for example.

Now, here is a tip that is great for young families. When using colors, you want to keep the color the same for each person on all platforms. So if you use color coding for bins in your mud room, for example, you will want to continue to use the colors you designated for your calendar on those bins. The more you consistently use the same colors, the easier it will be to keep your entire family organized.

HUB LOCATION

All right, next let's talk about location. You will want to choose an area that is easily seen by everyone in your family. This will encourage all of your family members to use the hub, keeping everyone on track each day. For some, the kitchen will be the best spot, for others, the entryway, and still others, a full wall setup in the hallway.

For the setup, this will depend on how detailed a hub you need. If you have a bigger size family, you may want to use a large open area on a wall, whereas a smaller sized family may only need the front of a refrigerator.

Another thing to keep in mind is how busy everyone's schedule is. Let's say your kids are in sports, after school activities, and club events. This means you will need a large space for your hub to hold everyone's schedules.

When finalizing the area for where to put your home hub, look for a spot that is easy for every family member to see and use. I suggest walking your home a few times before deciding. Remember, you can always change things up if the spot you chose does not work as well as you had hoped.

Now, a few spots to consider for your home hub are the front of a refrigerator, a wall in the hallway, a shelf or a table in a mud room, maybe a wall near the garage door, or even a cabinet in the kitchen.

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THE BAKER'S RACK

Now, a question I get asked often is, what did we use for our home hub? And when our kids were small, we used a baker's rack in the kitchen. I wish I had taken a picture of that setup, but here's basically what I had. I had a set of those plastic organizing drawers on the counter, one drawer for each of my boys, and the drawer was large enough to hold an eight by ten sheet of paper. That way they could put their school papers that needed to be signed in there, permission slips or any other important items, and they would fit right inside of their drawer.

I also had a wall calendar for schedules and appointments and a basket for any incoming mail. Now, after our kids were grown and gone, my husband and I downsized to just a fridge calendar with a small basket to hold incoming mail and a binder for all of our home hub pages.

Okay, so let's jump back over here for another show and tell. So I wanted to show you quickly my home hub binder because I don't have kids that live at home anymore. And we still use a big calendar because I need to know my grandkids sports schedule so that my husband and I can plan to go to them. I need to know my older kids if they're coming in to visit or if we're going to their house. So I still need this great big calendar for our family planning.

THE BINDER

But all of the papers and all of the supporting items in our hub is now inside of our home hub binder. So this is everything I need to run my family and home inside of a binder. And it's super easy to get to. So I have my addresses are in here. I have takeout menus in here. Can you see? Sorry, I have to look backwards to see what I wrote.

I have my home care items in here for appliances and warranties and such. I have my pet care in here for vet appointment numbers and his medications that he's on. I have auto care in here for all of our vehicles so we can keep oil changes on time. I have money, budget, and bills. Everything is all in here. It's a sturdy binder that can hold all of our papers and supplies. So if I need anything, I just grab this. I can grab the address for the birthday card I'm sending out. Stamps are in there as well. It's all ready to go and easy for me to access.

Okay, so let me go back to my share screen and back over here now that I'm getting the hang of all this. Okay, the parts you include in your hub are all up to you. And what you include will be different from what I include. So you might have things like sports schedules, appointments, chore charts, shopping lists, work schedules I could go on and on, right?

THE FOCAL POINT

But there is one part that we will all have in common, and that is our calendar. Now, since the calendar is the most essential part, you will want to put that up first. This is going to be the focal point of your layout for your home hub.

I suggest having it at a height where everyone can use it easily. Remember, the purpose of your hub is to remind everyone where they need to be. So your goal is to make that calendar really stand out, encouraging your family to stop there every day and refresh themselves on their schedule.

Now, one of the best parts of using a home hub is to encourage each of our

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family members, husbands included, to be more responsible and self-sufficient. Your calendar is for the entire family to use, and the more you can help them to utilize it, the more proactive they will be with their own schedule.

When deciding what else to organize, you will want to think about your family and your time of life. What a young family chooses to organize will be completely different than what a couple of grandparents choose to organize, the purpose of our home hubs will be the same, but what is included will be different.

WHAT ELSE TO INCLUDE

Okay, let's talk about that for a minute. A young family may want to keep track of kids' chores, house rules, babysitter information, sports schedules, daycare class events, after school activities, carpool appointments, pet care. There's so much for young families, right?

A single person may want to keep track of takeout menus, to do list bills, maybe any appointments they have, pet care or social events.

An older family may want to keep track of sports schedules, individual work schedules, car maintenance, house rules, or work meetings. And an empty nester may want to keep track of exercise schedules, doctors' appointments, social events, phone numbers, or birthdays and anniversaries. Oh, and possibly pet care.

Now, before you start to do the actual layout of your hub, make a list of the top five to eight areas that you plan to streamline in your setup.

You can have one area for each family member, along with a few home management areas. By having a basic idea of what you plan to streamline, you will be better able to choose the best tools to keep them organized. Okay, now for the fun part, let's talk about those tools.

CLIPBOARDS

I love clipboards, and I find they are the easy way to organize in a home hub and a great way to designate specific categories or family members efficiently. These clipboards here I got at Amazon.com. They came in a pack of like, ten, and I literally use all ten of them. So you can set up a clipboard for each family member that has all the papers for them specifically.

So you might have a clipboard set up for Johnny, and it would have his sport schedule on it, his work schedule on it, his chores, any school events or permission slips he needs to be signed. Or you may want to do a clipboard for a few main categories such as shopping list, weekly menus, or pet care.

So basically, let me show you how this works. So if you do chore charts and this sheet is included in the bundle . . . so if you do chore charts, you can put the chore chart right on the clipboard and put it right on the wall. And this would be specifically for one family member so they can easily see exactly what their chores are and they can keep track of them.

Hopefully you can see me because I forgot I'm not sharing. All right? So it just makes it easy. And they can write on the clipboard without punching a hole through the paper, right?

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OTHER INFORMATION

If you are an empty nester and you want your husband to see the meal plan, let me put this one on and take this one off. Then you could put the meal plan right on it, right? And your husband could see everything that you have planned for the week ahead, and he knows exactly what days he wants to be late and what days he wants to be on time, right?

Okay, so maybe you have a pet and you want to keep all of the information for your pet front and center in your home hub. So you can have vet phone numbers, you can have basic, the border numbers, the groomer numbers, everything ready and right in your home hub so you can easily see what it is you need when you need to call.

And finally, if you're a single person and you like to have a daily schedule where you can easily see it, you can do your daily plan right on a clipboard and you can see exactly what you need to do and what in time you need to do it in. It has your water intake, your menu, everything is on there.

Now, the best part about these particular clipboards is that they have this little hook. Sorry, it's hard to get out. There it is. Mine's bent. So they have these little hooks on the back. See this little hook right here? Right there. So you can put a nail in the wall and hang your clipboard right in your home hub. And that way the child can see it, but they can also take it off, write on it, add any new papers, and then hang it right back up. The more efficient you can make your hub for your family to use, the more it's going to become a valuable tool for everyone involved.

STREAMLINING MAIL

Okay, next on your layout list is mail. An incoming mail is seriously a huge source of clutter and chaos. No matter what stage of life you are in, by having a specific spot for the daily paper influx, you will eliminate a lot of the mess from your main areas in your home. Oh, and bonus, you'll never lose an important paper again.

Okay, so what should you use to organize papers? Well, that's all going to depend on your setup, so let's talk about a few ideas to get you started. If you're going to do a wall layout, you can use plastic bins to hold incoming mail and any other important papers you routinely access.

These bins I got at amazon.com, they came in a pack of three and they're plastic and sturdy and they really hold up well to the weight of books, as you can see in the bottom picture. Now, if you're going to do a countertop layout like you see in the picture here, you can just use a bin or a basket for incoming mail. Be sure the basket you choose is big enough to hold those larger pieces of mail so things don't get bent or folded inside.

TRAVEL ITEMS

Next on your home hub layout list is travel items. Okay, I struggled to find a fun term for this area and this was literally the best I could come up with. But when I say travel items, I'm talking keys, sunglasses, wallets, purses, or other items you usually take with you when you leave the home.

Again, the container you use will all depend on your setup, so let's look at a few examples for a wall layout. Hanging containers or hooks like this one are a perfect solution to hold a miscellaneous

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collection of items in a wall layout. If you use a countertop setup, you can place a ceramic bowl or another container to hold those items you routinely use. Now, if you're an empty nester, you can have one for yourself and one for your spouse.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Keeping everything neat and contained: now that you have a good idea of what you want to include in your home hub, it's time to put it all together. Now, for the rest of our talk, we will be talking about a wall layout. Just know if you choose a different location than the wall, you will want to adjust your layout accordingly.

FIRST DRAFT

I suggest using temporary tape to hold things into place so you can more easily rearrange the layout until you're happy with how things look. Remember, start with your calendar. This is the centerpiece, the support for all the spokes in your wheel. Put your calendar in place, being sure it can be easily seen by everyone.

Next, step back and take a look at the area you have to work with. Ask yourself what is the best location to put your clipboards? You could put them all down one side of your calendar, along the bottom, or framing your calendar all the way around. You can use Sticky Tack to put your clipboards up. Sticky Tack is just like this temporary hanging tool that you can use for now, until you determine if this setup will work best for you and your family.

Remember to keep everything labeled. If you're using colors for each of your family members on your calendar, you'll want to use the same color on the clipboard. You can write their name at the top so they can more easily see which clipboard is meant for them. If you choose to use clipboards for holding different category items, then you can use a label maker for each of your boards.

So far, so good. You are doing great. Now it's time for your paper organizers. Whatever containers you decided on, you can now add those in. Always remember, take a step back and evaluate an item as you incorporate it, being sure you have things in a layout that makes sense to you. Now, since the paper organizers will mainly be used by you or your spouse, these containers can go up a bit higher, which can be helpful, especially if you have a younger family.

Last but not least, you will want to add in a container to hold travel items. Again, as you and your spouse may be the only ones using this area, you can keep these containers a bit higher.

Now that you have the first draft of your home hub, complete step back and take a look, see if things are too crowded or in the wrong spot. You can adjust them as you test drive this layout.

INTRODUCTION

Finally, you will want to introduce your new home hub to the rest of your family. This is a great time for a family meeting. Remember, the goal of this working is to have everyone be an active part, and a family meeting is a great way to explain the layout and how it all works.

Give an overview of why you wanted to set up a home hub. Explain the calendar and how important it is to everything running efficiently, introduce everyone's specific color and explain how to use their own clipboard. And finally, tell them what other

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areas they will be able to utilize and what areas you would like them to refrain from using at all. Your new home hub may be for your entire family to use, but the main purpose is to help you with day to day organizing and activities.

BUILD HABITS

Start a new daily habit of refreshing yourself each morning for what is up for the day ahead. This one step will help you to prepare for all the upcoming events scheduled for the day. Just as important, you will want to end the day with a recap of how things went.

I like to do this after dinner so I know if I have any questions, my entire family is nearby for me to ask them. This is also a good time to make any adjustments for the next day. Remind family members of commitments they may have and what items they will need to take with them. This recap is your most valuable tool and one I want to encourage you not to skip over or postpone to the very end of the day.

Why should you not postpone your daily recap? Well, let's say your daughter has a class party tomorrow. Written on the calendar, you remind her of the party and that's when she remembers one crucial piece she needs to bring in cupcakes for her class of 24 kids. Luckily, you did your recap early in the evening so you still have time to get those cupcakes ready. By doing a recap, you can confirm the next day's commitments and ask if there's anything else they need to have ready. This will hopefully remind them of any additional things they may have forgotten to mention earlier. One of the best parts of a home hub is no more stressed out mornings of last minute reminders, lost permission slips, or missing uniforms.

OTHER HUB BENEFITS

It's true that the main goal of a hub is to keep family activities organized, but there are other benefits as well that I would love to mention.

MORE EFFICIENT SHOPPING

Encourage your family to add to your shopping list as they see you are running low on things. This can be easily done on your errands clipboard. Before you head out to the store, take a picture of your list. Or take the entire list with you.

MORE EFFICIENT COOKING

Each week, take a look at your fridge, freezer and pantry and create a meal plan that incorporates any ingredients that are getting close to their use by date. Be sure to refer to your calendar so you know what days you will be rushed for dinner. Those are the days when a crockpot meal is the perfect solution. Your weekly meal plan can then be put on a clipboard so everyone will know what's for dinner and hopefully keep those what's for dinner questions from being asked over and over and over again.

EASIER TAKEOUT

Whenever you grab takeout or delivery from a local restaurant, you can save time with your home hub. Have a clipboard that you can use to hold menus from your family's favorites. When you're ready to order, you can access the menu in seconds and get your family order called in quickly.

HAPPIER PETS

Our pets are our family and that means you may want to have a section in your

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hub for them as well. A clipboard for your pet that can hold licensing numbers, chip information, any medications, vet information, and feeding instructions, feeding restrictions can be extremely helpful.

PHONE NUMBER ACCESS

I know with the technology of smartphones, this may not be an important part of your hub, but it sure is an important part of ours. We have a one paged sheet of numbers that we keep in case we need them quickly. Numbers for our vet, utility companies, neighbors, even our church. I cannot tell you how many times I've had to refer to this sheet when our power has gone out and I need to quickly report it in.

CHANGING HUB NEEDS

Okay, what if a big, full sized, elaborate home hub is more than you actually need? What other options are there? Well, when our family was younger, having a bigger layout was definitely better, and we kept that setup for years. As our boys moved out on their own, we took that large setup and downsized it into a smaller platform. The same information was included, but we decided to use a more compact setup.

So now we have a calendar on the front of our refrigerator for our entire family schedule, a basket on the counter for any incoming mail, and a binder for all other information we want to keep track of.

This is our home hub in a binder and it's what we have been using for the last handful of years. As you start to use your home hub, you may find some areas you thought you would use that are not needed. On the flip side, you may find you are missing important areas altogether.

FLEXIBILITY

I like to think of our home hub as a living and breathing extension of our family, and that means as we grow and change, our hub may need to do so as well. So every new month, as you're updating the family calendar, take the time to evaluate the layout and move things around if needed.

Remember, a home hub is not one size fits all, and that gives you all the creative freedom you need to keep a setup that fits you and your family specifically. With so many things that happen in a home, having a way to streamline such an important aspect can be incredibly helpful. Not only will it help you to keep tabs on everyone's schedule, but you can relax knowing this important part of your home life is streamlined and organized.

HOME HUB GUIDE

Thank you so much for joining me for my talk on creating a Home Hub. I hope you're excited to get started setting up a spot in your home today. Now, before you go, be sure to grab my free Home Hub Prep Work guide. That is seriously the hardest thing to say. You guys, when I came up with the name Home Hub, I didn't realize how hard it would be for me to get it out of my mouth.

Okay, so this guide will help you decide if a home hub is right for you, what areas you'll want to keep track of, and an overview of how to set one up. Go to declutterinminutes.com/hubHQ to download the free guide.

SPECIAL OFFER

Now, if you love the idea of setting up a home hub layout in your home, but you're still not sure how to do it or what to keep

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track of, I have a special offer for you. All right. Introducing my brand new home hub in a bundle. It's everything you need to set up a hub in your home. You'll get my full video course that will walk you through setting up a hub step by step in your home, videos on how to do the layout, what to include, tools that work best, and helpful tips so you can use your hub in the most efficient way.

You'll also get my home hub startup pages. These pages can be used on clipboards that work perfectly in a wall layout. They also go good in picture frames that work great in a countertop setup or even in a home hub in a binder, which is the version my husband and I use. Now, inside this bundle, you'll get all the planner pages we talked about today, along with many more that will be just what you need for every setup.

You'll get my video walkthroughs to show you the best layout so you can choose the one that fits your time of life, sample pictures of hubs that you can use for inspiration, tips on putting it all together, and so much more.

I've worked hard to include everything inside of this bundle so you can start using a home hub with confidence, keeping your home, family and life organized going forward. Now, the full price for this bundle is $67, but for the organized HQ Summit, you can purchase it for just $21. Grab the deal at declutterinminutes.com/special to get the home hub bundle 60% off.

Again thank you so much for joining me today. My name is Tracy Lynn, and you could find me at declutterinminutes.com where I share guides, decluttering, checklists home planning pages, and so much more. Head on over and take your first step to creating a home you love.

Take care and happy decluttering. Bye, everybody.

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Make Space For Happiness: How to Stop Attracting Clutter and Start Magnetizing the Life You Want

TRACY MCCUBBIN • TRANSCRIPT

Hi, I'm Tracy McCubbin, and I am so excited to be part of the Get Organized HQ Virtual Conference. This is my first year here, and the amount of amazing and valuable information that's going to be shared is fantastic.

Again, my name is Tracy McCubbin. I'm the founder of dClutterfly, and I'm the author of two bestselling books on our emotional attachment to our stuff. So today I'm going to dive into a subject that I love to talk about. The number one question I get is, what's the easiest way to be organized? Simple. Have less stuff.

A CLUTTER CRISIS

It's actually not that simple. We have been talking about decluttering in depth for the last ten years now, but we still all have too much stuff. This country, all of us, we're in a clutter crisis. So why, after all this decluttering, do we still have too much stuff? Because we have never discussed the root cause of our clutter, which is our buying habits.

We've never talked about why this stuff comes into our house and where do we get it? We've only really talked about decluttering and letting it go. So if you're not looking at how this stuff is getting into your house, then it kind of doesn't even matter how much you declutter. What we buy, what we purchase is related to how much stuff we have.

Look, you can declutter all you want, but if you keep over-shopping, you're still going to have clutter. We've got to make the correlation between what we're buying and how much stuff is in our house. I mean, look, how many times have you said to yourself, like, where does all this clutter come from?

I'll tell you. It comes from you or someone in your household. You or someone in your household bought it and brought it in. So we are ultimately responsible for our clutter. And if we don't look at how it's getting in, it doesn't matter that we're getting it out.

WHY DO WE SHOP?

The big question is, why do we shop? I've done a deep dive into the science of shopping and why shopping feels so good. Originally, we were designed, us humans, as hunters and gatherers, right? So every time we found something out on the tundra or in the savannah that we needed - a pear tree full of pears, a rabbit in our trap, a pile of firewood - we would get a hit of dopamine to tell us to grab that thing to help save our family or our tribe, to ensure their survival.

So now, as we've evolved, we haven't lost that. So when you go to Target and you shop the dollar aisle, you still get that hit of dopamine as if you had killed a woolly mammoth and could feed your family for the whole winter. That hit of dopamine comes every time you hit buy on Amazon. It comes every time you get a package on your doorstep. We're constantly being given hits of dopamine when we shop.

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And here's the thing about dopamine, it doesn't last that long and we want more of it. So we go out and we shop some more and we go out and we buy some more and we get it and we get a hit and we get better. And then it goes away and then we buy some more.

Are you seeing the pattern? It's that dopamine high that we're chasing with the shopping to make ourselves feel better. So what are we trying to fill inside of ourselves with all this shopping?

WHAT ARE WE TRYING TO FIX?

I've been a professional declutterer and organizer for 16 years. I have been in thousands and thousands of clients' homes. I get these phone calls that would say, hey, remember all that stuff that we decluttered? Well, I bought it all again and then some. And then the pandemic hit and everybody was shopping like drunken sailors. I mean, I would drive down the street and I would see towering packages like on people's doorsteps.

And I started to think, this is the missing component. This is why we keep having too much stuff in our house. So what are we trying to fix by all that shopping? I realized that the best way to describe it is it's like as if some of us have this missing puzzle piece in us. I call these missing pieces Clutter Magnets.

Imagine that these pieces of stuff are flying into you - a new blouse, the perfect lipstick, a straightening iron - and trying to fill what's missing. Clutter Magnets are important because when you identify them, you can work through them. When you know why you're shopping and what feels like is missing inside of you, you can replace it with something more positive and not stuff.

So there are seven Clutter Magnets and I'm going to go through them all today. And the great thing about having this video is if you don't get them all, you can go back and watch it again. So just maybe listen the first time and then go back and rewatch it.

CLUTTER MAGNET NUMBER ONE: MAGNETIZE TRUE CONNECTION.

You know that expression retail therapy or like all those little signs about going shopping with your girlfriends? What that's really about is trying to get connection. We're humans, we're pack animals, we're meant to be together. One of the biggest indicators of longevity is social connection. So when you get isolated, not only does it affect your health, it affects your mental health.

When you go to a store and someone helps you, they're super friendly because they're paid to, that's their job. But you feel like you're making a relationship with them, or you start buying stuff for yourself or buying stuff to give to other people, and that feels like a connection.

So if you feel like you are shopping all the time, if you're buying, if you pride yourself on being a great gift giver, is there really something else going on? Are you feeling lonely? Are you feeling like unsatisfied in relationships or friendships?

CONNECT SOME OTHER WAY

Can you find a way to connect with other humans that isn't transactional, that's not out there buying? I want you to take a calendar, and I want you to put a check on

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every day that you connect with someone that isn't around shopping.

I have a friend who recently moved to Seattle, and she was really concerned about her lack of community. So she put a little thing up on Facebook that said, moving to Seattle. Don't know anybody. Can anyone set me up on a friend blind date?

So she spent the first month of her there, like, going to coffee and taking a walk and getting to know the city and meeting complete strangers. And she said it was amazing. And by a month, she had a community of people. And sure, it was a little scary that she had to put herself out there, but she found connection.

And also, I want to say this, you can actually find connection through decluttering. A great way to get to know your community and meet your neighbors. Put things up on a buy nothing group. All of a sudden, you realize the neighbor across the street has kids two years younger than yours when you give them your old clothes, use decluttering as an opportunity to connect.

So if you feel like you're trying to magnetize true connection, I want you to find ways to connect with other humans that doesn't involve shopping.

CLUTTER MAGNET NUMBER TWO: MAGNETIZE STRONG SELF-CONFIDENCE.

Look, we all fall victim to this one, right? We think that that eye cream out there, that perfect blouse, that perfect face mask, we think that buying those beauty products and those purses and those clothes are what's going to give us confidence.

Sure, your outfit is an armor when you go to the world, but that's not where true self-confidence comes. And by the way, it's all a marketing ploy. If there was a magic potion that worked, we would all know about it. We would see Cindy Crawford using it. It doesn't exist.

Yes, moisturize, wear sunscreen. But if you think that your confidence is going to come from a jar or a bottle, it's not. You know where self-confidence comes from? Being of service to other people, showing up in your and your family's life, doing good in the world, being proud of your accomplishments, that's where you're going to get self-confidence.

INDUSTRIAL SABOTAGE

Self-confidence does not come from a jar. It comes from within. There are whole industries out there trying to sabotage you and get you to buy things based on undermining your self-confidence. The beauty industry, the health and wellness, the diet industry. We are fed so many messages about the fact that we're not good enough, but if we buy this thing, we'll be better.

I work with clients all the time, and they have a closet full of four different sizes. Or they keep saying, oh, I want to keep this thing because when I get back to my goal weight, right, it's always this place down the road. If I get there, then I will be happy.

I recently got married and like everybody else, worked out really hard, watched what I ate right before my wedding and I got to my goal weight. The magic number I'd made up in my head years ago that I had to be at to be happy. Well, guess what? Nothing was different. I was super happy to be married. That's where my joy was coming from. It wasn't the number on the scale.

So remember that when you're buying all these kinds of things that ultimately lead to clutter, it's people playing on your lack of self-confidence. If you find yourself over buying these kinds of products, I want you to go out and find your self confidence in something other than stuff.

CLUTTER MAGNET NUMBER THREE: MAGNETIZED FREE TIME

Look, we all want more time. That's the one thing that's in short supply and that's the one thing you can't buy back. You can't buy time back. So we're constantly doing everything we can to get free time.

INVESTED TIME

This Clutter Magnet shows up in two ways. One, if you've invested a lot of time into an old hobby or a craft or a career or a job that you used to have and you don't want to let go of the stuff around it, it's because you've invested time in it and you're trying to buy that time back.

This is a great example. I have people who keep textbooks from when they were in college or grad school and they're like, well, someday I'm going to go back and read that information. No, you're not. You're a professional now. You're already an expert in your field. But they're hanging onto it because they invested that time and they want to see that it was worth something. But it is. That time that you put into becoming an expert, that's what's worth it. It's not the stuff around it, right? It's not the buying and keeping of the stuff.

SAVING TIME

The other way this Clutter Magnet shows up is buying gadgets to save time. I'm going to say it. It's controversial. The air fryer is the new George Foreman. Everybody's buying them and in about six months they're going to stop using them and we're going to start to declutter a million of them. So be careful of buying gadgets to save time.

So the combination shampoo and conditioner, that extra 3 seconds that you saved doing that, what did you do with that time? Did you go out and learn Mandarin? Did you take up a new hobby? No. We're so transactional about time that we actually end up wasting it.

Be really careful if you find yourself purchasing things that you think are going to save you time. What saves you time is being organized, having less stuff and having good systems in place. And those systems can be so simple.

I love a drawer organizer as much as the next person. I think that it really makes a difference. But if they're going out and shopping for it and ordering and measuring, that's a lot of time. You know, what works great as a drawer organizer, a checkbook box. There are alternatives that aren't buying, that aren't consuming, that aren't shopping, that have the same goals.

Please be really careful about trying to magnetize free time. Take your time, be precious with it. Map it out, understand how fast it goes. But if you're shopping and buying a lot of stuff to save you time, you've already wasted that time.

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CLUTTER MAGNET NUMBER FOUR: MAGNETIZE BIG LOVE

This one is tough, but when you realize that this is what you're looking for, it can just open you up to so many possibilities. Our need for stuff and our need for love are so intertwined. We are looking for love all the time and that we think it's going to be in this stuff. Or if we give this person that thing, they will love us back. Or this person that I didn't get enough love from gave me her collection of Lalique and I can't let go of it because I really wanted love from her.

It's super uncomfortable and it's super hard to look at. Stuff does not equal love. Stuff does not equal love.

The amount of gifts you buy for someone is not going to make them love you more. The amount of like, let's say you're looking for a partner. I see this all the time. You're looking for a partner and you go out and you buy what you think is the perfect date outfit and you have a closet full of date outfits and you're like, well if I have date outfits, then I'm going to magnetize bringing dates into my life.

No, you know what's going to get you dates and meeting someone? Go to every party that you're invited to. Accept every dinner invitation. Go out in the world. It's like your grandma said, you're not going to meet someone sitting at home.

So trying to magnetize all this stuff to open you up for love. No, experiences are going to open you up for love. Join a club, a hiking club, and you'll meet like-minded people and also understand that we tie the stuff that people have given us into their show of love.

But how people really show you how they love you is how they show up for you. You're going to get love back if you give love out and it's not tied around the stuff.

GIFTS AREN'T LOVE

And I want the grandparents and the parents out there to really listen to this. I have nieces and nephews that I love and every time I go visit them, I would always bring them little gifties and I'd hide it in my suitcase and it was super fun. And the last couple of times that I went to see them, walked through the door and they just dove on that suitcase. Where are the presents? Where are the presents? Didn't talk, didn't have a moment. And I was like, oh, I'm setting up a bad precedent here. So I stopped bringing presents.

You know what happens when I go to see them? They show me the art that they've made. They take me in the backyard and show me the swings that their dad built them. We connect. We show each other love. They're not looking for presents, and I'm able to hear about their life.

So think about that on a bigger scale. Whether you're looking for love from family members, whether you're looking for your partner, the stuff is not going to get you there. The putting yourself out there, the participating in your life, being there, that's where the love is going to come.

And here's the thing. The stuff that you think represents the love, I see this all the time. People have a garage full of stuff from their mother who passed away too early and they just haven't grieved and they're having trouble letting go. And then a flood happens or the roof caves in or somehow all of that stuff is ruined. And they focus on like, I don't have those memories anymore, and I don't have that person anymore, because they

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attach the stuff to the love.

So if you can find a way to acknowledge the connection and love you have with people, you don't need the stuff, right? The love doesn't come through the stuff.

CLUTTER MAGNET NUMBER FIVE: MAGNETIZE SELF RESPECT

This one, this whole thing makes me want to gnash my teeth to powder. I go out in the world and I just see people covered in logos. We've just become walking billboards. Every designer purse now has a giant Celine, Khloe, huge logos.

We're just carrying around someone else's brand to advertise for them. And it's all about trying to get self-respect. We think that carrying the fancy thing means that we did something with our lives. We use the fancy car, the big house, to gain self-respect.

But that's not where respect comes from. I work with so many people who have amazing careers and work in nonprofits and do such good in the world, but they feel like if they don't have just the right purse or just the right shoes or just the right house, that none of their work matters.

If this is ringing true for you, if you feel like, I don't have enough self-respect, but I want to buy these things to earn it, I want you to try and find it somewhere else. You know, the best way to gain self-respect is to be of service to someone else. You feel so good when you can help someone else, and that's from do you have an elderly neighbor who needs help taking their trash cans out? Once a week you take their trash cans out. Or is there a nonprofit that you believe in what they're doing and you want to volunteer your time?

Self-respect comes from action. It comes from acknowledging your accomplishments, acknowledging how you show up in the world, acknowledging what you do. Not a big logo slapped on your T shirt.

CLUTTER MAGNET NUMBER SIX: MAGNETIZE YOUR REAL PURPOSE

This one is so interesting. We are all trying to find why we're here. What are we here to do? What were we put on this earth? What is our purpose? What lights us up.

But so much of the time, we end up buying all the stuff that we think goes with our purpose. Like we think I'm supposed to be a jewelry maker or I'm supposed to open a bakery or I'm supposed to do this and I buy all the stuff to support it without even trying it out.

I had a client recently who decided to make tea. An energy tea. They just gotten out of business school. They had all their business plan. They had everything. They went out and bought everything for a commercial kitchen.

Now, they hadn't done their due diligence. They hadn't realized that you just can't whip up any old brew in your kitchen sink and bottle it and try and sell it. So ultimately, they were missing a few pieces in their business model, and it fell apart and it just took a toll on them. But what they realized was they actually didn't want to be an entrepreneur. They didn't want to run a business.

They wanted to work for a company that had all the systems in place and they could help grow it. So they realized that their

real purpose wasn't being an entrepreneur, but working in a company. And that's an important thing to understand. What is your real purpose? What do you want to do?

IT MAY NOT MAKE MONEY

And also I'm going to say this. Your real purpose may not make you money. Right now, we're so inundated with your side hustle and your gig economy, and you've got to make jewelry, and then you've got to photograph it, and then you've got to sell it and it doesn't count.

Maybe you just like to do things. To do them. Maybe you just like to bake to eat it or to give it to friends. You can do something that fills you with purpose and it doesn't have to make you money.

Some people's lives are very full where they have their job that supports them, and that is so admirable. And then they have another purpose. They volunteer at the animal shelter and walk dogs. They do something else. Your purpose doesn't have to make you money.

And your purpose doesn't have to be full of stuff. I see this a lot with women who choose to stay home and be moms. Okay, first of all, that is beyond a full time job. That is a CEO, an accountant, a driver, everything. But then they sort of feel like they should have something else, that it's just not enough. And so they take up a hobby. They want to make jewelry, and they buy all this stuff, and then they're photographing it late at night when really they just want to be there for their kids, be there for their family, be there for their parents.

So if you find yourself buying a bunch of stuff because you're trying to find your purpose, stop the stuff buying. Stop the stuff buying. Do some inner work. Go volunteer. See if you can find your purpose without all this stuff.

Because we all have a purpose for being here. And when you get clear on that, that's when your happiness is going to shine through.

CLUTTER MAGNET NUMBER SEVEN: MAGNETIZE LASTING WISDOM

Okay, full disclosure. This is me. This is my Clutter Magnet. I am buying books all the time. I'm buying online courses. I'm watching YouTube videos. I am a truth seeker. I am a learner. I love information, but sometimes it tips over into the place where I'm buying so much stuff that I'm not actually learning.

I have stacks of my to be read pile, which, by the way, all those books I could get at the library, I don't have to buy them. I have online courses that I bought that I've never finished. Because, for me, one of the things is I'm not realistic about the amount of time I have to commit to this.

We want to learn. We want to enrich ourselves. We also need to be realistic. I have a thriving business. I just got married. I like to work out. I like to see my friends. There are only so many hours in the day. So I need to be realistic about the time that I have.

And I have to understand that buying the book and putting it next to me is not going to give me the wisdom. For me, one of the things I've realized is a lot of times I can glean the information that I want from listening to the author on a podcast or listening to the audiobook in my car.

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OTHER WAYS TO WISDOM

There are other ways to get that wisdom without buying it. I absolutely think that we need to keep learning. I think it's what keeps us young. It keeps us growing. But can we keep learning without buying all this stuff?

Do you have a library card? Everything you could ever want is at the library. It's an amazing resource that doesn't add clutter to your life.

Can you join a book club? Can you start a conversation with someone about what you want to learn? There are ways to get that wisdom without magnetizing the stuff. Okay?

The Clutter Magnets are a lot, I know. I've given you so much information, and you're probably going to want to go back and watch this video again.

STOP AND THINK

Here's what I want you to do the next time you feel that need for retail therapy right? You're like, I got to go and buy something. When you feel that, like, that will make me feel better, I want you to stop, take a breath, try and identify what's really going on.

Are you feeling lonely? Are you feeling like you messed up at work? You're doubting yourself? Are you feeling disconnected from your partner or your family member? What really is going on that you can try and fill in a different way than shopping?

Listen to that. What's really going on? So that you can try and find another way to take care of those feelings that isn't shopping.

Because when you can go shopping from a clear and concise and neutral ground, it's going to be so much more successful. You're not going to buy stuff you don't need. You're not going to have the drunken regret of over-shopping.

When you feel that stop, take a breath, try and figure out what's going on. Try and do something else to manage it, and then go shopping.

ALTERNATIVES TO RETAIL THERAPY

What are all the other things you can do to manage your feelings? Therapy. Call a friend. Take a walk. Get some sunshine. Eat a snack. So much of our life problems can be solved by having a snack and taking a walk. Nothing is going to be solved by shopping.

I thank you so much for your time. I know how valuable it is. I hope you learned a lot. You can find me at www.dclutterfly.com or on Instagram at Tracy McCubbin.

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How Minimalism Relates to Self-Care

VERA • TRANSCRIPT

TASHA: Please join me in welcoming Vera from Simple Happy Zen. And today we're going to be talking about minimalism as a form of self-care. So thank you so much for joining us today.

VERA: Thank you so much for having me. I've been looking forward to this call all week.

TASHA: Absolutely, yeah, we're so glad to have you. So just to start out, can you tell us a little bit about your personal story and background with minimalism? And what led you to pursue minimalism as a lifestyle?

VERA'S STORY

VERA: Of course. Yeah, so I usually say it started around ten years ago when my boyfriend and I first moved into our apartment together. So when I left my parents' house, basically. But it actually started a few years before that and I was still quite young. And I remember getting into minimalism and decluttering before I really knew what that was.

So I had never heard of the term minimalism before or decluttering or anything like that. But I noticed within myself, really this need to simplify my immediate surroundings. Because I've always been really sensitive and also as a child and as a teenager. And I remember really wanting to create my own bedroom, have that be like an oasis of calmness, like a relaxing environment where I could really just decompress and calm down after being in school and everything.

At the same time I was also someone who had a lot of stuff, so that was really hard for me to create. So I just started decluttering, really, this internal need to simplify and have a more relaxing environment, basically.

TASHA: Yeah, absolutely. So I know you've talked some on your channel, that season kind of led to some burnout. Can you talk about that a little bit? How you recognize burnout, what burnout, kind of how you define that.

SIGNS OF BURNOUT

VERA: Yeah, of course. Well, first of all, I'm not a doctor, so let's just put that out there. Little disclaimer. Just like, these are my own personal experiences and I know that burnout is not really a set term that is going to be the same everywhere in the world. So these were definitely what I experienced to be the case and this was a little bit later.

So I had a burnout in 2017 and it was quite severe. Like, it took me around two years to recover from that, to feel like I bounced back, so to speak. And I feel like burnout, for me anyway, was definitely both physical as well as mental and emotional. So I always find it a little strange when burnout is described as like a mental illness because for me it was definitely also very much physical.

So I started experiencing persistent headaches, stomach problems, like

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indigestion, acid reflux, really low immune system, so I got colds all the time. I was really exhausted. And also rather strange things, maybe like feeling dizzy, runs really starting to shake, me dropping things, heart palpitations. So really I felt very much out of sync.

And then just mental also, like, really emotional mood swings. Feeling extra sensitive to stimuli. For example, if I was walking outside and I was walking on the sidewalk and there was a bike coming my way on the bike lanes, we have a lot of bike lanes here, and it would feel like they would crash into me even though we were, like, on two separate planes. So I feel like I'd lost my shell, so to speak. I was feeling very vulnerable.

FACTORS IN BURNOUT

TASHA: Absolutely. So do you know, or maybe looking back, what kind of led to that? Was it the stuff in your house, or was it other experiences?

VERA: Actually, I feel like minimalism kind of saved me during that time because my home was really nice. I had already decluttered so much by then, so I had a really nice home environment where I could really destress. So that's something that I'm actually very thankful for, to have that experience.

And what caused the burnout was several other factors that were largely kind of outside of my control. There was a death in the family. My mom was really sick to the point where she almost died, and that was going on for a couple of years. As well as I was working in a very toxic work environment myself. So those things combined actually led to me burning out. But I think it took me a few years to reach that point of like, oh, this cannot go on anymore.

TASHA: Absolutely. So how did you find that minimalism helped you to kind of overcome that and eventually climb out of that burnout?

BENEFITS OF MINIMALISM

VERA: There are tons of studies that talk about the effect that our home environment can have on our mental health, our physical health even. And I always like reading that stuff. We know that having lots of clutter can increase cortisol levels. The stress hormone, it can increase negative thoughts, can make it really hard to focus and be productive.

I've also read a study that talked about how having a cluttered home can make it really hard to make healthy choices when it comes to what we eat and are exercising, but also choosing to take enough rest. So all of these things, I feel like minimalism, of course, it can help us to have rid ourselves of the excess in our home, but also in our own head and in our own heart.

DEFINING MINIMALISM

TASHA: Absolutely. And maybe we should have asked this at the beginning, but it just hit me. Can you kind of just give us your working definition of minimalism? Because that word gets thrown around a lot, and people mean all sorts of different things. So maybe we should have done that a little earlier. But could you just tell us what you mean when you say minimalism?

VERA: Yeah, of course. So this is my personal definition. Minimalism is less meh and more yay. Yeah, just really identifying what brings you joy, what brings you

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fulfillment, focusing more on that and having less distractions. So less of the meh in life that really detract from all of those good things.

TASHA: Right. So you've mentioned that your home environment was just like a really peaceful place. Can you share what you find relaxing about minimalism and having less?

VERA: Yeah, of course. So there is this idea in minimalism, and this is something that Fumio Sasaki talks about in his book Goodbye Things. I'm not sure if you're familiar with the book.

TASHA: Yeah, I've never heard of it.

SILENT TO-DO LIST

VERA: Okay, well, I can recommend if anyone here is interested in reading about minimalism. I think it's one of the best ones out there personally. And he talks about the silent to do list, and when I read that, something really clicked. That was a huge eye opener for me at the time. And the silent to do list is this idea that our things, the things we have around us, are constantly messaging us silent messages.

So instead of just hanging out and not doing anything, our stuff is actually influencing us when we're around it. So let's say we see a pair of jeans that we still want to bring to the tailor. We don't really see the jeans. We also get that message, like, oh, I need to bring that to the tailor.

THE DEMANDING PIANO

When we see a dirty kitchen, we, oh, I need to clean the kitchen. Or for example, I used to have a piano and I decided to declutter it a little while ago, I even talked about that on YouTube because it wasn't really bringing me joy anymore. And every time I looked at it, it was signaling to me, like, why aren't you playing me? Why aren't you practicing? You wanted a piano, right? So why aren't you using me? And it was making me feel guilty every time I looked at it.

So the less stuff we have around us, the less messages we receive all day. And that silent to do list just becomes a lot quieter, basically. And that's the biggest thing that is very relaxing to me about not having a bunch of stuff around me and is lessening that silent to do list.

NOT ABOUT ADDING

TASHA: What you would say overall helped your outlook whenever you were coming out of the season of burnout? Or are there other things you found about minimalism that really just help improve your mental state and your outlook and all of that?

VERA: Yeah, so I think most of all, what minimalism has done for me is it brought me from a state of always focusing outward and looking at, look, what can I buy? What can I add? Or how am I perhaps not good enough? What can I buy to improve myself? Or comparing your life to others.

CONTENTMENT AND GRATITUDE

It brought me from a state of wanting and searching to more of a state of contentment and gratitude and being able to focus inward because I knew that I didn't need any of that stuff necessarily to be happy. I already had everything I need to be happy right now.

And that is the biggest thing, I think, when it comes to minimalism, because we get bombarded by ads all day. I mean, I even

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contribute to that. I'm a YouTuber and that's fine. But it is very good to maybe be more intentional when we see those ads, to know that maybe I could buy that and there wouldn't necessarily be anything wrong with it. But I don't need it to be happy. Like, I can be happy right now.

IMPACT OF ADVERTISING

TASHA: Right. And just recognizing that those ads, the messaging they're giving you is that you can't be happy if you don't make this purchase or do this thing. And just I think being aware is really impactful.

VERA: Yes, exactly. And I feel like also decluttering can be sort of like the ultimate form of self-care in a way, because we're really instead of just having a lot of stuff around us that's just there, and it's there because it's something normal like people have, that we really start to look at each item and be like, how is this impacting me? How is this affecting me? Is this adding value in any way? am I using it? Am I loving it?

Or perhaps is it affecting me negatively? Like, is it making me feel bad? Or maybe my family members? So you're really taking charge and you're really asking yourself, like, how can I create an environment and even a life that makes it easier for me to just be happy?

AVOIDING THE CYCLE

TASHA: Right. And we do live in this society that's telling us that we need more and more things.

And so do you have any tips, words of encouragement, maybe, like, experiences that you've had of how you can live in this society that's telling you, hey, you need to buy this to be happy. We need more and more things.

I feel like there's probably some women listening who are like, oh, I see what you're saying, that minimalism can really just help me, but it's hard to step out of that cycle that we find ourselves in. So what would you say to someone who's just like, I want this, but I also hear really loud voices telling me that I need all these other things?

VERA: Yeah, exactly. And I still have this too, myself. I still get tempted sometimes to be like, OOH, that's pretty, or something. Or maybe I would feel better about myself if I did that more, if I had that more.

EXAMINE WHAT YOU CONSUME

I think the number one thing that everyone can just start with is just take a good look at what you are exposing yourself to in terms of the content that you watch, maybe newsletters that you get, influencers you're following.

For example, I am at like, I turned 35 this year, and so I am at that age where I'm being bombarded by skincare ads. It knows about my anxiety for getting wrinkles and stuff. And that's not even like me searching it out. It just comes to me.

But I also know that if I engage with that stuff, if I watch all those people doing skincare hauls, for example, I'm going to want to buy skincare products. And there's nothing wrong with buying skincare products, of course, but I already have few products that work for me, so really be critical.

Like, what are you watching? What are you reading? And are there perhaps maybe people you're following that really want to

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make you go shopping? And what would happen if you just stopped following them for a while? For me, I find that it made me so much calmer because if there is a product that we really need, then it would have been a product that we would have thought of before seeing it somewhere else. Do you know what I mean?

TASHA: Yeah, that does make sense. I don't think I'd thought of it like that before.

IF YOU DIDN'T KNOW IT EXISTED...

VERA: Yeah. If you didn't know it existed, you probably don't really need it. Because there wasn't anything real, like a problem in your life that needed fixing to make you go out and look for a solution.

TASHA: Right. And I've heard that line of thinking when decluttering, if you find something that you didn't even know that you had, then it's probably something you can get rid of. But that would apply to bringing things in as well. If you find something that you didn't even know existed, probably your space can live without it too.

TAKE A CHALLENGE

VERA: Yeah, exactly. And also if you're really into the cycle of buying and shopping, then another idea could be to do a low buy or a no buy challenge for a while.

TASHA: Yeah. Have you done one of those?

VERA: Yeah, I do low buy challenges myself. I am not really the type of person who can do a no buy because I don't really like rigidity. I like bit of wiggle room, so but every year I do a low buy in certain categories.

So at the end of the year, I make a little list. Usually I share it on YouTube as well, about these are the things that next year I want to not buy or not buy as much. Or this year, I think I set a limit for three closet items, like wardrobe items for the year. So far I'm at two, so I need to be careful.

REMEMBER THE PURPOSE

Yeah, but I mean, just doing a little challenge like that, it's not about beating yourself up or being really strict or being hard on yourself if you don't make the challenge. It's more about breaking a pattern and really seeing like, now that I'm not shopping, what am I going to do with my time?

Maybe you find a nice hobby or something else to focus your energy towards that could bring more fulfillment. So these things are just really great for breaking patterns, I think.

TASHA: Yeah. So you found overall that this helps ease the burnout. Because I think for some people who may be entering into this, it can almost sound like, oh no, there's more rules, more things I need to worry about. Like this is going to increase the burnout. But in your experience, it's actually been the opposite.

WHAT WORKS FOR YOU?

VERA: Yeah, definitely. And I mean, we all approach minimalism in different ways. It depends on our personality and on our lifestyle and what we want from it.

I am also the type of person, I always talk about this, like minimalism is supposed to make our life easier, not harder. So if you're feeling bogged down by all the rules, then let go of those rules. Only follow the

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rules that make sense for you and for your situation.

We have quite a few towels here. It's only the two of us and we have I think like twelve towels or something. So a minimalist might say like, that's too many towels. But for me it helps because now I only have to do laundry once a week. So I mean, it's things like that where really feel free to make it your own. And if something's not working for you, then feel free to switch it up.

TASHA: Right. And I think that plays into what we were talking about with social media. Don't let that define what's going to work for you and your family. It might be able to give helpful suggestions, but just because one family can live with one plate, one cup and one fork for every family member doesn't mean that that works for my family.

MAKE A WISH LIST

VERA: Exactly. And we're all different. So definitely make that your own. And something that I always also recommend, and this can be helpful, I think, for everyone, even if you're not even interested in minimalism that much is to have a wish list.

So that might sound a little counterintuitive because we're focusing on spending less, so wishing less. But for me this has really helped because I used to be someone, I would buy things on impulse, especially the stores. When you go to a store... and I have a huge weakness for cute bowls and mugs and plates and all that like pottery and stuff.

SLOW YOURSELF DOWN

So if I go to a store like that, I'm going to see some things that I think are really pretty and I write them down on my wish list or I take a picture of it and I wait for a couple of days. And oftentimes I find that the need to buy that certain item has really decreased after a little while. It's usually that initial response of like, oh, I want that, I should get it, that you can kind of switch around to, oh, I like that, I'm glad it exists in the world.

That's very helpful. And even after, if you've waited like a week or I don't know, if it's a bigger purchase maybe even a month, and you still want it, then you can also just buy it and know that you've made the right choice because it's actually like something you thought about.

THE SALES TRAP

TASHA: Right. And I think sales play into that a lot too, because I know for me, it's like, oh, I have a coupon and it's going to expire, but maybe it would be better to just spend the 20% that I didn't get off, but take the time to actually make sure I'm purchasing the things that I really want.

And it may be that in the long run, you actually save more by being slow and intentional, even though on that particular item you could have saved 20%.

VERA: Yes, that is a really good one. And they always say, like, it's not saving if it's not something that you need, basically.

TASHA: Absolutely. Yeah, that's really true.

VERA: Then you're still spending money on something you don't need.

TASHA: Oh, yes. My husband always loves to say, "how much did you have to spend to save that much money?"

VERA: Oh, that's a good one. Yeah,

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sometimes it does make sense. I mean, if it's a product you're always using, it's not going to expire. Stock up on it if it's on sale. Definitely do that. That's only smart. But don't let yourself be tempted by the sales. Exactly. That's a good one.

JOY OF MISSING OUT

TASHA: Yeah, for sure. So what are some other ways that you found that minimalism just helps to reduce stress?

VERA: So I don't know if you're familiar with the concept of JOMO.

TASHA: Okay. The joy of missing out, I'm assuming. Yes. Okay.

VERA: Yes. So I think that's one of my favorites. I think we've all experienced FOMO in our lives at times, especially nowadays. And I think what minimalism has helped me with is really if we can identify what's truly important to us in life, then we also have that clarity to simplify and decrease the distractions and the things that really just don't add anything for us.

And therefore also it doesn't help us to be the best version that we can be for others to be a good influence in the world, I guess. So we can happily miss out on all of that other stuff. And I think that saves a lot of stress.

NEW POSSIBILITIES

So, for example, a good example of this is when the pandemic started and we couldn't travel anymore. I experienced this, and lots of my friends experienced this too, that we were like, that's nice. Like, we finally don't have to worry about traveling. And I'm not saying that travel is bad, of course, and I'm happy that we get to travel again now. But it was actually refreshing because it took away this huge thing like, should I travel. Or it's expensive, and where should I go? And if you can't travel, there's just a whole world of other possibilities opening up.

TASHA: Right. So just reducing the mental strain of responsibilities. And it goes back to that silent to do list I think that you were talking about.

SAVING TIME AND MONEY

VERA: Yes, and I mean, also if you're living like a lifestyle that is very hard to maintain in terms of the costs or the time investment. And even maybe I used to get my nails done, for example, so that's something that I had to do every three weeks. And if we have a bunch of those things that cost time and energy and money but don't necessarily bring anything for us, then if we can decrease that, it gives us just a bit more freedom, I think, and a bit more flexibility also in life to perhaps make some big life changes.

Let's say you feel like you want to work one day less or to a different kind of career that maybe brings in less money in the beginning. The easier your lifestyle is, the easier you can make those kinds of changes to really fit who you are and what you want out of life.

So I think that it's also really a stress decreaser because you're not constantly worried about needing to make all those payments and working really hard in a job that maybe is not really fulfilling.

TASHA: Yeah, absolutely. So thank you so much for your time today and for sharing just your experience and all of this with us. Are there any just last thoughts you want to leave us with before we wrap up today?

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CLOSET CLEANUP

VERA: Maybe one thing. If there are any clothes in your closet that are too small or too big or something that don't fit you anymore, maybe decide or at least consider letting them go.

I think that is maybe the biggest thing that I've decluttered that really made me happier. Unless you're actively on a journey to lose weight or gain weight or, I don't know, you just had a baby or something where it really would make sense to keep them because there's a good chance that you can use them again.

But for me, the part where I could really start to accept who I am and how I look and everything body-changing as we get older, things like that was deciding to let go of the clothing items that wouldn't fit me anymore. Like that had gotten too small for me.

FEEL GOOD AND MAKE IT EASY

So if there are any items, and it doesn't even have to be clothing, but anything that makes you feel bad about who you are or guilty about past decisions you've made, I definitely recommend considering letting these go.

TASHA: Yes. And that just makes your morning like that decision in the morning is now a much more pleasant experience.

VERA: Exactly. Because there are only clothing items that fit you and that you feel good in. It just makes everything easier

TASHA: Right. Yes. Well, thank you so much for joining us today, having this conversation. If people want to learn more from you, follow you online, what platforms can they find you on?

VERA: Mostly on YouTube. So my YouTube channel is called SimpleHappyZen, and there you can find me and you can also find me on my website, which is simplehappyzen.com.

TASHA: Awesome. Well, we'll leave links to that down below. Thank you so much.

VERA: Yeah, thank you so much for having me. I had a blast.

TASHA: Absolutely.

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