

LONI MENDEZ

STRAIGHTEN UP!

**50 Simple Ways
to Live a
More Organized Life**

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50 Simple Ways To Live
A More Organized Life

By Loni Mendez

1 Battling The Paper Monster

Keep a small waste basket on the porch, in the hallway, or by the front door to chuck the junk mail right away. When you check your mail, leave the junk paper at the door.

If you receive a brochure with coupons for Camel cigarettes, and you do not smoke, don't even bring them into the house. It will help you eliminate additional paper, as paper is already one of the toughest areas of maintaining an organized space.

“Every day do something that will inch you closer to a better tomorrow.” Doug Firebaugh

2 Create A Laundry Limit

My rule for keeping up with the laundry is to have one wicker basket assigned to each person in the house, and once it is full, it's time to do laundry for that person! Mine is approximately 15" high and about 18" in diameter. For infants and small children, you can assign one basket per two little ones, since their clothing is smaller.

“Success is the sum of small efforts, repeated day in and day out.” Robert J Collier

3 Use A Daily To-Do List

A daily to-do list is like a road map, it provides a level of structure for what you want to accomplish for the day.

Write out the list with the most important items at the top, and as you move down the list, the level of priority should decrease. But be prepared to temporarily stop working from the list to put out fires and handle emergencies.

At the end of the day, because the less urgent matters are easily identified as those at the bottom of the list, you can easily move some of them to the next day if necessary.

“Time is the coin of life. Only you can determine how it will be spent.” Carl Sandburg

4 The Quarterly Purge

Every quarter, I go through many of the items at home and in my office space and purge. What kind of items? Clothing, shoes, books, files, and even pots and pans. Following this process on a quarterly basis makes a huge difference in keeping the clutter down.

For most people, without this purge, the inevitable tends to happen. We keep bringing new items into the home or office, and over time, these additions add up. Before you know it, you have outgrown your space, because the size of your “stuff” is growing.

Schedule these purging sessions, one per calendar month, and one calendar entry for each type of item. And you will continue to be ahead of the game.

“Great things are done not by impulse, but by a series of small things brought together.” Vincent Van Gogh

5 The Power Of NOW

Have you ever tried to clean up a room and at the end of the process (if you ever get to the end), it looks as though you have simply shifted a bunch of items from one side of the room to the other? When organizing a room, get into the habit of taking the trip to the room or area where an item belongs right away.

For example, if your son Billy left his sock in the living room, and it belongs in his room in his laundry basket or hamper, stop, take the sock to his room, put it into his hamper, and return to the room you are cleaning.

I do realize that this requires a lot of walking back and forth. But it will be well worth the extra steps when, at the end of the process, you actually have a clean, uncluttered room.

“When the time for action arrives, stop thinking and go.”

Andrew Jackson

6 Your Calendar Leads The Way

Yet another really valuable practice to take on is entering every single meeting or event into your calendar right away. This practice significantly minimizes the chances of you missing appointments. Additionally, enter these items into your calendar with an alarm for 10 minutes before. Most importantly, when the alarm goes off, honor your commitment to do whatever you've scheduled at the time that you scheduled it.

“The point of power is always in the present moment.”

Louise L. Hay

7 Effective Telecommuting

Sometimes the monotony of working from your home office several days in a row can stunt both your creativity and your productivity. Spontaneously grab your laptop and head out to the nearest Starbucks or Panera Bread to work. A change of scenery could prompt some new ideas and perspectives on whatever you are up to.

“Change is the parent of progress.” Steve Maraboli

8 Use ONE Calendar

Some of us have not yet transitioned over to using the calendar in our electronic device, and are still using paper calendars, which is perfectly fine. But if you are going to use paper, just have that one paper calendar.

If you are using the calendar in your electronic device, such as a phone or tablet, then use that one calendar only. Using more than one calendar leaves a ton of room for overbooking and double-booking. Using one calendar eliminates the need to make updates in more than one place.

“Simplicity is an exact medium between too little and too much.” Sir Joshua Reynolds

9 I'm gonna drop it off tomorrow... no really I am...

Whenever you have things that need to be dropped off (i.e. dry cleaning, shoes to the repair shop, donations), put these items in bags and take them to your car so that they are in there when you find yourself in that area or town. Then, take it a step further by creating a calendar entry to actually drop them off.

"It's the little details that are vital. Little things make big things happen." John Wooden

10 Never go into a grocery store without a shopping list!

Going to the grocery store without a shopping list leads to overspending and the opportunity to forget about items you need that prompted the trip to begin with. If you don't have a pen and paper to write the list, use the voice recorder on your cell phone to record a list.

If you have a hands free system or device, you can even do this in the car on the way. The idea is to develop the habit of being clear about what you need when you enter the store and not forgetting to get those items; and not walking out of the store having spent more money than you needed to or bringing home tons of items that you didn't really need.

"Habit is stronger than reason." George Santayana

11 Moving? Tips To Help Keep It Together

Save money on boxes by picking up empty boxes from liquor stores and supermarkets. They are happy to give them away before they smash them every morning after unpacking them.

Pack by room first, then by category (i.e. toiletries, shoes, scarves & belts).

Wrap all cords to appliances, etc. around the actual appliances that they go with, or tape them to the appliance. This avoids scrambling to find cords when you get to your new home.

“Do your duty and a little more, and the future will take care of itself.” Andrew Carnegie

12 Organizing Your Files

When it comes to files, an electronic system in the cloud is the way to go. However, I do recommend keeping the hard copy of certain documents and files, but it should be a minimal amount.

My rule at my own house is three file drawers: one for business files, one for financial related paperwork, and one for general or personal. The general drawer contains files regarding health & medical, files on the cars I own, and hobbies, such as golf, recipes and gardening. If you don't need a file at your immediate fingertips, consider scanning the documents and keeping them in an electronic file.

“Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication.” Leonardo da Vinci

13 Quick Tips for Dealing with Cancellations

Offer to meet via Skype, phone or web.

If you are in business, incorporate a cancellation fee into your agreement with your clients.

Pick up your groceries, dry cleaning or shoes from the shoemaker.

Return those library books.

Check voicemail, read email and orchestrate your responses.

“Make use of time, let not advantage slip.” William Shakespeare

14 Organizing Your Dresser Drawers

Here's a good, simple way to organize your dresser drawers. Ideally, three to five drawers would be a good number. A five-drawer dresser would be organized as follows:

One drawer dedicated to underwear

One drawer dedicated to socks

One drawer dedicated to tops

One drawer dedicated to bottoms (pants, shorts, etc)

One drawer dedicated to belts, scarves, swimwear, etc.

If you've only got three drawers, you can use an over the door hanger for scarves and belts and hang your swimwear on hangers. You could also combine the socks and underwear, and use the remaining two drawers for tops and bottoms.

"For every minute spent organizing, an hour is earned."

Unknown

15 How To Organize Your Job Search

When you are searching for work, you want to ensure that you are tracking which resume you sent to which employers, who responded, who you've interviewed with, etc.

The best way to do this is to keep an Excel spreadsheet with six columns: name of company; date submitted (resume); resume version (be sure to give diff resumes a version number); date of (their) response; interview date; date of final notification. Sometimes, the last two columns will remain blank, but at least you have a record of the submission details.

"Success doesn't come to you; you go to it." T. Scott McLeod

16 An Organized House With Children???

Children....such a joy...accept when it comes to keeping house!! My coaching to anyone managing a household with little people, or even teens is as follows:

Have a designated play area; set up the toys, games and items they like to play with in a specific area and deem it the play area...it could be in the basement, the family room or a set space in any other room that you see can work.

I realize the toys, games, etc. may not stay there, but have a clean-up time. I recommend 30 minutes of clean-up time every other day. Negotiate with your child by allowing them something they like at the end of the week when they've done this every other day for an entire week, such as ice cream, a movie ticket, etc.

You can even schedule the clean-up time and post it on a weekly family calendar on the refrigerator door. If you think you'll forget, put it in your calendar as well, and participate with the child, or at least provide regular check-ins throughout the 30 minute cleanup session.

"Children are great imitators, so give them something great to imitate." Anonymous

17 An Organized Way To Spend Your Money

It is a sound practice to never receive money without planning it out in advance, unless, of course it is unexpected, in which case that wouldn't be possible.

If you know you are going to receive some money, whether it's your regular paycheck, a tax refund, or any other money, plan what you are going to do with it. The best way to do this is to have a budget that lists your monthly bills and expenses. One can easily be found on the web if you google "monthly budget."

If it is money other than your regular paycheck, decide what you're going to do with it. Are you going to save some of it? If so, how much? 25%....50%?? If you are going to pay down a credit card or some other debt with it, how much of it are you going to pay?

Have a list written out of where the money is going to go. It's the best way to use your money wisely, as opposed to receiving the money, and then paying bills and spending it without planning. In doing the latter, before you know it you will probably run out of money. Unless you have an impeccable memory, you most likely will not be present to exactly how much you have left at any given moment.

"A wise person should have money in their head, but not in their heart." Jonathan Swift

18 When something comes in.... something goes out....

This rule is as powerful and as effective as the “quarterly purge” rule, which I have also shared in this book. Used together, they are a great way to keep the clutter down...for good.

Whenever somebody gives you something that you want to keep, whether it's a blouse, a chair, a book...when you bring it home, donate an equivalent item to someone, or to a charity. This way, you make room for that incoming item, without growing your collection or decreasing your space.

So if your sister gives you three really nice blouses, and you know that you already own tons of blouses, donate three of the ones you already have. It's almost like a swap out. Now, of course, if you are in need of clothing and don't have enough, then it's not necessary to follow this rule. Use your judgment, if you know that you already have a lot of whatever it is you are agreeing to take, this rule will make a difference for you.

“We are not cisterns made for hoarding, we are channels made for sharing.” Billy Graham

19 Organizing And Planning A Vacation

I hear a lot of talk about “all inclusive” vacations, and I went on one once to Punta Cana. One of the ways that I think it was definitely a waste, was in the context of food. I am a person who eats a certain way, and I am not an “all you can eat” kind of person. I found that not only did I not eat as frequently as many others at the resort, I did not eat much of what was available.

When I’m planning vacations for my clients, I have found it to be most effective to put the vacation together “piece by piece.” It also has makes the most financial sense for many, especially if you are traveling alone or as a couple. If you are traveling with a family, perhaps all inclusive may, in fact work best for you.

In putting a vacation together “piece by piece,” I simply research the airfare on all of the popular savings sites (i.e. Expedia, Travelocity, Cheaptickets, etc.) to find the best airfare. Then, I go to the sites of my favorite hotels, and they are my favorites because they provide quality accommodations without busting the bank. Two of my favorite brands are Marriott Courtyard and Hilton Garden Inn. After that, are all the other Marriott and Hilton brands, all the Hotels in the “InterContinental Hotels Group,” and certain brands from the “Choice Privileges” group to name a few. Once you’ve got the airfare and accommodations handled, you can research deals on meals, attractions, etc. around your destination.

“To travel is to live.” Hans Christian Andersen

20 When To Rent A Storage Unit

I've worked with many clients to either decrease the amount of storage space they've needed to rent, or eliminate a storage unit altogether. In certain circumstances, a storage unit may really be needed. But often, it becomes a place where people take all of the "stuff" they don't need, and becomes an ongoing expense that could really be eliminated. Here are some situations that I would say a storage unit may actually be necessary:

- 1) On a temporary basis if you are moving, have moved, or have emptied the house or apartment of a lost loved one (sometimes it takes time to address the items left behind by loved ones....in my experience clients generally come to me 6 months to 1 year after their loss).
- 2) If you have a business that involves inventory, equipment, or files that need to be kept for a specific period of time.
- 3) If you live in a house that does not have a garage, an attic or a basement (in this case you still want to be very selective about what goes into the storage unit, and it should be the smallest size that you can get away with).

"In the process of letting go you will lose many things from the past, but you will find yourself." Deepak Chopra

21 A Free To-Do List - In Your Online Calendar

One evening at one of my speaking engagements, a colleague showed me a neat way to incorporate your “to-do” list into whatever online calendar you are already using. It is so simple that it’s a no brainer:

- 1) All there is to do is to enter your to-do items for the day, just as you do with all of your other calendar entries, except be sure to check off that its an all day event. That way, it migrates to the very top of the that day in the calendar...in alphabetical order.
- 2) To prioritize the to-do items, simply type in either the letter A, B or C and one space in front of each to-do item, based on the level of priority, with the A’s being the most important. By doing this, the items will appear at the top of the day, in your calendar, in order of priority.
- 3) After you’ve completed each item, simply change the A, B or C to an “X” and the item will fall to the bottom of the list (remember it automatically alphabetizes).

Of course, my colleague has permitted me to include this cool tip in this book!

“Nature is pleased with simplicity.” Isaac Newton

22 Emergency Access To Your Travel Documents

A neat tip for having access to your documents in case of emergency while traveling is to scan your passport and driver's license, and email them to yourself before leaving. This way, if for any reason you lose your passport and/or ID while you are away (due to a robbery or any other tragedy), you can log onto your email and obtain a copy of them. Depending on what country you are in, and whatever process you will have to go through to get home, this should definitely make replacing those documents easier for you.

"Preparedness makes us powerful." Hermann Goering

23 Only keep what you need immediate access to at your fingertips.....

Often, what's behind a cluttered home is the intention to have everything one owns up close and personal. To keep clutter down in the house, decide on what you need on a daily basis versus what you only use or need to access every now and then. Here are some examples:

In the kitchen; if you have certain large pots, pans, trays, etc that you only use when the whole family comes over for the holiday, perhaps they can be stored in the basement and save some kitchen cabinet space.

Files & papers; the older certain documents get, the less likely it is that you will refer to them every day or week....one example would be taxes, if you keep ten years of taxes, keep the tax documents that are six to ten years old in a safe or waterproof container in the basement, and keep the last five years in the file drawer nearby.

“Changing a lifelong habit is a difficult thing.” Randy Frost, PhD

24 Organizing A Room

So you want to organize that “catch-all” room, but you don’t know where to start.

The best way to organize a room or space in your house is to start by separating all the items into piles or groups, placing all like items together (i.e. books, clothes, shoes).

Then, go through each pile and sort them into sell, donate, trash, and keep.

Decide where to sell (i.e. eBay vs. Craigslist).

Decide where to donate.

Return all the keep items to the room in an organized way.

If you are unable to go through this process alone, don’t feel bad, most people can’t; hire a professional!!

If you do decide to take this on by yourself, in the end, the room may not look like it would if you had hired a professional, but it will be a significant improvement, and you will have less stuff.

“Preparedness makes us powerful.” Hermann Goering

25 Organizing Your Car

Believe it or not, I've had clients task me with organizing their cars, but it's always once they've gotten to a certain point. Here are a few tips for keeping the car organized, I actually use all of these myself:

Whenever you have coffee or any kind of take-out while in the car, take the trash with you when you leave the car on that trip. Don't wait until later to dispose of it. Trash builds up quickly, and if you don't follow this rule, before you know it you could have several empty bags or containers in your car. I don't eat much fast food, but this is a valuable tip even if it only applies to coffee containers.

Keep a small wicker basket or plastic container in the car (I keep mine on the floor in back of my seat) that contains some "must haves" for when you are in the car. For me that includes plastic spoons because often times I have to carry my greek yogurt out with me in the morning to eat while I'm on the road. It can also include CD's that you listen to in the car, wipes, and any other items that you might need while on the road. The container is small for a reason, so that you don't keep too many things in the car.

In my trunk I keep an umbrella, a set of jumper cables, a pair of sneakers, a light jacket, a first aid kit, and a blanket...just in case of emergencies.

Make a habit of clearing out those pockets inside the car doors one per month, so they don't become stuffed with mail, other paper items, etc. You may even need to put this event in your calendar to make sure it happens.

"If you wish to travel far and fast, travel light." Glenn Clark

26 Determining What Items To Donate

Here is a quick list to support you in determining the kinds of items to donate when you are de-cluttering:

Clothing & Shoes: if two seasons have passed and you haven't worn it – DONATE IT! Also, if you are saving more than two sizes of clothing, consider which two you really need to continue to save. Most people do not fluctuate between more than two sizes

Pots & Pans: if you have more than one of a particular size and kind of pot or pan – DONATE ONE!

Books: unless it's a book that you need to use on an ongoing basis as a reference, or one of your favorites that you know you will read time and time again – DONATE IT!

Electronics: if you have more than one of a particular electronic appliance (aside from a scenario like having a vacuum cleaner on each floor of your house) – DONATE IT!

Make a point of not saving items that you don't need or use "just in case." It's one of the primary tendencies that leads to hoarding.

"Abundance is a process of letting go; that which is empty can receive." Bryant H. McGill

27 What To Do With That Extra Set Of China

If you have an extra set of China and don't know how to get rid of it, you can sell it to a china reseller like Replacements.com.

The one caveat that I have to mention is that you need to be extremely careful in wrapping the china to ensure that it doesn't break; and you also need to make sure that you take out insurance at the post office when you mail the package. This way, if anything does break, you will get a check from the post office to cover the loss.

The insurance process through the post office is a little lengthy, but eventually you will get the check. Be sure to save the receipt that shows that you purchased the insurance.

“When you let go of the things you no longer need, you create the possibility for something new to manifest!! ” Unknown

28 Effective Scheduling

When you are planning your day and scheduling appointments, be sure to include cushions of at least 30 minutes in between your appointments. This would be in addition to travel time. It allows the space for heavier than usual traffic and other unexpected delays.

*“Punctuality is the soul of business.” Thomas Chandler
Haliburton*

29 Organizing Your Kitchen Cabinets

Here's a good, simple way to organize your kitchen cabinets:

Two to three cabinets should be dedicated to food items.

I typically recommend that either pots and pans or cleaning supplies be stored under the sink.

Whichever of the two items I listed above that is not under the sink will need its own cabinet.

A cabinet that is near or directly above the stove is a good one for seasonings.

One cabinet should be dedicated to plastic food storage containers.

If you have the luxury of having more than seven cabinets, you could store appliances, cookbooks, recipes, or kitchen towels in additional cabinets.

Be sure to use cabinets that are high up to store items that you use infrequently. If you have limited cabinet space, you may want to use some hooks that hang inside the pantry door, or purchase a baker's rack if you have room in your kitchen.

"The kitchen is the heart of the home." Unknown

30 THIS WEEK AT A GLANCE

On either Sunday evening or first thing Monday morning, preview your calendar in order to presence yourself to what's coming up. If there is any pre-work that you can do to prepare for any of your events or appointments in advance, take that on if you have time. It will save you some time during the week.

“When the evening comes, prepare yourself for the morrow.”
Donald Pillai

31 Tips For Selling On eBay

So you want to get rid of some things that are in your house and you are considering selling them on eBay? Well, here are a few tips to help you to be successful at it:

Always take good pictures so that buyers can see what they are getting. If you can, use a digital camera as opposed to the camera in your phone. However, most smart phones take decent pics, so if you don't have a camera, don't fret, use what you have.

Be up front about flaws, damages, etc. This way, it is documented right on the site and your buyers are responsible for reading the details before making the purchase. If you are not up front about these things, you will have to deal with upset buyers, refunds, etc.

If you are selling anything that is glass, make sure you wrap the item really well. Use bubble wrap, newspaper, etc. to protect the items from being broken in transit to the buyer. Purchase insurance on the value of the item from the post office just in case, the cost is minimal.

Be as descriptive as you can about the items. For example, if you are selling clothing, include all the necessary measurements.

“People of excellence go the extra mile to do what’s right.”

Joel Olsteen

32 When to Use Craigslist vs. eBay

This is just some useful information to help you to determine when to use eBay vs. Craigslist to sell your items. Craigslist attracts a bit of a different crowd than eBay. People who buy on Craigslist are generally looking to buy whatever they need for a “cheap” price.

However, the crowd on eBay is willing to pay more, as many of those buyers are more concerned with the quality of what they’re getting.

I’ve found that Craigslist is a great place to go if you’ve had an item on eBay for an extended period of time, have tried taking the price down, and it still didn’t sell. At that point, the next price drop should be posted on Craigslist, and the item should be removed from eBay.

“Quality is remembered long after the price is forgotten.” Ed Sabol

33 Do You Have Artwork To Get Rid Of?

If you have artwork that has been appraised, and you are looking to get rid of it in your efforts to de-clutter, consider using an auction house to consign the art for you. There are several in New York that may be interested in your collection. Keep in mind that some of the high end auction houses (i.e. Sotheby's) only deal with pieces that are upwards of \$5,000.

If you are unable to find a dealer who is interested in consigning your pieces, then consider donating them to an organization that holds silent auctions for a good cause, like the Red Cross or Big Brothers and Big Sisters.

“We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give.” — Winston S. Churchill

34 Use An Online Calendar That Syncs With Your Phone or Handheld Device

It is always a good idea to use an online calendar like google or yahoo, and to set up your phone or handheld device to sync with this calendar. In fact, this is more a matter of efficiency.

If you are away from home in a meeting, or on a business trip and you have problems with your phone for any reason, rather than being oblivious to what you've got scheduled for the rest of the day, you can log onto any computer and access your calendar.

“We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give.” — Winston S. Churchill

35 Organize Your Bills & Expenses

To organize your finances, simply list out your monthly bills and living expenses, and add up the total. Then, deduct that amount from your monthly income. If your income is more than your expenses, then you are probably in pretty good shape. If your income is less than your expenses, then you have a deficit, and what there is to do next is to look at ways to either decrease your expenses, or earn more income. You can easily find a monthly budget template online if you google the words “monthly budget.”

The other suggestion I’ll make is that you sign up for mint.com. I use it with all of my monthly bill pay clients. To set it up, you connect to your online banking website through their site, and the system/program tracks your spending. You can set up budgets so that if you go over your budget, it will alert you. Each month, you can identify spending trends to assess whether you are spending too much money on certain things.

“Money, like emotions, is something you must control to keep your life on the right track.” Natasha Munson

36 Being Organized When You're Eating Healthy

For the most part, eating healthy can be a lot more work than eating meals that are not so healthy. For example, juicing, smoothies, steaming, grilling...all these methods of healthy eating come with clean up.

One of the things I recommend to my clients is to get into the habit of cleaning up as you go along when you are preparing your meals. This way, when you are done with the preparation, you can sit down and enjoy your meal. And after the meal, all you have left to clean up is the dishes that you used to eat from.

"There are no short cuts to any place worth going." Beverly Sills

37 Document Management 101

Ever wonder where to start as you stare across the room at the stacks of paper that continue to grow at home. Have you ever considered throwing out all those totes of papers but weren't sure what to keep and what to chuck? Here is a quick and dirty list of documents that should be kept permanently:

Birth, Marriage and Death Certificates

Divorce, Citizenship, Adoption and Custody documents

Social Security Cards

Military Documents

Medical History

Appraisals (i.e. on jewelry, artwork, and other collectibles)

Real estate documents and corresponding insurance policies and claim info

Tax Returns

Wills and Advanced Directives (Power of Attorney, Living Will)

“We are made wise not by the recollection of our past, but by the responsibility for our future. “ George Bernard Shaw

38 Getting Off To A Good Start In The Morning

I make my best effort to make my bed before I leave the house or start work every day...I can't really explain it but it provides something that gets you off to a good start! I coach my organizing clients to do it, and I am always told about what a difference it makes.

"We become what we repeatedly do." Sean Covey

39 Running A Successful Meeting

Have you ever sat in a meeting and all of a sudden realize that nothing is being accomplished? Or leave a meeting realizing that you are no closer to a solution to the problem you set the meeting to discuss than you were before the meeting? Here are some quick tips for running a successful meeting:

Always create an agenda

Always request that those you have invited RSVP

Have an overall outcome or objective that you want to leave the meeting having accomplished

Stay focused, and complete the conversation regarding the topic at hand before moving on to the next topic

Summarize the takeaways

It's not always that we need to do more but rather that we need to focus on less. Nathan W. Morris

40 Organizing Your Housekeeping Efforts

With all that we've got on our plates these days, it is sometimes difficult to do all of the housekeeping or chores in one day. How I handle keeping the house clean is to do it in stages.

Have a list of tasks that need to be done in the area of housekeeping. On a given day of the week, set aside an hour or two for some of the tasks. For example, three to four times per year, I set aside a few hours in a given day to clean the blinds and the ceiling fans.

Every week or every other week, I set aside a day to steam the wood floors with a simple machine by Shark that provides what is probably the easiest way to do it. Also on a weekly basis, I set aside a day to scrub down the entire bathroom. Little tasks like vacuuming get done three times per week.

I also incorporate some chores into regular tasks. For example, when I wash dishes, I automatically wipe out the microwave oven and wipe the kitchen cabinets down. These little steps help keep your home clean and tidy without the stress of having to manage all of the chores in one day.

"If you spend too much time thinking about a thing, you'll never get it done." Bruce Lee

41 Be Prepared For The Unexpected

As I mentioned in the introduction of this book, no one is willing to have a discussion about when it's time to leave this earth. However, none of us will be here forever. It is critical for our loved ones that we take the time to create the following while we are alive and able:

Will - This document is not that difficult to create, as there are tons of templates online, and once you create the document, you will need to visit a notary public with two or three witnesses to make it official. Make sure that someone, specifically the person who will handle your affairs, knows where it is kept.

Living Will – For the most part, you can create one just as easily as you can a Will. They should be kept together in a safe place.

Have a life insurance policy, and keep it together with the other two items listed above.

“There is no real ending. It's just the place where you stop the story.” Frank Herbert

42 Organizing Your Computer Files

Organizing your computer files can be a daunting task. Think about your computer files in the same way that you do an actual paper file. In other words, consider how you've organized your paper files. How have you categorized them? Here are some examples of the main files and sub-folders that you could create on your computer:

Finances: Budgeting, Taxes, Mortgage Documents, Automobile

Personal: Gardening, Recipes, Wine/Wine Tasting, , School, Activities, Summer Trips

Your files and sub-folders can be created in the “Documents” folder on your hard drive. Or, you can set up an account with a cloud service provider, like Dropbox.

Categories like these can also be used to organize your email accounts.

“It has become appallingly obvious that our technology has exceeded our humanity.” Albert Einstein

43 Create Accountability

Sometimes, with all the structures, etc. that we put in place, it is still a huge challenge to keep things in order or accomplish all that we want to get done. What can often make the difference in this case is to create accountability with someone.

Either hire a coach, or enroll a friend or colleague in becoming accountability buddies with you. The two of you would share your goals and commitments with each other, and have follow up calls to assess progress and support each other in making it happen.

As a coach, I provide this for many of my clients who are committed to living an organized life.

“Accountability breeds response-ability.” Stephen R. Covey

44 The ANYTIME List

Keep a running “to-do” list of things that are not urgent but that can be done anytime. This way, whenever you have unexpected downtime, you can pull out this list and complete some of the tasks on it.

“Your greatest resource is your time.” Brian Tracy

45 Organizing Your Receipts For Tax Season

Here is a quick and simple way to organize your receipts so that you are prepared for tax season when it arrives. These days, many have taken on scanning their receipts, but I do realize that not everyone is onboard with this just yet.

You can keep your receipts organized by creating a simple Excel spreadsheet with four columns: Date, Vendor, Amount, and Category. Each month, tuck your receipts away in an envelope throughout the month.

At the end of the month, enter them all into this spreadsheet, and by the end of the year you have all your receipts entered, in a format that you can sort by category and email to your accountant.

“In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes.” Benjamin Franklin

46 Categorizing Your Storage Items

Whether you are using your attic, basement or a rented storage unit to store items in, it's a good idea to keep a list handy of what's been stored.

I always recommend that items be stored away in plastic totes so that they are protected from moisture and other elements.

As you pack the totes, write out a list of what's in each tote, then number the tote.

At the end of the process, create sheets with the tote number at the top, and then a list of the items that are contained in that particular tote. This way, you are not rummaging through the containers to search for items when you need them.

“Appearance blinds, whereas words reveal.” Oscar Wilde

47 How To Dispose Of Your Old Computer

I am often asked about how to dispose of an old computer, as there is naturally a concern about one's confidential information remaining on an old pc or laptop.

Staples has a great program where you can bring your old computer to a local Staples, and they will recycle your computer for you. Your old information will be destroyed.

If you want proof that your information has been destroyed, you can pay a nominal fee, and they will remove your hard drive for you to keep.

“The desire for safety stands against every great and noble enterprise.” Tacitus

48 Organizing Your Photos

There are several ways that you can organize your photos. This is another area in which many have switched over to digital storage, and some still haven't. Whether you have gone digital or not, here are some organizing ideas:

One of the most obvious ways is to organize them by year, and then month.

If you have older photos of your children, and you don't have specific dates, you can organize them by child.

You can also organize them by events (i.e. Weddings, Company Galas, Summer Picnics, etc.).

If you like to travel, you can organize the photos by location or destination.

"God gave us memories that we might have roses in December." J. M. Barrie

49 Organizing Your Spaces for Peace & Productivity

Here are some quick elements to include in your work or home space for peace and productivity:

Peace

Burning Incense
Essential Oils (Using a diffuser)
Mirrors
Use pastel or neutral colors

Productivity

Plenty of light (as much natural light as possible)
Plants (oxygen)
Lose the clutter
Use bright colors

“Tranquility is not weakness; from tranquility emerges power and strength.” C. JoyBell C.

50 Organizing Your Luggage When Traveling

An efficient way to pack is to include interchangeable pieces of clothing, and 2 to 3 pairs of shoes that can be mixed and matched with all or any of those pieces.

Use a separate case for jewelry, and a miniature travel bag for toiletries. For protection, use Ziploc bags for items that don't fit into your miniature travel bag that might spill, like shampoo, conditioner, and lotion.

Make your best effort to fit your items into a carry-on. If that is not possible, and you have to bring a bigger bag that you'll need to check, put some essentials into a tote bag to carry on with you, like your swim suit, a small towel, and a change of underwear. This can be very handy in the case of a lost bag or bag that is delayed in its arrival by a day or two.

“The world is a book and those who do not travel read only one page.” St. Augustine