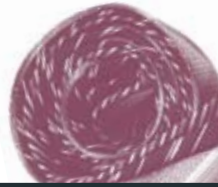


PROFESSIONAL
ORGANIZERS ASSIST IN
RECLAIMING LIFE'S SPACES

Dominate



your disorder

BY JENNIFER SHAPIRA

10 Rules of Organizing

1.

IF YOU LOVE IT AND
USE IT, THEN KEEP IT

2.

MAKE IT EASY TO ACCESS
AND EASY TO PUT AWAY

3.

STORE ITEMS WHERE
THEY ARE MOST USED

4.

COMMUNICATION IS KEY

5.

GIVE EVERYTHING
A HOME

6.

DON'T INCREASE
STORAGE—REDUCE
INVENTORY

7.

TOUCH IT ONCE

8.

BE IN CHARGE

9.

KEEP IT SIMPLE

10.

HIRE A PROFESSIONAL

JANET SCHIESL HAS BEEN ORGANIZED AS LONG AS SHE CAN REMEMBER. EVEN AS A CHILD SHE FOUND PEACE IN ORDER.

“I remember being very young and being stressed when I couldn’t find my things,” she said. “So being organized was a way of relieving that stress for me. My homework was in the same folder. I could turn it in on time. My desk at school was always perfectly organized.”

Being able to put her finger on things, she said, “is what made me feel most comfortable.”

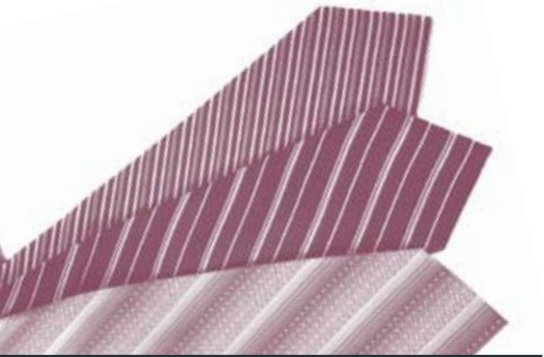
Now, the Centreville-based professional organizer helps others put things in their places. She devises ways to help homeowners manage their time and conquer their clutter.

WHO NEEDS A PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZER?

People need help for a variety of reasons, said Schiesl, owner of Basic Organization. For example, new mothers who suddenly come up short on time or business owners who work out of their homes can sometimes let life’s daily tasks slip. While the average person is organized enough to get through the day successfully, Schiesl says some need a little more help.

Whether it’s paying bills on time or remembering where you put your keys, personal organizers can devise systems that will make you feel more together and allow you to spend more time doing what you love, like relaxing with family, instead of wasting minutes looking for your glasses.

Michelle Bogert, president of the Washington, D.C. chapter of National Association of Professional Organizers (NAPO), has helped many clients put their



finances in order. From the disorganized small business owner to the recent widow, people have put their trust in Bogert, a CPA and owner of SatisFunctional Spaces, to help them pay bills online, create and remember passwords and decode health insurance statements.

Additionally, Schiesl and Bogert are both certified by the St. Louis-based National Study Group on Chronic Disorganization, which teaches organizers to deal with the most difficult clients: hoarders.

GETTING STARTED

Public enemy No. 1: Clutter. Almost everyone has it. So how to conquer it? Schiesl's general rule when it comes to paper is, if it's something you can easily obtain a record of, toss it. Credit-card statements, gas bills—someone else will have a copy. Figure out what you need to keep, file it, and take the rest to a community shred.

But most people who call an organizer are experiencing a major or minor life change, "something you're coping with that's got you a little off track," Schiesl said. "It may be moving or having a baby, or getting a new job and commuting longer than you used to. And it may be an illness in the family, or a loss of a job, or loss of a relative ... And then you find that things get kind of pushed to the wayside, and suddenly you're overwhelmed."

No matter the concern, trained, trustworthy professionals can set you straight. Maybe you don't have time to cook. Ease the burden by ordering groceries online and having them delivered to your home. If you



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can afford it, hire a personal chef. Find a service that delivers healthy meals to your home. Or plan a girls' night out; sign up to prep a week's worth of dinners at a nearby professional kitchen.

WADING THROUGH CLUTTER

"So many people say, 'Oh! I bet this is the worst house you've ever seen!'" Schiesl said. "People are so hard on themselves, because it's never the worst house I've ever seen!"

The house may function just fine, she said. There just might be an issue with clutter collecting in the garage. "That's no big deal."

She works with many "project clients," people who have a specific job they need done but don't have time to undertake themselves. An organizer will map out a strategy and get started. Those who need ongoing support are known as "maintenance clients."

"Maybe their issue is their home office, and you go in once a month and go through the paperwork," Schiesl said.

And that garage? "We'll just go like gangbusters, and we can haul everything out and clean it up." Same with closets. "Sometimes the job is just more fun if you're not doing it yourself," she said.

DOES IT STAY OR DOES IT GO?

But in drastic cases, like moving or the passing of a loved one, letting go of a lifetime of belongings can be difficult, Schiesl said.

"I always tell my clients, 'I'll ask you a lot of questions. I'll challenge you on why you want to keep something, why it's important to you. But you live here. Everything that leaves the house will be your decision,'" she said.

Sometimes just knowing those possessions are going to a good home provides enough comfort, and very often, the process includes recycling. "I don't have a single client who's not interested in how to be greener," Schiesl said. From posting on Craigslist to donating to charities, organizers are constantly working to find creative ways to

BEFORE and AFTER

A NORTHERN VIRGINIA GARAGE REORGANIZATION PROJECT BY JANET SCHIESL FEATURED SYSTEMATICALLY STACKED CLEAR STORAGE BINS.



50%
OF HOMEOWNERS
SAY THE GARAGE
IS THE MOST
DISORGANIZED PLACE
IN THE HOUSE.

reuse and recycle. Their calendars are marked with days and locations of community shreds and hazardous waste drop-offs throughout the area. They'll lug boxes of old bank statements, dispose of harmful products, erase computer hard drives, donate electronics—anything to decrease what ends up in landfills.

FINDING A PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZER

Bogert suggests starting with a visit to the agency website, Napo.net. Punch in your home's coordinates, select your problem areas, and the returned results will be a list of organizers near your home. Peruse their profiles, and note their specialties. Look for a good fit. Then pick up the phone, and call with questions. The organizer should put you at ease right away, she said. And if that's not the case, call another.

When you find an organizer you like, he or she will schedule a pre-assessment at your home. He or she will inquire about your lifestyle, the flow of your home and where you need extra attention. And you'll be on your way to tackling whatever it is that made you make the call in the first place.

For a more local listing, go to DCOrganizers.org, to search only D.C.-area NAPO-member organizers. Again, you can search by your problem area, if it's business or residential organization, and by county. Check off a few boxes, and the site will provide organizers with those specialties who are based near you.

Again, make some calls, Bogert said, because as the organizer figures out your rhythm, a number of consultations are sure to follow. "It's important that you feel comfortable with this person because you'll be spending a lot of time together." 🏡

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