



## *True Confessions of a Professional Organizer*

I had a client ask me if my home is organized. It's a fair question. We've all heard the tale of the cobbler whose children had no shoes. The answer is yes. I am organized. Does that mean everything is always neat and tidy? Nope. I live with a normal family with normal messes and influxes of paper and collections of stuff. I just know a few tricks. Organization creates order. Once you have order you become more efficient. Being efficient means getting more done with less effort. You can find things more easily, accomplish tasks more quickly and this is the best part... you have time left over to do the things you want to do.

Let me dispel a common myth, *you don't have to be neat to be organized*. I've always been pretty organized. I worked for ten years with two different companies that sold every conceivable closet, kitchen and office organizing product. I was a space planner and I learned all of the techniques to stay organized. Of course there are different levels of organization. My friend describes herself as being organized "down deep" under the layers of clutter. Even though she has surface clutter, she can always find what she is looking for. If you open a closet door or a cabinet everything is in place. So her style fits in with my definition of organization. She can find what she wants when she wants it and she has a place to put all of her possessions.

Over time I learned how to be both neat and organized. I learned the neatness piece from my husband. When I started dating him I had to raise the bar a bit. He was very neat and tidy so when he called to say he was on his way over to my place, I would straighten up before he arrived. When we married he convinced me that we needed to clean once a week and do a thorough spring and fall cleaning. I will probably never love cleaning, but I do love a clean house.

Craig is the one that taught me the value of keeping up with chores. (He loves Nike's slogan: *Just do it!*) In the past, there had been times when I let things go and then I paid a price for it. I had to scrub the stovetop long and hard or file papers for hours or spend a whole Saturday cleaning. I don't have to do that anymore. Because I tidy the bathroom and kitchen every morning, weekly cleaning rarely takes more than two hours. And even less if I get help from the boys.

My biggest struggle is in my home office. I am a visual person and I have a lot of ideas for articles, projects, and products. I am afraid that I will lose an opportunity if I don't keep the ideas on my desk. As a result I've had a hard time keeping a clear desk. I haven't started using the floor for storage, but some days it's close. I recently listened to an interview between marketing expert Robert Middleton and organizing specialist Elizabeth Hagen. They discussed how entrepreneur's can keep track of these types of

ideas. If I have success, I'll write about it in the future.

In the past I thought that organization and neatness meant perfection. If you've spent any time with Martha Stewart you know what I mean. The truth is that life is too short and too valuable to spend your time doing and re-doing projects. I've come to realize that good is good enough. Voltaire said it best, "Don't let the perfect be the enemy of the good." Now I aim for efficiency instead of perfection.

I am organized because organization benefits me. Organization creates order. Order makes things simple, and simple is good.

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