

PRO DUCTIVE

Ignite! organizing for the new year

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New Year Resolution

The second most popular just behind losing weight, is to get organized. Why is it we go into it with good intentions and energy and fall back into being disorganized and discouraged so quickly? Getting organized isn't simply about cleaning up and putting things away.

Getting organized is about discovering how being disorganized is effecting you and then setting up systems, patterns and new habits to ensure its success.

Disorganization can cause great stress and can take a bite out of your reputation, not to mention your finances. Where is your disorganization affecting you? Is it the fact that you cannot seem to get yourself to work on time? Is it feeling overwhelmed by all that has to be done and only starting things without finishing them? Are you "spending" so much money in interest and late fees on bills that are paid late? Review your struggles this year, what areas are causing you stress? This will give you a good focus as to where to target your efforts.

IF YOUR STRESS IS COMING FROM TIME MANAGEMENT ISSUES such as not getting places on time take a look at your planning process. Start with the time you need to arrive at your location and work backward. Take this week to get a more realistic idea of the

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actual time it takes you to shower, to do your make up, to eat breakfast, to get the children ready and to run your errands. Once you have a realistic perspective of the time *add thirty to fifty percent more time to your plan as a cushion* for those things that come up that you have not counted on. Now you have a realistic measurement for how to arrive on time.

Even a minor hiccup in your plan will not cause you to be late because you planned for it!

It is important to be aware of your activities and not try to squeeze projects like spot cleaning the kitchen or watching television into your preparation time.

Take a look at the events, meetings, and appointments you have on your planner or PDA for the upcoming weeks. How much time did you allot in between appointments? Have you considered the real time it takes and added twenty five percent to it? If you begin aligning your schedule with this cushion of time, I guarantee you less stress!

IF GETTING SIDE TRACKED IS YOUR ORGANIZATIONAL CHALLENGE I would ask you to jot down those items that pull you away from your focus. You start to do the dishes and look out the window to realize that the birdfeeder is empty and so you head on out to the garage for additional birdseed and there in the garage you discover that dog food supply is out so you run back in the kitchen to make sure you write that down. In your search for the piece of paper to jot that on you discover a note with a phone number on it that you were suppose to call yesterday! You then pick up the phone to make the call and you notice your plants have fallen over and are screaming to be watered, so you get the picture here!

At the end of this day you are exhausted and you have nothing to show for it! The simplest answer to this type of disorganization is to put new consistent patterns into place. For example, the birdfeeders are filled every

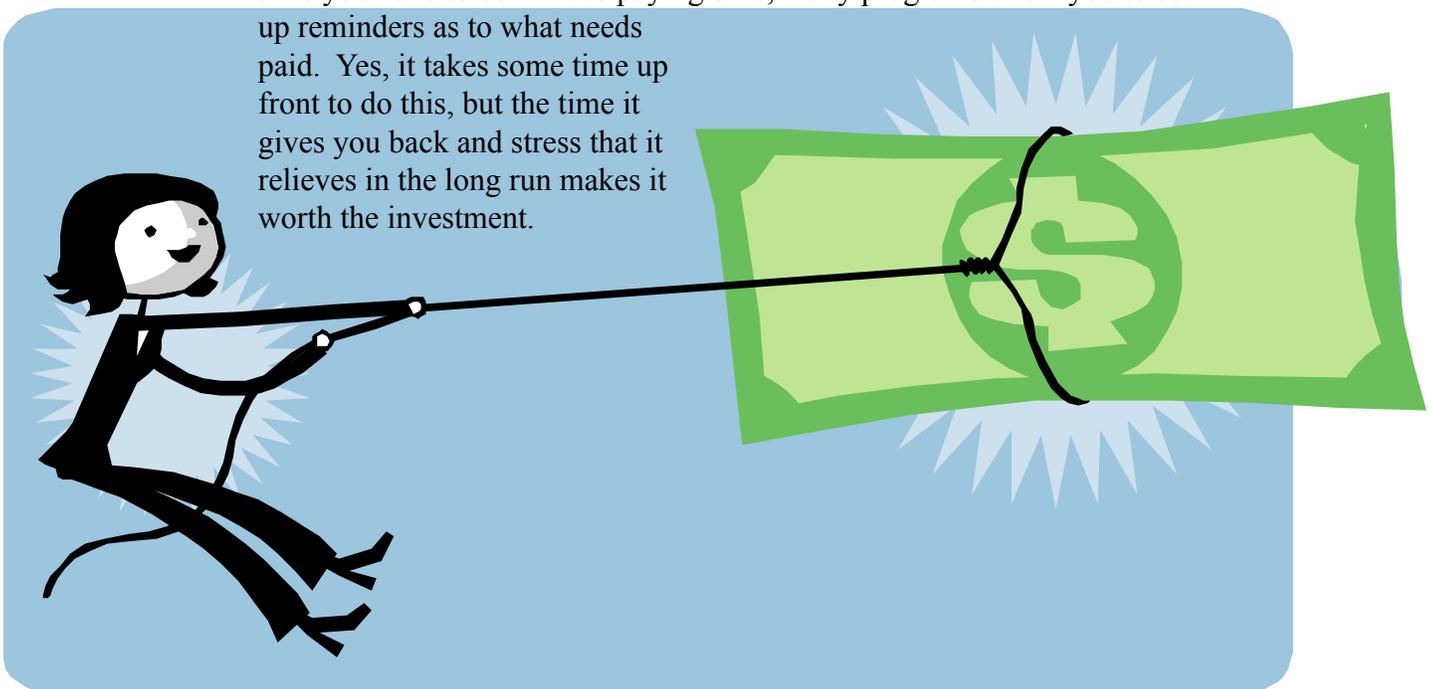
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Saturday and plants are watered every Sunday. This way the feeder is full and the plants are standing upright and proud. Create a generic chart with one week on it and list those items that are sidetracking you today and get them on a set schedule.

Some distractions are out of our control. We can not schedule what children will do or need at any given time. Life throws uncontrollable things at us. The objective here is to schedule and plan for what we can. Imagine what you could stay focused on and accomplish if your distractions were cut in half.

ARE YOU LOSING A LOT OF MONEY TO BEING DISORGANIZED?

Are bills not getting paid on time? First of all you need to set up a plan for bill paying. I normally recommend the 1st and 15th of the month and in addition, establish a chart for your reference listing any bill you pay and if it is due the first or second half of the month. As a Professional Organizer I always recommend to my clients that any bills you can have drafted are that much less you have to worry about, no late fees or cancellation letters to add stress to your life here. If you are uncomfortable with drafting, the second option is to set up bill paying on line. These programs are user friendly and can drastically cut down on the time you have to commit to paying bills, many programs allow you to set up reminders as to what needs paid. Yes, it takes some time up front to do this, but the time it gives you back and stress that it relieves in the long run makes it worth the investment.



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If we have not addressed your organizing challenge in this article speak with an individual you know that is successful in the organizing area that you struggle in. Don't be afraid to ask them how they do it. Most people are flattered and happy to share their ideas!

One word of caution in establishing your "get organized" plan: take on one organizing project at a time and stay focused on that until it has become a habit for you. Taking on too many projects at once will only lead to failure and disappointment with each of the projects. Your goal is to be better organized, take it slow, keep it simple and stay focused. The rewards to being organized are reduced stress, money saved, a better reputation and more time to do what you want to do!



As a Professional Organizer, Cyndy Ratcliffe works with home and small business owners in organizing their homes, offices and time. She received her bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Ashland University in Ohio and was a senior level manager for approximately 20 years before launching Organizing Solutions, Inc.

Cyndy assists individuals to reduce stress, boost their image and me more productive through speaking, training and hands-on coaching of organizing techniques.

She has received certificates of study in Basic Attention Deficit Disorder and Chronic Disorganization through her membership in the National Study Group on Chronic Disorganization. She is also a founding member of the National Association of Professional Organizers, North Carolina Chapter.

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