Your Roadmap to an Organized Life

Tips, Resources and an Action Plan for your Organizing Journey

Presented by Tracy Hoth
Do you struggle to find what you need right when you need it? Are you chronically frustrated by disorder? Do you miss opportunities or fail to follow through because you just don’t have a system in place?

I want to help YOU become more organized and thus more efficient. I want you to be more organized so you are FREE from the weight clutter and disorganization causes. This will enable you to better give your gifts and talents to those around you – your family, friends and the people you help in your work!

Unfortunately, just reading this presentation will not get you organized. We can all read a book and then hope that we will put some of the things we learned into practice and life will be better, but for the most part, it just doesn’t happen!

This presentation will equip you, educate you and give you tips and ideas so you have the resources you need. Additionally, I have included a 10 Step ACTION plan and 10X10 Mini Organizing Challenges to make change happen in your life! Implementing these will get you started “getting organized.”

Organizing is a journey - not a destination! Enjoy!

Warmly,

Tracy Hoth
What ORGANIZING is NOT

Being organized is NOT all about having your spices in alphabetical order!

There are many **myths** about being organized! Let me address four of them:

1. **Being organized is being perfect.**
   Perfect keeps you stuck! Ask yourself these three questions to find out if you are organized:
   i. Do you know what you have?
   ii. Can you find it in 10 seconds or less?
   iii. Can other people use your space and find what they need?
   When things get busy and disorganized, can you recover quickly – processing through items and getting things put back?

2. **You have to be born organized.**
   Are people born able to play the piano? No. Someone taught them and most likely made them practice! And then probably made them keep going when they wanted to quit! I am here to teach you! As an adult, you get to choose whether you practice or not and if you keep going on the journey! Some learn faster and easier. Some need to hear the same thing over and over. Some choose to get hands-on help. Others choose to be accountable through a friend or a coaching/virtual program!

3. **You need organizing bins and products.**
   People love to buy fun, new bins or baskets but they do not get you organized. Often they are the wrong size or are not even functional. You NEED to follow the steps to organizing in my SPASM™ acronym. **Sort, Purge, Assign a home** and THEN **Set limits** using containers, bins, baskets, dividers and shelving! Lastly, **Maintain** the space you have chosen. I recommend not buying a thing until you know how much you have, where you will put it and what kind and size of container is necessary! You might already own exactly what you need!

4. **You’re organized if your space looks like Martha Stewart or Pinterest.**
   Do not compare your space to a picture or to your friend’s space. You need to find what works for you! It may be outside the box. It may look different. Try to make it work like YOU think!
What ORGANIZING IS

Being organized is...

1. Knowing what you have and being able to find it when you need it!
2. Having your environment support you in the life you want to live.

Organizing is about...

- Clearing a space.
- Only keeping what you love, what you use and what enhances your life regularly.
- Giving each item a home so you can find it when you need it.
- Setting up systems, routines and habits to help you maintain your organization.
- Enjoying life more because you have less stress, more peace, better follow-up and the ability to help others more easily!

Why get organized?

1. To support the life you want to live!
2. To reduce housework!

"Getting rid of clutter would eliminate 40% of the housework in the average home!!"
- The National Soap and Detergent Association

3. To save money! Clients tell me this ALL the time!

"23% of adults say they pay bills late (and incur fees) because they lose them!!"
- The Harris Interactive

4. To save time!

"The average American burns 55 minutes a day looking for things they know they own but cannot find!!"

~ Boston Marketing Firm Study

"A manager loses 1 hour per day to disorder, costing the business up to $4,000/yr if earning $35,000/yr – or $8,125/yr at $65,000)."

~ Stephanie Winston, author of The Organized Executive

5. To create a happier family!
6. To reduce stress = Healthier YOU!

"The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention state unequivocally that 80% of our medical expenditures are now stress related."
I’m overwhelmed! Where do I start?

"Nothing can add more power to your life than concentrating all your energies on a limited set of targets." - Nido Qubein

The most common problem people have when trying to get organized is that they are overwhelmed and don’t know where to start...or how to start.

WHERE TO START:

What area is most frustrating to you right now? What area least supports the life you want? What space would make you the happiest if it were organized and you could find things when you needed them? This is where you start!

Remember, focus on this one area and only this area until it is complete. The great part is that you will love to go back to this space to just sit, stare and enjoy! You will be motivated and inspired to keep going and begin another project! Focus on this one area. This is the first step.

Which one area will it be for you? Write it on the line:

________________________________________________________________________________________

A second exercise is to address what kind of life you want. Get a vision for what you want your life and your space to look like. Describe it in detail. How do you want to feel? What will you be doing in your space?

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

Does your environment support this life? __________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

Begin the organizing process using the 10 Step Action Plan on page 13 and the fundamental steps to organizing on page 15. In a nutshell it is:

SORT, PURGE, ASSIGN A HOME, SET LIMITS and MAINTAIN = SPASM™!!!
I’m overwhelmed! How do I start?

You’re not obligated to win. You’re obligated to keep trying to do the best you can every day. ~ Marian Wright Edelman

HOW TO START:

Always start organizing by **clearing out the space**. As you clear out the space, **SORT** things into categories. Don’t get stuck on what the categories are. There are no right or wrong answers. Just use what makes sense to you! If you are cleaning out an office drawer you may sort into pens, notepads, cords, business cards, tools, etc. If you are cleaning out your pantry you may have cans, spices, baking supplies, pastas, etc.

Don’t look around. Don’t see the mess you are making. Don’t stop. Focus on…

**“ONE THING AT A TIME!”**

Next, wipe down or vacuum out the space just cleared. WOW! Enjoy the emptiness of it!

Now, focus on **one pile at a time**. **PURGE** each pile only keeping things you love, things you use (in useable condition) and things that enhance your life on a regular basis!

To **ASSIGN A HOME** to each item think about the following:

- **Where do I use this item?** (Put it as close as possible to where you use it.)
- **How often do I use this item?** (The more you use it the more easily accessible it needs to be.)
- **Think logically and think in zones.** (Keep all beverage items – teas, coffees, drink mixes, cups, grinders, sugar/creamers, coffeemaker – in a beverage zone. Keep all address labels, envelopes, cards, stamps, etc in a mailing zone.)

Now for the fun part...**SET LIMITS!** Use containers, shelving, bins, baskets, drawer dividers, etc to contain the items AND to naturally set the limit on how much of an item you can keep! Once the basket is full you must decide what you really want to keep!
I’m overwhelmed! Carry On!

You’re not obligated to win. You’re obligated to keep trying to do the best you can every day. ~ Marian Wright Edelman

Finally, **MAINTAIN**. Take the time to put things away, file the paper, unpack your suitcase, fold the laundry, tidy up your desk/car before getting out.

Think of the teller at the bank. If you watch her, before she invites the next person in line to come to the window, she **completes** the current transaction. Why doesn’t she hurry up and help you??

At the end of the day her space could be a confusing mess. But, because she took the time to place the deposit slips in the correct spot, run checks through, put cash away, etc she has less “clean up” work to do and she is more likely to be successful when balancing her drawer!

The same goes for each one of us. Take the time to put things away and you will be less overwhelmed at the end of the day!

**Catch this…**

According to the American Society of Training and Development, the probability of completing a goal is:

- **25%** if you consciously decide to adopt it
- **40%** if you decide when you will do it
- **50% if you plan how you will do it**
- **65%** if you commit to someone else you will do it
- **95%** if you have a **specific accountability appointment** with the person to whom you committed.

I have created the 10 Step Action Plan for you to use to propel you to success. This plan will help you accomplish your organizing goals instead of just thinking about them! Feel free to make copies of the 10 Step Action Plan and use it for each project. It will help you decide, plan, commit and have accountability with another person. You CAN make your goals happen!
Email Organizing Tips

“The average distraction takes 6-9 minutes with 5 minutes of recovery time! Imagine how much time is wasted! Eliminate distractions as much as possible!”

There are several things to remember when dealing with email. The most important is to schedule times to check email (3x during work hours, at the top of the hour, etc). ONLY check it at your scheduled times.

Write the times you plan to check your email: ______________________

Next, you need to have a plan when dealing with your email. Process your email using my 3How?s™ just like you would with a pile of paper. Take the first email and make a decision using the “How” questions.

1. How can I get rid of this email?
   • Delete it! Copy the information in your calendar and delete it.

2. How can I get this done on time?
   • If it takes two minutes or less to reply or handle the email do it now.
   • If not, assign a date or time to do it.
     Right click on the email to assign a date to take action. Add a reminder. Create a task.
   • If you cannot give it a specific time or date slide it into an action folder such as “To Read”, “Data Entry”, “Pending Orders”, etc, Right click on the Inbox to create an action folder. Schedule time in your calendar to address these tasks so they are not forgotten.

3. How can I find it when I need it?
   • Use folders to store information just like a file cabinet. Right click on your email, choose “move to folder”, choose the folder or create a new folder.
   • Use “contacts” to store information. Under each “contact” in Outlook you can take notes and keep valuable information that you want to remember for each contact. If you want to keep an email from that contact just slide the email over into contacts; the contact will come up, click update - or create a new contact if they are not already in your contacts.

Be selective! You will only access 20% of the emails kept.

Use the search feature – in your inbox, deleted items and contacts. It will save you time!
Car Office Organizing

But change must always be balanced with some degree of consistency. ~ Ron D. Burton

The car can get out of control and disorganized, especially if it serves as your office. It is vital that you have what you need when you need it. Here are some tips and products that I recommend to help you keep your car organized:

1. Every time you get gas or pull into your driveway take 2 minutes to organize and tidy up: put things away, clear out trash, get things that belong elsewhere out of the car.
2. If your car serves as an office think of it like an office. In your office you should have most things that you need within arms reach. The other things can be kept in another location.
3. What papers do you need regularly? File these in a portable file box (with a lid) that you can keep secure if tipped over. Furthermore, you can transport it in and out of your office with ease.
4. Use a clipboard with a legal pad attached. Keep all notes, messages, and lists on this paper. You will never have scraps of paper that get lost. You will always know where that number you wrote down is or where that contact you need to follow up with is written.

Here are some products to accomplish this:

**The Car Cup** – Keep essentials close by ~ pen, pencil, phone, Bluetooth, reading glasses, change, gum, and dental floss. 😊

**The Trunk Organizer** – Store other supplies in one place, contained neatly!

**Collapsible Crates and File** – Store files that you need within reach on your passenger floorboard.

**SmartLap™ Lap Desk** – A desk in your car! It collapses when not in use.
Paper

“80% of what we file never gets looked at again!”

A very popular method for dealing with paper:

Paper without a system is like a kitchen without a refrigerator or pantry. Imagine coming home with a huge load of groceries. You start unpacking things to put them away and you realize you have nowhere to put them. You decide to place the spaghetti and the tomato sauce in one spot, the taco shells and seasoning in another spot, the fruit in a bowl and the snacks in a big pile. Before you know it, the entire counter is filled with piles! Ahhh... How stressful! How awful!

Even if your kitchen is disorganized, however, there is a plan, by design, for groceries coming in. Now, think about your paper. Paper comes in - but, there is no plan. Mail lies unopened for days or weeks. Bills go unnoticed. Piles form on every surface, hoping that nothing is forgotten. What a mess! **There must be a plan for paper!**
Paper

“Your four-drawer file cabinet, when full, holds 18,000 pages!”

There must be a plan for paper. Here are three essentials:

1. **An inbox** – ALL paper coming in gets placed in the inbox. This should be a box with a removable lid. Place the lid under the box and only close the box if you have very important company coming.


3. **A file cabinet** – invest in quality or you will hate filing

Use the 3How?s™ to process the paper out of the inbox. You must stand up (literally) for this! You get a lot more done when standing! Try it. It’s true!!

- **How can I get rid of this paper?** Trash, recycle or shred it.
- **How can I get this done on time?** Do it immediately (if it can be done in a couple minutes) or assign a time to take action on the paper using the Freedom Action File – which combines a tickler file and action files.
- **How can I find it when I need it?** File it.

The secret? Process and make DECISIONS regularly. I suggest daily. No decisions = piles! Use the 3How?s™ with each example on the left. On the right I have given an answer as to where you might place the paper.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Christmas gift idea – ripped out of a Sky Mall magazine</th>
<th>Freedom Action File in the December tab of the tickler file</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business card you picked up at a networking event</td>
<td>Freedom Action File in a file labeled “Data Entry” (Friday @ 10:00 you enter all data from this file into your computer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill to pay</td>
<td>Do immediately. It only takes 1 minute!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invitation to an event</td>
<td>RSVP. Write info in calendar and toss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes for a project you are working on</td>
<td>Place in manila folder, label and put in Freedom Action File in hanging file labeled “Current Projects”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great coupon for your favorite store</td>
<td>Freedom Action File in hanging file labeled “Coupons”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An article you want to read at Friday’s meeting</td>
<td>Freedom Action File on the 28th tab of the tickler file because Friday is the 28th</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Home Organizing

“80% of the clutter in homes is a result of disorganization, not lack of space.”
Clutter = Delayed decisions!

Your home is your haven. It should serve as a peaceful refuge to reenergize you and your family! How you view your home often effects how you feel about yourself. How you feel about yourself often effects how you treat others.

Here are some tips to organize your home and keep it that way:

1. **Commit to the 10x10 Organizing Challenge** on page 14. Do it for 10 minutes every day for 25 days! Then you can begin organizing in other areas.
2. **Create a place for your keys.**

   “People spend, on average, 6 minutes looking for their keys in the morning.”

3. Begin morning and evening “tidy-up” routines.
4. We spend a lot of time in our master suites. Make the closet, bedroom and bathroom areas a priority. You will wake up and go to bed a happier, more peaceful person!
5. **Tie habits and routines** you want to establish with something you do already. Here are some examples:
   a. Process your inbox every time you start the dishwasher. Tape a note on your start button of the dishwasher to remind yourself.
   b. Look at your action file every time you look at your email.
   c. Read your “read pile” for 10 minutes every night before bed.
   d. Clean out your files every year while preparing your taxes. Place ALL 2012 papers in your files in a tub, place your final taxes on top and label it 2012! You have clean files, taxes done and if you ever need to find anything from 2012 you know right where it is.
      Repeat each year and store the tubs on a shelf.
6. Don’t get overwhelmed with how much you have to do! Just take one area at a time. **You can only focus and do your best TODAY.** Don’t worry about tomorrow.
7. Use the SPASM™ method to organize each thing – a drawer, a shelf, cabinets, an entire room, your desk, your car, etc. Always start with sorting items into like piles. It works!
10 STEP ACTION PLAN

"Goals in writing are dreams with deadlines." - Brian Tracy

☐ 1. List 10 areas that you want to organize. Be specific. For example, instead of your whole house choose junk drawer in kitchen, car trunk, laundry room shelves, office file cabinet, pantry, bathroom cabinets, etc.

☐ 2. Choose one and write it here: __________________________________________

☐ 3. Assign a date that you will organize this area: _____________________________

☐ 4. Enter this date into your calendar.

☐ 5. Tell a friend (one that WILL keep you accountable) and/or make this project and it’s deadline public (post on Facebook, tell your office, share with your family, hang a note in your kitchen, etc):

☐ 6. Do this organizing prep anytime before the scheduled organizing date:
   a. Throw away 5 pieces of trash from the area.
   b. Take out 5 things that belong elsewhere and put them away.
   c. Take 5 things you don’t need or want and start a donate bag/box.
   d. Repeat as desired.

☐ 7. On the date scheduled follow the SPASM™ acronym exactly. See page 15 for details.

☐ 8. Take time to put all things away that you’ve decided not to keep in the area. If the items do not have a home then put them where you eventually want them to be or with other like items. Deliver donations to your favorite venue, throw trash away, put returns/deliveries in your car and include the errands on your to do list.


☐ 10. Enter a date 3 months from now to check in: Is it working? Do you need to make any changes? Can you refresh or tidy up this area?

Repeat! Don’t delay! Get started again on the 10 STEP ACTION PLAN!
10X10 MINI ORGANIZING CHALLENGES

"Go for good enough!" - Geralin Thomas

10 minutes X 10 things

These challenges will help you reduce what you have, free up space, give you momentum in your organizing journey and are simple enough to complete one when you have 10 free minutes! Hang this list inside your cabinet door and check them off as you go! Are you competitive? Try completing this list in one month!

Remember:

Grab 10 things in one of the following areas and get rid of them!! Recycle, donate (keep a box labeled as you go) or throw them away!

1. VHS tapes or DVDs
2. Make-up/personal items
3. Books
4. Unsubscribe to 10 advertising email lists
5. Shoes
6. Sports equipment
7. Utensils you haven’t used in the last 6 months
8. Mugs, plastic cups or water bottles
9. Sheets, towels or pillowcases
10. Socks (pairs or singles!)
11. Medicine Cabinet (can we say…expired?!)
12. Items from your junk drawer
13. Office supplies
14. Tools
15. Empty 10 files in a file drawer
16. Bedside table drawer
17. Pajamas
18. Paint cans
19. Coats or sweatshirts
20. Hats, scarves, mittens, gloves
21. Pants, jeans, slacks
22. Toys
23. Craft supplies
24. Wire hangers - replace with huggable hangers (velvet) or wood
25. Expired pantry items!
KEY Organizing Fundamentals

Basic Steps to Organizing:

SPASM™: I imagine our homes, offices and closet rods having spasms because they are so FULL of stuff! Next time you have a muscle spasm or an eye twitch/spasm you will think of me and be reminded to organize!

S = Sort – Put like items with like items. Celebrate!! Easy decisions!
P = Purge – Go back through each pile and only keep what you love, use and what enhances your life on a regular basis.
A = Assign a home – Think logically and use zones (reading zone, beverage zone) to decide where each item will live.
S = Set Limits - Use containers, shelving, drawer dividers, etc. to naturally set limits and alert you when you need to purge.
M = Maintain – Tie maintenance to things you do already (clean files during tax preparation, process inbox every evening when starting the dishwasher, etc)

Process Paper (and email) using Tracy’s 3How?s™:

HOW can I get rid of this paper?
- Trash
- Recycle
- Shred
- Out/Others

HOW can I get this done on time?
- Do NOW if it will take you 1-2 minutes
- Place in Tickler file

HOW can I find this when I need it?
- File in the hanging Action Files (Short term)
- File in File Drawer/Cabinet (Long term)
RESOURCES

**Organizing Blogs and Information:**

- **Tracy Hoth** | Simply Squared Away  
  www.simplysquaredaway.com/blog
- **Laura Wittmann** | The Org Junkie  
  www.orgjunkie.com
- **Geralin Thomas** | Metropolitan Organizing  
  Managing Modern Life Blog  
  www.metropolitanorganizing.com/managing-modern-life/
- **Lorie Marrero** | The Clutter Diet  
  The Clutter Diet Blog *(Great video tips!)*  
  www.clutterdietblog.com/#
- **Aby Garvey** | Simplify 101  
  Website: www.simplify101.com *(Great workshops!)*  
  Blog: www.creativeorganizingblog.simplify101.com
- **The Paper Tiger**: Info on Office Organizing  
  Blog: www.thepapertiger.com/blog
- **The Efficient Office** | Tracey Gritz  
  30-minute monthly Teleclasses on office efficiency *(most are free)*  
  www.theefficientoffice.com/events
- **Organized Home** | Clean house, cut clutter, get organized at home  
  www.OrganizedHome.com
- **Pantry Makeover Blog Post** *(AMAZING)*  
  www.decorchick.com/the-great-pantry-makeover/

**Organizing Product Websites:**

- www.SeeJaneWork.com
- www.Ikea.com
- www.ContainerStore.com
- www.stacksandstacks.com
- www.OrganizeIt.com
- www.Organize.com
RESOURCES

Books:

Organized...From the Car to the Bedroom – FREE eBook!
Tracy Hoth  {text TRACYHOTH to 22828 to receive this eBook!!}

Organizing from the Inside Out and
Time Management from the Inside Out
Julie Morgenstern

Taming the Paper Tiger at Work and
Organizing Paper at Home
Barbara Hemphill

ADD-Friendly Ways to Organize Your Life
(For those with ADD or ADD tendencies!)
Judith Kolberg and Kathleen Nadeau

It’s All Too Much
Peter Walsh

Getting Organized in the Google Era
Douglas C. Merrill

STUFF - Compulsive Hoarding and the Meaning of Things
Randy O. Frost and Gail Steketee

For Microsoft Outlook Users:

Weekly Outlook Tip
Learn one new Outlook tip each week. Sign up here:  http://email.about.com/c/ec/293.htm

Colombia College Technology Services - Microsoft Outlook Tips & Tricks
Learn how to create an email signature, recurring appointments, calendar labels, contacts, tasks, flag
emails for follow-up, manage your emails using folders and more!. http://tinyurl.com/d2uarrs

Work Sm@rt Outlook Class
Larry Krakow @ Priority Management | 913.681.1920 | www.prioritymanagement.com/kc
Prioritykc@prioritymanagement.com | 12920 Ballentine, Overland Park, KS 66213
RESOURCES

Products:

The Freedom Action File with training CD- $58.00
www.simplysquaredaway.com/products

Folding Crate - $18.99 and Collapsible Crate - $11.99
www.containerstore.com

The Car Cup - $10.99
www.containerstore.com

The Trunk Organizer - $11.99
www.containerstore.com

The Inbox - $14.50
www.seejanework.com

SmartLap™ Lap Desk - $24.99
www.containerstore.com
(Useful in car and it collapses!)

File Box - $15.99
www.officemax.com

Iris Clear Media Storage Box - $10.22
www.officemax.com
(Great for pantry shelves – especially deep shelves. Leave the lid off to store pastas, mixes, snacks, etc.)

Hangers (50/$29.99), scarf hanger (2/$9.99) & drawer dividers (2/$16.99)
www.bedbathandbeyond.com
(Previously recommend for closet and drawers!)
About the Author

“You can only do your best TODAY” - Tracy Hoth

Tracy Hoth’s compassion and insight help the overwhelmed and organizationally-challenged become free from the weight of clutter and more productive in their careers and at home. Tracy has a contagious passion to share how organization can help move thoughts into actions...dreams into reality! Through her hands-on organizing, clutter coaching, writing and speaking she inspires people to become who they are meant to be! She teaches audiences how to conquer clutter with her memorable acronyms, personal stories and energy.

Tracy is the owner of Simply Squared Away, a Kansas City based company. She is a member of National Association of Professional Organizers, Faithful Organizers and Elizabeth Hagen’s SuccessPlus Coaching program. Tracy has appeared in the Kansas City Star, KC Business Magazine and more.

Join Tracy over coffee!!

Do you want more TIME, more FUN, more PRODUCTIVITY and more PEACE in your life?

Join Tracy (on the phone) for a FREE 30 minute “Organize Your Life” Breakthrough Session to:

- Identify challenges you are having with organization
- Uncover what is keeping you overwhelmed and unproductive
- Identify a crystal clear vision for you to accomplish your goals

Contact Tracy by email or phone to schedule your FREE 30 minute session!! This may be JUST what you need! Hurry, limited space available!