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How to Get Organized

By Susan Dunn

How to Get Organized by Susan Dunn, MA Clinical Psychology, THE EQ COACH

I belong to a yahoogroup of coaches and right now the topic is how to get organized. One coach writes that he's using Outlook Express for his email and email address list, Time & Order for his address book, calendar, datebook and to-do list (synchronizing, he says, between PS and daytimer), and MindMappit for brainstorming/lists." Someone replies that they're an infj and to remember to focus on people and relationships. A third one replies they wouldn't want to be a `type' and there's probably a name for that type, and she uses ...etc."

My son swears by his Palm Pilot, except he left it here on his last visit. I use a combination of this and that, and still missed a dental appointment the other day.

The point is, we all have too much to do, and we all feel we need to get better organized.

What will get us organized once and for all? Such perfection is not possible. If it were, that would be your life - making lists, making checkmarks, and transferring data and information around. There on your daytimer at 8:04 p.m. would be "Kiss my son goodnight." Intuitively we all know we don't want to end up there!

So what can you do that's helpful and reasonable? There are so many systems out there, you'd have to get organized to get organized to shop for one. Instead try these things my clients have found successful:

1.Mary observed carefully someone she considered like herself in personality, only well-organized. She watched how they kept track of things, asked them about their systems and tools, and then did the same thing with good results.

2.Tom told me he was disorganized and praised his officemate, Richard. When I quizzed him, he couldn't zero in on anything but the fact that he was not as organized as Richard. I assigned him to observe Richard and ask him some questions. Turned out Richard thought he was disorganized, missed things from time to time, but didn't worry about it because he was doing the best he could. Tom

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then quit comparing himself to other people, took a long look at what things were actually impeding his progress, and devised a system to get himself organized enough to be satisfied.

3. Keely told me about all her tools - Palm Pilot, Outlook Express, Best Day Ever, Don't Die at 50 calendar, etc. I asked her what she was organizing and she said "my life," but she couldn't break it down. You can have the tools but if you don't have a map of the territory, you're just digging a hole instead of digging for gold. We made a list of categories and her values regarding them -- Home, Work, Relationships, EQ, Travel, Debt Reduction, Yard, Car. The details weren't hard to fill in, and she had the tools. The meaning and purpose of the big picture helped her make use of the tools.

4. Neil wanted to get organized. When we talked, I couldn't see anywhere where he wasn't organized. "What do you want to get organized about?" I asked. "I missed picking up my clothes at the cleaners

the other day, he said. "That's not like me." Neil needed to work on his perfectionism. He had narrowed his life so much in order to accommodate his perfectionism that his life was relatively empty and always disappointing. The point of getting organized is to enhance your life, not vice versa.

5. Nucha began coaching by saying, "I hate this," and "I know you can't help me." With such a pessimistic attitude, how could she succeed at anything? She needed to work on her emotional intelligence and learn a more optimistic attitude!

6. Emilil said she couldn't prioritize. I told her to write down everything she did for the next two weeks. When she returned, she'd figured it out! We are prioritizing all the time, whether we're conscious of it or not. Get conscious about it is the beginning. If you want to see what your values are, look at your checkbook and see what you write check for. With awareness comes change, and a sense of control.

7. Candee wanted to get organized because she said she always forgot things and didn't get things done. When I asked her "Like what?" she could only come up with a couple of things ... failing to buy MacIntosh apples on the last trip to the grocery, not remembering her uncle's birthday. I asked her to make a full list of the things she was NOT doing. When faced with that assignment, she realized the absurdity of it, and that perhaps she was worrying just for the sake of worrying. She entered birthdays on Clock-Calendar, and found a new grocery-list system that worked.

8. Nancy said she had too much to do and I asked her to tell me. After talking for 10 minutes she said, "This is ridiculous. I can't do all this." Sometimes you need to hear yourself talk to see how things really are! She immediately took action. She got a low-maintenance hairstyle, found new homes for 3 of her 5 pets; shopped online and used gift bags instead going to the mall and then wrapping; and she quit baking homemade bread, which no one in her family noticed for 3 weeks.

Whatever organizational state you're in, get the big picture organized first, and then go get the tools. Work with a coach for quicker results.

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Personal" or "EQ in the Workplace", or both, for the subject line.

Top Ten Reasons to Get Organized

By Barbara Myers

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1. Enjoy more time for yourself. You'll run your home and office more efficiently. You won't waste valuable time looking for things.
2. Save money. You'll plan better. You won't buy a second because you can't find the first.
3. Improve your health. You'll lower your stress. You'll have a cleaner work and home environment.
4. Make a better impression. Improve your status at work. Look pulled together with an organized wardrobe.
5. Improve your mental health. Feel a sense of peace. Experience an uncluttered mind.
6. Increase your self-confidence. "Yes, I have my act together!"
7. Eat better. Plan your meals and grocery shopping. Enjoy cooking in your organized kitchen.
8. Make more money. You'll do your job better and be more likely to get a promotion. Also see number four.
9. Have control over your surroundings. Know where everything is located. Take control of your time.
10. Be a better parent. You'll have more time for your kids.

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