

cross 'get organized'

by Adriane Weinberg

off your *to-do list* in 2006



Photo courtesy of Builders Prime.

After losing weight, the most popular New Year's resolution is to get organized. "Getting organized" is a broad concept; what exactly does it mean? It means different things to different people. For some it's to better manage their time. For others, it's to organize piles of papers. It may mean decluttering the kids' toys strewn throughout the house. For most, it's a combination of issues. Whatever you want to organize, how do you make it happen?

First, break down any concept into manageable goals. SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timebound) goals work well. To create a SMART goal, define what you want to organize (S), make sure it's measurable (M), achievable (A) and realistic (R) and determine a timeframe within which to complete it (T).

Wanting to organize your house is an example of a concept. To make it happen, create SMART goals. Here's an example: "Have a clutter-free kitchen with a specific place for everything so it's easy to find what I need when needed in order to function efficiently" (S). It's decided that it is achievable (A) and realistic (R) to complete this project within 1 month (T). Results are measurable

at the end of that month (M).

First, declutter by eliminating everything that doesn't belong in the kitchen. Decluttering is a process similar to losing weight. Usually dieting is the first step. The excess pounds weren't added overnight so they can't be eliminated overnight. It is a process that takes time. When the goal weight is reached, a maintenance diet is necessary to sustain the results. If old eating habits are resumed, the excess weight will return. It's the same with clutter.

Next, plan and arrange the space for maximum efficiency which is important for a kitchen. Designate a permanent home, or place, for every single thing. Returning things to their homes immediately after use allows instant retrieval next time and will keep the kitchen organized and clutter free. If by the end of the month the kitchen has remained clutter free because everything has been kept where it belongs and you can find everything quickly and function efficiently, you accomplished your goal! Remember, you have an entire month to complete this goal.

If organizing the entire kitchen seems too daunting, start with a junk drawer, cabinet or pantry. Just

apply the same principles.

Say another goal is to organize bills so they are paid on time. Determine a timeframe to start and finish this project, arrange a permanent space for bill paying with the necessary supplies and establish a payment schedule. Results are easily measurable. If you don't receive past-due notices, your system is working.

Tips:

- Start with smaller blocks of time such as 2 or 3 hours. Take a quick break or two. Don't do too much at one time or you may burn out and give up. Remember the tortoise and hare story.
- Schedule appointments with yourself and, if necessary, note them in your calendar. Honor these appointments as if they were with someone else. Don't cancel for any reason other than an emergency or you won't complete your goals.
- Post a sign and place it in a visible spot if it helps you to remember.
- Create a fun motto such as "Clutter will be nixed in 2006" and repeat it to yourself for motivation.
- If you get off track, don't give up. Reaffirm your goal, make a fresh start and stick to your plan. You'll be glad you did!
- The beginning of a new year is a perfect time for goal setting. Set as many or few as you want to achieve. As an idea, create 12 goals with one to be accomplished each month. Organizing the kitchen can be your goal for January and paying bills on time can be February's. Pick 10 goals for the remaining months (e.g., organize

other areas, recycle old magazines and newspapers, organize recipes). Have small goals for busy periods such as December (make holiday goals) or vacation time so you don't over schedule yourself and become frustrated if they can't be completed. At the end of the year you will have accomplished 12 goals!

Tips for your new year checklist:

- Get a 2006 paper or electronic calendar that works well for you and enter all recurring appointments. Using different colors or codes can distinguish family members, types of events or family versus personal activities. Use only one calendar.
- Organize your 2005 tax documents. Schedule an appointment with your accountant if you use one.
- Schedule yearly medical and dental appointments and note them in your calendar.
- Purge unnecessary paper in your files, set up new files and archive older records.
- Update home inventory records for insurance purposes. Increase coverage if necessary.

As each goal is completed, you will feel relief, a satisfying sense of achievement and renewed motivation to continue. Think how much you can accomplish by the year's end.

Have a great organized year!

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