

ORGANIZE YOUR LIFE!



IN THIS ISSUE, WE WILL DISCUSS:

DON'T WAIT FOR VALENTINE'S DAY:
8 WAYS TO SHOW YOU CARE

ONE THING

CONSISTENCY

THE BEST LAID PLANS



DON'T WAIT FOR VALENTINE'S DAY: 8 WAYS TO SHOW YOU CARE

1. Direct your anger elsewhere

Have you ever heard of the song entitled, "You Always Hurt the One You Love"? When you can't do something about your anger, it is natural to want to do something anyway! Often, this results in picking a fight with the people around you so that you can continue to vent your anger, even though it's not them you're really mad at.

If you find yourself suffering from this problem, try to divide away the part of your life that's makes you mad. Is it work? Then take 15 minutes when you get home to relax quietly, have a drink or read a book, and disconnect from the workday before you join your family. Is it money? Set aside two hours each weekend to deal with money matters, and release it for the rest of the week.



2. Do a chore that isn't yours

Do something that your loved one normally has to do, in addition to the things you do.

- Take the garbage out
- Do the laundry
- Clear off the table after the guest have left
- Clean the kitchen, or another room that has gotten out of hand
- Do the shopping

It may seem like simple things, but these are great ways to show your loved one that you want to make them feel happy.

3. Check in

Always check in with your loved one. You would check in with your boss or potential new client, why wouldn't you treat your loved one with the same courtesy? Sometimes we tend to take for granted our loved ones, assuming that they will always be there. Remember to nurture these relationships. Here are some great examples of checking in:

- Call when you arrive at your destination on a trip
- Call when you are running late at work
- Call when you are going to miss dinner
- Check before accepting invitations that will take up many hours of your time, or will require the other person to be there

It's a quick, two-minute way to let your loved one know that you're thinking of them.

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4. Random and spontaneous outbursts of affection

A great way to show you care is to stop and have a snuggle or hug. Don't do it when the other person is concentrating hard or something or on the phone, since it may be a distraction. I know it sounds corny, but it is a great way to keep close and show that you care.

5. Always give the benefit of the doubt

Sometimes no matter how much we plan, things happen beyond our control. When your loved one is late and hasn't called, or is short with you on the phone, give them the benefit of the doubt. How do you know what really happened until you have a chance to talk to them? They could have had a flat tire and had no reception on their cell phone, or their boss could have been standing in their office when you called. Assume the best of your loved one, and they will start to live up to your expectations.

6. Accept your loved one for who they are

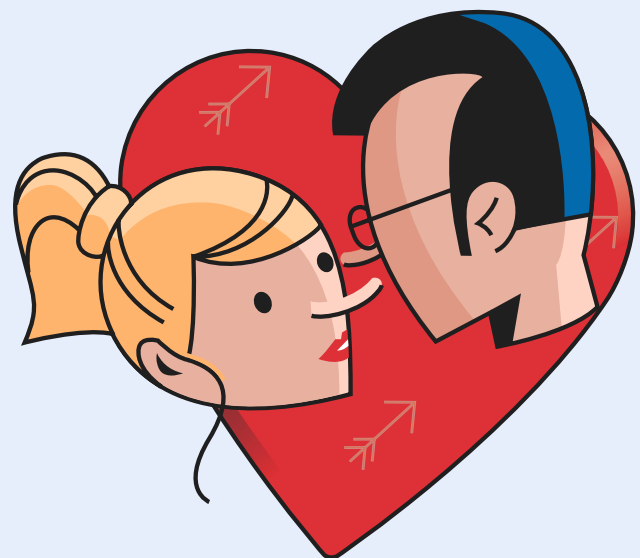
I work with a lot of married clients where one is organized while the other is chronically disorganized (CD). A lot of times the organized spouse will lack sympathy or understanding for the CD one. If the chronically disorganized spouse is reaching out to get help from a Professional Organizer, the other spouse should be supportive and non-judgmental. Being negative and unsupportive can be disastrous for the chronically disorganized spouse who is trying to change their ways. Remember why you married them and accept their challenges as they do yours.

7. Treat your loved one as you would a friend

If you are in the car with a friend and you want to listen to the radio, wouldn't you ask your friend if they minded the radio on? Why not ask your spouse or loved one? Not asking can make your loved one feel taken for granted. Imagine your spouse or loved one is constantly late for appointment, or can never find anything. Instead of putting yourself in the position as a nag, gently suggest they seek a professional organizer to help them figure out systems for avoiding being late and being able to find things. Instead of being a pain, you can be their supportive friend who stands by them as they get the help they need.

8. Make your loved ones your priority

When you have plans with your loved ones and a conflict comes up, what do you cancel? If you're having a romantic dinner and the phone rings, do you get it? Try to remember back to when you first started dating, and treat them with the same respect and admiration you once did.



ONE THING

I admit it. I can be morbid sometimes. When the flight attendant says, "In case of an emergency you are to leave all items behind", I start worrying. "What about my medications? What about people who have diabetes or some other disease that require prompt medical attention at all times?" Then, I start to think rationally and realize that these things can be replaced.

After I heard about the disastrous accounts of the tsunami, I was haunted by the image of all the victim's belongings floating in the water. It reinforced for me how things become so precious to us. They kindle memories, give us comfort, and make us feel less lonely. If, heaven forbid, something like this ever happened to my home, what thing would be the most important to me? I am aggressive about getting rid of my old things, but I too save some memorabilia. I have a special box with things like old letters from my Mom, photographs, and small trinkets from childhood. I look upon these items at least three times a year and am filled with a warm glow inside. So, what are the things I would risk my life for in a moment of disaster?

When I think about it honestly, my memories are what I hold most sacred as a "thing"—no object can compare. When the time came to evacuate to save yourself and your loved ones; you would grab your family and make a run for it. You wouldn't say, "Oh, my wedding photographs, I have to get them!" The bottom line is when the time came to rescue yourself and family you would choose your life over your things.

So why then is it so hard for us on a day to day basis to let go of things? We are a sentimental race that hangs onto our child's first clipped hair, the love letter from a first love or an empty bottle we discovered on the beach. Why are we collectors of things? Are we so materialistic that we need stuff to feel fulfilled?

I think not. I think some things are a comfort and are needed. True, not when disasters occur, but when we are feeling melancholy and need a bit of reassurance through a memory. Is it that wrong to hold onto things? This is a hard question. I don't believe so, and I don't want people to feel bad for wanting to. But it is terribly important to keep perspective. Ultimately, the things are just a support for what matters—they are not what matter themselves.

So how do you know if you're going overboard? When do things begin to take on a life of their own? When have you crossed the line from keeping cherished memories to drowning in your possessions?

Here are some warning signs that you may be going overboard with regard to your material objects:

- You don't take the time to look at some your things purely for the sake of enjoying them—you only see them when they get in the way
- You are tripping over collections of things that cover every space of your home
- Buying things makes you feel better, but you find after a day or two the good feeling is gone and you need to buy another thing
- You buy things with a purpose in mind, like a project, but when the purpose is gone the things stay behind
- You buy things on sale that you wouldn't have bought otherwise
- You have a collection that you constantly increase, without regards to budget, space, or size
- You have multiple items that do the same thing, and you only use one of them
- Your things make you feel comfortable and enclosed like a safety guard against the outside world, so much that to remove anything would remove the border between you and the world

In the most extreme case, people will feel like they can't let go of anything they own. They may have years of magazine back-issues, bills from decades before, or piles of things they haven't seen the bottom of for years. These extreme cases really need the help of a professional—usually a professional organizer like myself, sometimes in partnership with a great therapist. If any of this sounds familiar, check out one of these websites where you can learn more about "hoarding".

[http://understanding_ OCD.tripod.com/hoarding.html](http://understanding OCD.tripod.com/hoarding.html)
<http://www.apartmenttherapy.com/main/archives/000477.html>
<http://www.nsgcd.org/>

CONSISTENCY

Consistency: reliability or uniformity of successive results or events.

Consistency: The cure for the chronically disorganized

People often ask me, "How long is it before your clients relapse?"

This is a tough question, but a fair one. The honest truth is that my goal is to help each client once, then have it stick! I strive to create a system that a client can maintain for as long as they want, with just a few follow-up troubleshooting visits (that I include in the cost of the original job). And for most of my clients, that's exactly what I can do.

But there are some exceptions. You see, most of my clients are disorganized. This means that they have had things in some sort of order in the past. They come to me when they're at a loss for how to organize a particular area, or when something has gotten out of control and they need help to get it organized again.

But some of my client's aren't just disorganized--they're chronically disorganized (CD). My chronically disorganized clients have never been organized. CD is defined as someone who repeatedly tries to get organized, and repeatedly fails.

Some things my CD clients have in common are:

- They own many organizing products, books, and devices, but none of them seem to help
- They have worked with professional organizers before, but always seem to relapse
- They feel guilty, frustrated, and hopeless about never being as organized as they want

Disorganized clients may call for my help once or twice, and then be set for life. They call me when they find something that, despite their natural inclinations, they are having difficulty with—I'll typically do several projects for them over the course of years. But a CD client may need long term help.

The important thing for CD clients is to learn consistency. Consistency can be a very scary word to the visual or creative type--it is to me! Taken to extremes, it can make our days seem all the same with no excitement. When properly applied, however, it also ensures less stress, more competence, and a lower likelihood of messing something up.

Let me give an example of someone lacking in consistency.

Judy (not her real name) is an accountant who is constantly in desperate search of her client's phone numbers. When she makes a list of calls for the day, she spends hours searching for bits of paper with important phone numbers on them. By the time she finds the phone number, she is interrupted by something else and the small bit of paper is forgotten to be lost yet again under many piles of other random bits of paper. Because Judy lacks consistency she will forever be losing phone numbers. The solution: to put the contact information into some kind of organizational system immediately after getting the information. Do it the same way, every time. That way when she goes to call she knows where the number is and can find it.

Consistency is essential—if she breaks her new habit just, she may lose a client. Worse, if she ever deviates from this plan, then she'll never be able to feel certain that all her phone numbers are in one place.

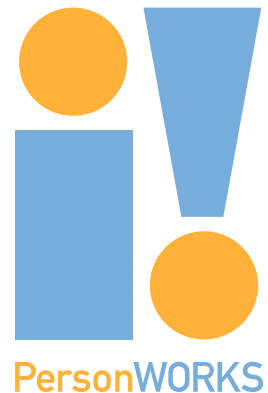
THE BEST LAID PLANS

I admit it. I am a planner at heart, but sometimes my creative side gets the better of me. For a while now I have wanted to move a set of shelves into our bar area so I can bring in a gym and turn my downstairs room into a workout room. I measured the gym twice, measured the shelving to make sure it would fit out of the door and even looked at the shelves to see how to take them apart. My husband was out of town and I wanted to do the project all by myself. After returning home from a dinner date, I decided to begin my long awaited task at 1 in the morning. I put on a new movie and began to empty the bookshelves. By 3 am I had the contents of the books shelves sorted into piles of keep and donate. The trash went into garbage bins, the donate-able items went into the pickup, and the things to keep went into boxes in the garage.

By the time I finished sorting and packing, I was very tired and went to bed. I awoke at 9am eager to finish my project. I got monkey paw, a crowbar, a piece of wood to use as a backing for the crowbar, and a hammer. I began to dismantle the wood that kept the shelves attached to the wall. By 1pm I had all of the wood pulled that was holding the shelves plumb to the wall. I began to move the shelving unit out into the hallway, and this is where the trouble began. The shelving unit was somewhat heavy, and I was moving it by myself. I managed to get it out into the hallway, anchoring it between the work out room doorway and the hall closet, and it stuck. That's right, it would not budge. Although I planned and planned and planned I didn't count on the shelving unit getting stuck. It was only 1" shy of moving out. I then had to crawl under the shelving unit to get out and call my neighbor for assistance. She came to my rescue and we had to move the shelving unit back into the work out room.

We discovered together that had I had a buddy, we together could have figured out that it needed to be carried out through the front door to the garage and straight down the hall to its new location. My lesson: sometimes all the planning in the world doesn't matter when you go at it alone. If you have a choice, get a buddy!

Why am I sharing this embarrassing story with you? I want you to think about all the times you have needed assistance in doing something and remember me climbing under a heavy shelving unit. There is nothing wrong with reaching out for help. Sometimes two heads are better than one. Sometimes you can try the books, and classes and you find that it is not helping you change or improve. Sometimes all it takes is a buddy or a professional expert in the area you need assistance



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