

# Get Organized

## Toolbox Teleclass Transcription

By Debra Russell



### Foundation Program

**Track 3: Nuts & Bolts: The Fundamentals of  
Business**



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## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Toolbox Tele-class for November 2007. The title of this class is Get Organized. So that's what we're going to be talking about. Has anyone else joined us since I went off to turn on the recording? Anyone not said hello yet? Alright.

Well, got a couple of new folks on tonight's call, so you may want to mute yourself by hitting 6 and you can un-mute by hitting 6 again. The majority of this class is lecture though there will be opportunities for you to ask questions.

### WHAT YOU WILL NEED TO CREATE ORGANIZATION FOR YOURSELF

So we're going to be talking tonight about getting yourself organized, primarily getting yourself organized.

#### *MAKE A CLEAR DECISION AND GOAL FOCUSED ON THE RESULT*

What you need to create organization for yourself as a project is first of all you need to make a clear decision and make a goal that focuses not on the problem, but on the result. So an office that supports me making a \$100,000 a year, right? You want to create a goal that is focused on what you want to be experiencing in this space, as supposed to talking about the problem or fixing something that's wrong. So that's the first thing you want to do is make a clear decision and make a goal about your space.

#### *TIME BLOCKS TO DO THE PREP WORK, TO DO THE ACTUAL ORGANIZATION AND TO DO THE FOLLOW-UP MAINTENANCE*

You also need to set up some blocks of time to do the prep work, to do the actual organization, and to do follow-up maintenance. The prep work probably is not a huge amount of time, depending on how big the project is, but the actual organization very often takes longer than you think it will, and I recommend setting up large blocks of time for doing the actual organization, you know. 5 - 6 hour blocks of time as supposed to an hour here and an hour there because the space is going to look worse before it looks better and it's hard to live with if you've only got an hour of work on it and you can find that very frustrating.

As far as the follow-up maintenance, once you've got the space organized in a way that's really working on going, maintenance can be 10 minutes a day, you know. When organization really works for you, maintaining it becomes easy and simple.

#### *SUPPORT OF THE OTHERS WHO LIVE/WORK IN THE SPACE WITH YOU*

In addition to those first two things: the creating the goal and the making the choice and creating the goal and creating the time blocks to do the work; you also need the support of the other people who live and/or work in your space with you.



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Now if you're like me and you live alone, except for your kitties who like to knock things over, generally you don't need to get a lot of support from other people, but if you share your space with family, with friends, with co-workers if we're talking about office space, you absolutely must get the support of the other people to help you in the organization because it needs to work for them as much as it needs to work for you or it will not last, okay?

## FOUR STEP PLAN – INTRO

So I want to give you basically the overview, the 4 Step Plan to creating organization, and then I'm going to go in and talk quite a bit more detail about each step.

### ANALYSIS

So the first step is analysis. Just as in our call of [The Road Map to Success](#), where it's a 7 steps plan, you know, 7 steps process to any goal. The first step is always what's true now. So it's analysis.

### VISUALIZATION AND PLANNING

The second step is visualization and planning.

### S.P.A.C.E.

The third step is created into an acronym by Julie Morgenstern called SPACE. S-P-A-C-E and I'll explain that acronym in a few minutes.

### MAINTENANCE

And the fourth step is maintenance. So it's analysis, visualization and planning, SPACE and then maintenance, and those are the 4 steps.

## ANALYSIS

So I'd like to first talk about the analysis. Now for those of you who have put yourself on mute, you can go and take yourself off mute for now, because I'd like to ask you guys a question. I'll give you a second to take yourself off mute by pressing 6.

### *WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT ORGANIZATION – ASK FOR THEIR BELIEFS:*

I want to ask you what you believe about yourself with regard to organization. What are some of your beliefs? Just go ahead and call them out.



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Steve: Um, it's Steve. I'm fairly organized, but I'm not quite there 100%. Still things I have to...go crazy looking for and...

Debra: Okay, so what are you... So that's kind of your circumstances. What do you believe about yourself with regard to organization? Is it something I've always been good at organization? Organization is always a struggle for me, you know, those kinds of things.

Steve: I believe I'm pretty organized person and I've taught public schools, and so you got to be organize to do that.

Debra: So you believe that you're a pretty organize person? Great!

Steve: Yeah.

Debra: Someone else? What do you believe about organization or about yourself with regard to organization?

Roxanne: Okay, this is Roxanne. I believe that I am an organized person, but I been so busy that I'm losing my skills so to speak. I've becoming... I don't have the system for keeping up with what I'm doing with the new direction.

Debra: Okay, that's interesting. So you believe that you yourself are organized, but you're noticing that your systems are not on a par with the level you're playing.

Roxanne: That's right. I'm doing too many things, and for the first time, I'm beginning to lose things.

Debra: Yeah, I will tell you that one of my beliefs about myself is that my organization, my level of organization, reflects the level of chaos in my mind. So when I'm really hurried or stress or not feeling well or feeling badly about myself, my space looks terrible. So that's my belief. You can always tell what's going on with me by looking at my space.

Roxanne: Yeah.

Debra: Isn't that interesting? Great! So what other beliefs do we have about organization?

Sheldon: Uh, this is Sheldon. I'm a... I know how to do it. It's just that I don't... I mean, once I get to it I enjoy it, but I don't give myself enough time to do it, and it really... And when I do it a few times that I do I realize the value of it. I can see how it would really be a good thing to do it in this, like you said, the blocks of time.

Debra: Isn't that ironic that you recognize the value but you don't give it to yourself?



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Sheldon: Right.

Debra: Interesting thing to notice. What else do we... I heard someone new beep in, so I'm going to ask the question again. What do you believe about organization? What do you believe about yourself with regard to organization? Anyone else want to chime in.

Let me ask you this question. How many of you were chastised, yelled at or shamed as children because of a messy room? Anyone else?

Roxanne: Me.

Steve: Yeah, me! I live with two other brothers, so we created quite a mess.

Debra: Yep. So let me ask you this. If there anyone on the call who wasn't yelled at, shamed or chastised?

Sheldon: I wasn't.

Debra: You weren't?

Sheldon: I wasn't. No. I think from what I remember it's that my mother especially would like pick up after me.

Debra: Oh, so she took care of all that for you?

Sheldon: Yeah, and I find I do that same thing with my son.

Debra: Interesting. You're perpetrating. You're continuing it. Great. Well, I know I for myself would consider it the sloppy one of the 4 kids. It was a badge of honor to me if you could not walk into my bedroom. It's my rebellion. I was a rebellious youth.

So what are the things that I found in working with a lot of clients around organization is that we seem to have this belief that we should know how to do this. This should just magically happen, like we should just be organized, and yet so when we aren't, there's shame and guilt and a lot of shooting on ourselves about it. That sound familiar for anyone?

Steve: Is that shooting or shitting?

Debra: Uh, yeah. I said shooting but yes. Right?

#### **Rarely taught as children**

But here's the thing to remember. It's pretty rare that parents actually teach children how to organize effectively, very often because they don't know. Sometimes because



they think it's their job to do it for you, as Sheldon mentioned, but push come to shove we're rarely taught as children how to do this.

There certainly were no classes in my elementary, middle school, high school or college about how to organize space, right? Like time management, it's assumed that you know how to do it, and if you don't, there must be something wrong with you.

### **Often shamed or guilt-ridden topic**

Very often shame and guilt connected to this.

### **Lack of organization creates an enormous waste of time and energy**

I think we can also all agree that a lack of organization creates enormous waste of time and energy, yes?

Callers: Oh yeah.

### **Myth - structure limits creativity**

Debra: Yeah. But here's the myth that I find a lot of artists struggle with and that is if they were truly organized it would limit their creativity. Anyone believe that?

Sheldon: I can relate to that, yeah.

Debra: And it's a lie.

Just as it's much harder to build, I mean, it's much harder to paint a picture if you don't have a frame, if you don't have a palette to work with. It's much harder to build a song if you don't choose which key you're going to be in. You don't have the structure of the staff.

It's much harder to create anything if your space doesn't have room for you to create in, and structure actually creates the environment in which creativity happens, and I think you will find that the more organized you are, the more clear your spaces, the more your creativity can store.

### **OVERALL ANALYSIS**

So having said that, our first step is analysis. Now there's two ways you want to analyze your space. You want to first of all do kind of an overall analysis on yourself, and you want to ask some questions:

### **What's working**

First of all, what's working? What in your space does work? What pieces of organization have you set up that continue to work for you? And also what's worked in the past if





you've been more... If there are been times in your life when you've been more organized, what's worked in the past?

### **What's not working**

Then you want to ask what's not working? What's not working about your space? What's not working about your habits in your space? What things have you tried around organizing that didn't end up working for you, that you thought were good idea at that time but they didn't end up working for you, and what's even more important--why? Why didn't they work? Okay?

### **What are my habits**

And another really key thing is to start tracking your habits. What are your habits in your space? Do you walk in the front door and dump everything? Do you eat your lunch and leave it sitting out or take it in to the kitchen and put it on the counter, but not on the dishwasher?

Do you take your clothes off at the end of the day and not really know where to put them, because they're not really dirty yet. You don't want to put them in the hamper, but you don't really want to put them back in with all the clean clothes; you don't have a space for them.

It's those kinds of thing you want to look at. Around your email, around your snail mail--the mail that comes in from the post office. Around your papers, around your songs, around your artwork, around your art supplies. What works? What doesn't work and what are your habits? Okay?

### *ANALYSIS BY AREA*

Then you want to look, you want to start doing an analysis by area. By room and by space within the room. For example, I have a really long living room, and it actually has three separate areas. It has a dining area. It has a living area, and it has an office space.

So when I analyze my area, I'm not analyzing the living room. I'm analyzing the dining area. I'm analyzing the living room area. I'm analyzing the office area, as if they were separate rooms

### **What is the current purpose**

You want to ask yourself again, what's working in the space? What's not working in the space? What are my habits in this space? What are all the current purposes that this space serves?



All of them, whether they're the right purposes or not it doesn't matter. You just want to look at what are all the things that you do in this space? Okay? So that's the analysis piece.

Anyone have any questions about that? Okay. You want to set aside some quiet time to do this analysis. I also have found it's really helpful to sit in the actual room that you're analyzing while you're analyzing it. You can kind of look around and see what you see, okay?

## VISUALIZATION AND PLANNING

The next step is visualization and planning. What you want to think about with visualization and planning is first answer this question:

### WHAT WOULD THE BEST USE OF EACH SPACE BE

What do you think the best use of each space would be? What is the best purpose this section of your home or this section of your office or the section of your recording studio or whatever you're looking at, serves?

### DAY IN THE LIFE – WHAT DOES IT FEEL LIKE TO BE IN THE SPACE

Once you've really kind of identified what purpose each section of each room is going to serve, then you want to sit down and do some writing about, you know, creating a vision for this space.

What would it feel like? You walk in the door. What does it feel like looking around? What do you see? How are you spending your time? How does it feel spending time in that room? How does that room now serve your purposes beautifully, efficiently, effectively? How is it that the organization allows you to maintain it, so that it becomes really simple and easy to keep up with it? What is a day in the life in this space now that it's beautifully, perfectly organized? Okay?

### PHYSICAL PLAN

Once you've created your vision of the space, then you want to get into the concrete planning stuff. And I recommend doing a physical plan and then a plan of action.

### SCALE DRAWING

The physical plan can be, and I actually recommend it to be, a scale drawing. Now you can get graph paper. I find most graph paper is 5 squares to the inch, you know, so if you get it that way it's easy to figure out what an inch is, and you can do an inch to a foot of your space, and in fact, you can buy what's called an architectural ruler, which



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looks like a little tripod ruler, and it's for drafting engineer and graphic arts supplies stores.

Most of them will carry it, and what it does for you is that it does the translation automatically. So it will from 1 inch to 1 foot. It can translate from a half inch to a foot. It can translate, you know, so it has all the different translations, and you can use it to make a really easy to create a scale drawing.

And then what I do is I take each piece of furniture and with construction paper, I make a little scale model. Not a 3D model, just a 2-dimensional model of the furniture, so that I can rearrange it on the paper. Much easier on the back to rearrange furniture on paper first. Much easier on the back.

#### *IDENTIFYING THE TERRITORIES BY PURPOSE*

So you want to do the scale drawing. Identify the sections by the purpose they'll serve, and then use what you own already to arrange things, so that they serve your purpose more fully. You can also identify, "Well you know what I need a new desk because this desk just doesn't have enough surface. So what size desk could I put in this space?"

And you could even draw a couple of different sizes and shapes of desks, and try them out on your physical scale drawing, so that you can really play with that. So that's the physical plan.

#### PLAN OF ACTION

Then you want to create a plan of action, and these are some of the things you want to decide in your plan of action.

#### *THE ORDER IN WHICH YOU WILL ORGANIZE*

First of all, you want to decide the order in which you will organize. You cannot organize an entire house all at once. You will make yourself crazy. You will make the people you live with crazy, unless you've got three solid days and a team of 12 to do it, like they do on those organizing shows. It's extremely difficult to organize an entire house all at once.

I recommend choosing one room at a time or even one section within one room at a time. So decide the order in which you are going to attack your space. So, "Okay I'm going to do my office space first. Then I'm going to do my music space. Then I'm going to do my bedroom closet. Then I'm going to do my linen closet..." You see what I'm saying? So you pick the order in which you are going to organize your space.

#### *THE SCHEDULE*

And then you schedule it in your date book. However long you think it's going to take you to organize a section, double it! Possibly even triple it if it's really, really a mess to



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start with. Organizing almost always takes longer than you think it will, and what a wonderfully pleasant surprise if it doesn't, okay? So really in creating the schedule pad-pad-pad.

#### *WHO YOU'RE GOING TO CALL ON FOR SUPPORT*

The third thing you want to decide in your plan of action is who are you going to ask for support? I've had clients-- I had a client who was a mother of 2 children, a 9 year-old and a 12 year-old, and a husband, and she made it weekend projects, and so the whole family would organize one room on a Saturday, and then they would all go out for ice cream or some other treats as a celebration to, you know, for the kids, and the kids could take turns choosing what their treat was, so that they really felt rewarded for having done all that hard work.

But you can also call on friends for support, family members, and I'm going to talk about that a little bit more on the next section.

Any questions around the visualization and planning section of this?

Sheldon: Can you talk about the furniture thing again? How you map that out?

Debra: On?

Sheldon: ...on the you know you said it like when you're moving...

Debra: What I do is that I create a scale drawing of the room with the windows where the outlets are and the doors and all of that stuff, and then I take construction paper and I create little pieces that are to scale of each piece of furniture that I want to live in that room.

So if it's the offices, there's a piece that is the desk. There is the piece that is the computer table. There is a piece that is the filing cabinet, whatever--all the pieces--the book cases, whatever physical pieces of furniture there are-- the desk or chair that are going to go in that room, I make a little tiny (not little tiny) but to scale. The same scale that the rest of it is.

Piece that is that furniture and then I set it up and what you can do is you can just move things around.

What would happen if I put my desk facing this way? Well, if my desk is facing that way then the computer table needs to go here. Okay, well, then where am I going to put the printer, and there's not outlet over there, so how is that going to work? You know what I mean? So you can try things out on paper before you start physically moving them.



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Sheldon: Right. I just wasn't sure what you're making there. I was picturing like a monopoly motel.

Debra: Oh no-no, I don't do a 3 dimensional. I just use construction paper and make it flat. I mean you can if you're really into it I've done the 3D scale drawing for when I was designing sets for my stage plays, but I'm not saying that you have to do that for this.

A 2 dimensional is fine. I use graph paper for the room and then I use just different color construction paper for the pieces of furniture, and then I just write in the marker on the, you know, this is the desk. This is the computer table, you know, so that it's how what it is. Okay?

Sheldon: Uh-huh.

Debra: Now I answered your question?

Sheldon: Yeah.

Debra: Any other questions before I move on? Alrighty. By the way, I'll do that when I get bored of a space. I'll just you know I'll just pull the scale drawing that I have in storage of the room and start, you know, and just rearrange the furniture. What would it look like if I rearrange it this way? And then sometimes I actually do it physically.

## WORK THROUGH ONE AREA AT A TIME

Okay, once you've done your analysis and your visualization, and you've got a plan, the next thing you want to do is to work through one section of your space at a time.

### START WITH THE FIRST SECTION, CREATE A FLOOR PLAN AND APPLY S.P.A.C.E.

You want to start with a section. Create a floor plan, create your vision for that--that place, and then apply the S.P.A.C.E formula, and as I said this is straight out of Julie Morganstern's book, *Organizing from the Inside Out*.

S.P.A.C.E is an acronym. It stands for: Sort, Purge, Assign a home, Containerize, and Equalize. I'll say that again because I know I went fast for you guys who were taking notes.

Sort, the S in SPACES for sorting your stuff. The P is for Purging, which means throwing stuff out. We as Americans tend to be pack-rats, and I will tell you if you haven't touch it in two years, throw it out, have a garage sale, donate it. If you haven't use it in two years, it's pretty unlikely that you don't use it.



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If it something that has sentimental value, then frame it or put it somewhere where you can honor it. If it has sentimental value and you're keeping it in a box, it's not--you're not honoring that sentiment. Time to let it go, okay?

#### *SORT*

I'm going to back up and say the first piece, which is Sort. Now one of the things around Sorting is that you want to, first of all go, through everything that's in the space and take everything out of the space that serves the purpose that that space doesn't serve.

So if you used to pay your bills in your dining room and you've decided that you want to pay your bills in your office, and you've got in your dining room and you're organizing in your dining room and you've got stands and envelope and old bills and you've got your check book and you got all the stuff that you used to use for paying your bills, you need to move it into the new space where you're going to be paying your bills. I hear someone speaking in the background. Can you mute yourself please?

The caveat, the warning that I have around that is that the temptation will be to try--So let say you're working in your dining room and you're moving the stuff out of the dining room, the dining room is no longer serving, right?

And you're moving it into your office, the temptation will be right then and there to organize your office. Resist, resist, resist. Which is one of the reasons why your space is going to look worse before it looks better. You need to move everything out of the space you're working on, so that you can work in that space, but do not allow yourself to be distracted by the spaces you have not yet got into. Does that make sense to you guys?

So the first step is sorting and that means going through everything. Every piece of paper. Every area that has become a depository for junk, and in the sorting, you need to have 3 categories. Keep it here because it serves the purpose that this space serves. Move it to the other space. Get rid of it.

The other thing that I recommend in the sorting is that you start--You just make a pile. You make 2 piles of the things that you're either going to move to another place or you're going to get rid of, and then at the end of your block of time, so let's say you've set aside 4 hours, at the end of your block of time, then move all of that stuff out, because if you just pick up one thing and then you leave the room to go put that thing in that it belongs in, you'll never get anything done. Does that make sense? You do it all at once. So that's the first step of SPACE and that is sorting.

#### *PURGE*



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The second step is purging, which is as I said, recycling, throwing out, giving away, garage selling, getting it out of your space.

I suggest that you treat it as if it belonged to someone else, and ask the question, "Does this person really need this thing? What's the likelihood that that person's going to need it in the next year? What will it cost to replace it if you throw it out and then find that you actually needed it, right? What's the damage? What's the consequences of throwing it out and then finding out later that you actually needed it?" I think asking yourself those questions will help you to purge, okay?

#### *ASSIGN A HOME*

The third step of the SPACE formula is to assign a home. And that's not just assigning a room, but actually assigning a home within that room. So for example, if you're in your office, you should assign a section of your shelving space that is for supplies or a section of your closet that's for supplies.

You know, I have a stack of plastic drawers for all my office supplies and each drawer has a kind of a category of stuff that's in it.

So I have one drawer that's all writing utensils, and so the pencils, the erasers, the pen refills, all of that are in that drawer. Then I've got another drawer that's scrap paper and my post it notes are in there and my little tiny 3-ring...not 3-ring, but spiral little pad notebooks are in there. Scrap paper is in there. 3x5 cards are in there, right? But you're not going to find paper clips in there. You're not going to find staples in there.

Then I got a drawer that is for clips and anything that is going to be putting things together, so paper clips, binder clips, staples, all of those things are in that drawer. You guys get the idea?

#### *CONTAINERIZE*

You want to organize by category and then create a container for those categories. I'm going to talk a bit more about containerizing, because there is a whole big thing about that.

#### *EQUALIZE – ASSESS AND ADJUST*

The last step of SPACE is what Julie calls equalize, and I think she just calls it equalize because she couldn't figure out another E for it. But I call it assess and adjust, meaning once you've organize a space, live with it for a couple of weeks.

And then do another analysis of it. What's working? What did I think would work that's not working? What are the pieces that, you know, what are the holes? What are the little bits of disorganization that are still happening? You know, what are the habits that I





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have not yet really committed to? Is this a habit I'm never going to commit to or do I need to arrange things to work with a habit I already have?

For example, I've told the story before I know but I'll tell it again. The apartment that I'm living in currently, the coat closet is as far removed from the door as it physically can be and still be within the apartment. You actually can't get any farther away from the front door and still be in the apartment. And I mean, how wrong is that? And I know myself. I am not going to walk all away to the back of the apartment to put away my coat when I come in. I'm just not! It's not who I am. I like to walk in the door and dump my stuff, so I got a coat rack. So I walk in the door and I hang up my coat on the coat rack.

I got a little bowl that sits on the table by the front door that takes my headset, my telephone, my keys, and my sun glasses, and my purse sits right next to that little bowl. And so I, instead of trying to change a habit that I knew I would never going to change, I created containers, so that I could organize within my habits. Does that make sense to you guys?

Now did I figure it out right away? No. It took me a little while, why is this not working? Why is this not working? And then I realized that I'm just never going to make that habit. It's just not true about me. I'm not going to make that habit, so I made containers that work for the habits that I have.

So that's the four steps: analysis, visualization and planning, working through one area at a time and applying the SPACE formula, and then the fourth step is maintenance.

Once you've really got things set up the way you like them, in a way that really work with who you are and how you think about things, then you've got to maintain it and that's just fundamental.

Organization is like doing the dishes. There's always going to be new dishes. Everyday there's new dishes so you just got to do them. And maintenance is like that and what I recommend doing is to pick 10 minutes or 15 minutes a day, every day, preferably around the same time as day and pick a room, so that if you live in the seven-room building, each day you address a different room, and you spend 15 minutes organizing in that room. And you do this after you've completed your organization because 15 minutes a day aren't going to do it until you finish your organization.

But 15 minutes a day if you've got a system of organization that really worked the way you work, will be enough to maintain it.

If it's not enough to maintain it, there's something about your system that isn't working. So you have to, you know, reassess and readjust, okay? So I want to stop here for a moment and answer any question, and then I want to go through...I've got a bunch of





tips and tricks to help with this, and then I'm going to open up the floor and if there's time and coach you guys.

But actually, you know what? If you...unless you've got a specific question about the SPACE formula and maintenance, actually hold it until I give you the tips and tricks, 'cause I may actually answer some of your questions with that. Does anyone have any questions specifically about SPACE and about maintenance?

## TIPS AND TRICKS

### ONLY WORK ON ONE SPACE AT A TIME.

Okay, moving right along. Tips and tricks! I already said this but I'm going to say it again, only work at one space at a time. Don't let yourself get distracted by the other spaces, which are going to look worse because you're dumping stuff into them that they have not yet been set up to absorb.

So it's going to look worse before it looks better just resign yourself to that and just work on one space at a time until it's functioning, and then go to the next space.

### IF YOU ARE FINDING THIS EMOTIONALLY CHALLENGING:

Now if you find organizing emotionally challenging and a lot of us do, particularly if the reason you are disorganized it because you -- and I've worked with people on this issue, a parent has passed on, a grandparent has passed on, and you've got all of their stuff in your space now.

And you never made a home for it, because it was you know it was sad and there were mourning around it and you couldn't quite face dealing with that stuff, but/or maybe you are mourning a part of your life that you no longer have or organizing is going to force you to deal with something that you've been avoiding dealing with. If this is emotionally challenging, I have a couple of tips for you.

### *IMAGINE THAT YOU ARE WORKING ON SOMEONE ELSE'S SPACE INSTEAD OF YOUR OWN.*

First of all, imagine that you are working on someone else's home. Not your home, it's someone else's. It's unbelievable, but that really helps. You know it's really...that's why professional organizers do this for a living, because it's much easier organizing someone else's space than it is to organize your own. So imagine it is someone else's space. That's the first tip.

*ASK SOMEONE TO HELP YOU (CHOOSE SOMEONE YOU NEVER FEEL JUDGED BY)*



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Second tip is to ask someone to support you during the process and make sure you choose someone who you do not feel judged by. Someone that you really feel safe with, but it's a lot more fun to do this with a friend or to do this with someone else, much harder to do it by yourself. But here's a really fun thing that I have done in the past with other people who were organizing their space on their own. You could have what's called a "dumpster day" with someone else or a couple of other people who want to organize.

So you pick a day. You pick a space that you're going to organize and you talk to each other at the top of each hour, and you just check in for two minutes. It's not a long processing and just say what you've gotten done, how far you've come, and what you're going to complete by the next hour.

So it's like the momentum calls, which I've talked about before, but it's specifically other people who are doing the same project you are doing.

And we call those "dumpster days." Isn't that fun? So you know find someone who also wants to organize and then pick a day and do it together virtually if you can't have someone coming to your space to do it.

Another thing you can do is you can trade. If you have someone who lives close to where you live, they can come and help you organize your space one weekend, and then you can go to their house and help them organize their space the next weekend. So that can also be really helpful.

#### *HIRE A PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZER TO COACH YOU THROUGH THE PROCESS*

The third tip is to hire a professional organizer to coach you through the process. By the way for any members who are in the Central New Jersey area, Wendy Caylan is doing professional organizing in that area, so if you're looking to do that, I recommend her. So you can hire someone--a professional organizer to help coach you through the process and that can be really helpful.

You do want to work with someone who gets you though, because if they try imposed a concept or organization that does not suit the way your brain works, it's not going to last overtime.

So it is important in hiring a professional organizer that you hire someone who you feel like they understand you and who'll be able to work with you and your personality, okay?



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##### *CREATE FUN IN THE PROCESS:*

The fourth tip if you're finding this emotionally challenging is to make it fun. Like my client who had her entire family doing it together, they put some great music on. They were dancing around doing it. They played games with how fast they could get it done, and then they had a great reward at the end of the day.

##### **Put on great music and use the music as a measure of time.**

You can put on your favorite music, and by the way, pick upbeat music, but put on some great music and use the music as a measure of time. "Okay I'm going to work on this section until the CD is done, and it's my goal to be done with this piece by the end the CD." So you can play time...you can play games with it. You can use it as a measure of time.

##### **Reward yourself**

I recommend you reward yourself in some way, whether it's by giving yourself a treat, going out. Buying something really beautiful for the space is a great way to reward yourself once your space is organized.

##### **Use your artistic aesthetic in your design – colors, shapes, etc.**

I also recommend you use your artistic aesthetic in your design. The colors that you love, the shapes that you love, the style that you love. You know if you hate filing, but you really like a certain set of colors, get files in those colors, you know.

Use your aesthetic sense to make the process of organizing fun and to make your space beautiful, because the more beautiful the space is the more creative you'll be in the space.

##### *SPEND SOME TIME RESEARCHING BEFORE YOU PURCHASE CONTAINERS:*

I recommend another tip is to spend some time researching containers before you buy containers, and I want to talk a bit more about that.

##### *GATHER EVERYTHING THE CONTAINER WILL NEED TO HOLD AND MEASURE THE ACTUAL SPACE*

First of all, when you're sorting and purging and you know organizing the space, the last thing you do is containerize, right? So before you containerize, you want to gather everything that the container is going to need to hold and measure the actual space you want it to live in.

##### *SPEND TIME WITH IKEA, THE CONTAINER STORE, BB&B OR LINENS 'N THINGS CATALOGUES, AND/OR GO SPEND AN AFTERNOON WANDERING AROUND THE STORES – BUT DON'T BUY ANYTHING*



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I recommend that you spend some time with catalogs from Ikea, from the Container Store, from Bed Bath & Beyond or Linens 'N Things. Get the catalogs, hang out, flip through them.

Look for ideas and innovative things that you can try out. You could spend a day just going into those stores and walking through the aisles and looking at things. Look at what the different options are of the different containers. Notice what you're attracted to visually. Notice the styles that you like. Take notes. Take pictures., Take notes of prices and sizes. **DON'T BUY ANYTHING.** Just do research.

*GET SOME IDEAS ABOUT HOW YOU WANT A SPACE TO WORK AND THEN CHOOSE THE CONTAINERS THAT WILL CREATE EASE, ORGANIZATION AND FUN WHILE FULFILLING THOSE PURPOSES – THEN PURCHASE THE APPROPRIATE CONTAINERS*

Then go back to your space. Get some ideas about how you want the space to work. Measure and then choose the containers. Choose containers that are going to create ease, organization, and fun, fulfilling the purpose of the space.

What people do is they'll go to the store and just buy a ton of containers without really knowing the purpose of the containers' fill and then the containers don't work.

So they end up having to go back and exchange, and it's a pain in the butt. So I recommend really making your decisions before you buy. So that's my recommendation about containers.

*USE THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD FOR YOUR SPATIAL DESIGN.*

And finally, I recommend using the scientific method for your spatial design. So I by the way have a science background, so I'm going to give you the scientific method.

*CREATE A THEORY FOR HOW SOMETHING COULD WORK*

First you create a theory for how something could work in your space.

*TEST IT OUT*

Then you test it out. You test out your theory. You try it out. You experiment with it.

*DISCOVER WHAT WORKS AND DOESN'T WORK ABOUT YOUR THEORY*

The third step is to analyze your experiment, what worked, what didn't work.

*ADJUST YOUR THEORY AND METHODOLOGY APPROPRIATELY*

And the fourth step is to adjust your theory and methodology based on the results of your experiment. So you create a theory, meaning you create a plan for your space. You set it up, and you test it out.



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You live it with it for a while, always looking for what's working and what's not working. You apply your discoveries to your theory and adjust your theory appropriately. You guys get that? Now that's the scientific method.

*LOOK AT YOUR HABITS WITH SCIENTIFIC CURIOSITY AND SEE IF YOU CAN CREATE STRUCTURES THAT WORK WITH WHO YOU ALREADY ARE, RATHER THAN TRYING TO CHANGE EVERYTHING YOU ARE TO FIT THE STRUCTURES YOU'VE IMPOSED.*

And finally I recommend that you look at your personal habits with scientific curiosity. So it's not about judgment. It's not about being wrong. It's curiosity. "Ha, I noticed I do this. This is my habit here. Huh, isn't that interesting." As opposed to, "I'm bad and wrong, and I shouldn't do it that way. And I should do it this way, and I really should be better about this."

No, just notice what you do. And then see if you can create structures that work with who you already are, rather than trying to change everything you are to fit the structures you've imposed, okay?

So that's my class about getting organized. Now I'd like to open up the phones for a few minutes, and ask, you know, go ahead and ask questions. If you've got a specific knotty problem in organization, if I have time, I can give you some pointers or ideas about it? Who'd like some coaching?

## LASER COACHING AND COMPLETION

Kate: I'll go.

Debra: Great! Who's that?

Kate: It's Kate.

Debra: Okay, Kate.

Kate: I've done a lot of organize thing and I feel like I've gotten quite better at it, which is great. My one thing I'm still having trouble with is still paper.

Debra: Can you be more specific? What is it about paper?

Kate: Specifically, my filing cabinet. When I first got my filing cabinet, I was very happy with it and I felt a lot more organized. I had some place to put everything, you know, and then it got quite full. So I never... I guess I later heard that you should be purging you know sort of as you go...



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Debra: Yeah, and actually what you want to do is to purge your files once a year. And then you want to create a couple of storage file boxes to save the things that you need to save, but don't need access to them unless you get, you know, God forbid, you know, unless you get audited. And there are absolutely things that you should save for 3 years, some other things that you should save for 7 years, and there are some things that you should save forever.

Kate: Okay.

Debra: I don't really have the time in this class to go into what all of those are, but you can find that stuff on the web at [irs.gov](http://irs.gov). They're going to tell you what files you need to save and for how long. I go to my accountant on a pretty regular basis and say, "What about insurance bills? Do I need to save insurance bills and for how long?" My accountant, who also happens to be my mom will say, "Well, you need to save your declaration page for 7 years." You need to save any claims information, I think, forever in my memory. Everything else, your monthly bills at the end of the year you can toss them.

Kate: Yeah, I don't think it's that so much... That doesn't seem to be so much the problem. I feel okay about that sort of stuff.

Debra: Right.

Kate: It's more like I don't know, images that I collect like other postcards of others artists work that I collect.

Debra: Yeah. How are you using that material?

Kate: Yeah, I'm not even sure if I'm even using it, you know. And then what I've started doing is I've started putting a lot of that information into my Daylite, my contact management. So that it is more useful now. It's not just in a big pile.

Debra: So yeah, you get...you pulled the data off, and then you trash it?

Kate: Yeah, that's what I've started.

Debra: ...you trash the physical thing. Now if you're collecting images because it's part of your artistic process, then you need to create a separate container for it, okay? So that is two separate things.

Kate: It's like a reference to a contact, you know, of their work, so to remind me of who they are.



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Debra: Right, but what you can do is that you can scan the image and link the file to their contact.

Kate: Yeah, that's what I've started doing.

Debra: I use Card Scanner to scan business cards. And that's really great because a lot of times I will remember someone by the image on their business card, so I agree with that. The Cardscan uploads the image to my Outlook, and so it's in my Outlook, and I can access the images of the business card and then I can throw out the cards. Is that helpful?

Kate: Yeah, that's what I've started doing. I guess it's just a matter of going through it all.

Debra: And I think, yes. As you're going through it you really need to ask yourself a question. "What's the purpose of this? What do I really need it for?" And the answer to that question will help you make those decisions, great.

There's someone doing a lot of rattling around in the background, so if you can...we only have 5 more minutes so contain yourself. So who else has questions?

Roxanne: This is Roxanne.

Debra: Hey, Roxanne.

Roxanne: Hi. Along the same line, I tend to collect things that I mean that take more than a 2-3 minutes to read. But I need or want to read these, so now I have these big stacks all over my office.

Debra: Have you created time in which to read them?

Roxanne: Well, sometimes.

Debra: Okay so that's the first thing I would do. I would create a weekly appointment with yourself to spend an hour reading through stuff. And then the second thing is that you need to create a container for it. So you're both making progress through the things that you want to read, and you have a container for it while you're waiting for that time to read it, okay? Because the truth is if you haven't scheduled time to do it, you're never really going to read it.

Roxanne: Well yeah, it's still happen. The stack gets higher and higher.

Debra: The stack gets higher and higher, and you don't actually read it. My reading room is in the bathroom, seriously. But that's what I recommend is to schedule some time in which you will actually read stuff, and then be honest with yourself. Is this something I should read? Is this something I really truly need to read? Is this





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entertainment reading? And entertainment reading shouldn't be living in your office anyway.

Roxanne: Well, actually not the office, I found that in my living room I'm keeping a lot of, you know, I'm a photographer. I'm keeping a lot of my photography magazines, and I started thinking I need to put those in my office.

Debra: Right, so that you actually... So, that you can read them as part of your research, yeah, absolutely, excellent. Who else has questions? I think I have time for one more.

Okay, well then let's get complete. And again whoever's chopping in the background, please either stop doing that or muting. It's really loud. I know you don't think it's really loud on your end, but every noise, because of the conference room, gets magnified for everybody else.

So okay, who wants to say one thing that they...one piece of value that they're taking away from tonight's call and one action they're going to take in the next week to put it...to start organizing their life.

Steve: It's Steve. Hello?

Debra: Yep, hi Steve.

Steve: I realized--I'm a songwriter, and I have my songwriting files of lots of information I've gathered, articles, and in my filing cabinet in my office, I realize I need to get a file box or maybe a two-drawer file and put it next to the piano, these files.

Debra: Wouldn't that make sense. Isn't that cool? You discovered the purpose for the space, and then you gather all the things that you need to serve that purpose into that section of the space.

Steve: Exactly, because they've been sitting in that filing cabinet. I'm not doing anything with them. They're just gathering dust. So thank you!

Debra: You're very welcome. That's awesome, great! Who else wants to share an insight piece of value and an action they're going to take?

Sheldon: This is Sheldon.

Debra: Hey Sheldon.

Sheldon: I have at my job-- I work as a music teacher pretty much one-on-one. I have a very small space, and I took over from somebody last year, and there's a three, you know, three-drawer file cabinet that is full of old stuff that I might go in there, like you





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know, maybe I've gone in there five times the whole time I've been there. I'm realizing now that I can take a lot of his stuff. It's just kind of lying around and put it in that as long as I look in there, and you know, I don't know if I could make the decision myself to get rid of it. That's the only thing, but you know...

Debra: You're sharing it with someone else?

Sheldon: Well, no, because, you know, like a lot of the stuff might belong to the school. So I might...but I definitely have the courage to ask...

Debra: Right, you could ask, and possibly, you can ask them for another space to store it. So that it doesn't have to be in your small little space.

Sheldon: Uh-hmm.

Debra: Excellent, very cool. Who else has something to say want to share? Piece of value and an action they're going to take.

Roxanne: This is Roxanne.

Debra: Hey.

Roxanne: I think the visualization that for each room or space could be very helpful for me, you know, to kind of imagine in my mind what I would like it to look like and what I want to be doing in the space.

And then the other thing is, based on the question I raised, I think this week I'll try to figure out what kind of container would be appropriate for all my big stacks of reading, and then you know...

Debra: Whoever is crinkling paper, please stop. Thank you.

Roxanne: And I set aside a time, whether 15 minutes or half hour a week or whatever it is, but at least start working with it.

Debra: Excellent. So the action is to close your eyes and do some visualizing of the space, and then make some decisions.

Roxanne: Well, actually the action...the visualization part was just what I really took away...

Debra: ...you got from it, right?

Roxanne: ...something that will be helpful for all my spaces, but I want to begin to tackle the problem of all the paper all over my office that I really need to get to.



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Debra: Right, excellent. So you'll schedule some time to actually start sorting through that stuff and purging it.

Roxanne: And right, and to really figure out what would work in terms of a long term container.

Debra: Excellent. Alright. I'll tell you, man, I had a blast just going to the container store and spending a couple of hours walking around and looking at their ideas and/or getting the catalog and flipping through the catalog and looking at all the different possible solutions for what I'm trying to do. It can really get your imagination running, but I recommend that. Excellent! Thanks Roxanne.

Who else wants to share? Anyone else? I think I heard Vicky in there somewhere. Are you still with us, Vicky? Maybe not; maybe she's muted. Alright, well we're actually just about out of time. So if there's no other burning shares...excellent. Thank you, guys.

Sheldon: Excellent is right.

Debra: Oh good!

Roxanne: Thank you, Debra.

Debra: You're very welcome. You're very welcome. It's my pleasure. So have a great couple of weeks. I will tell you that the December is going to be chock full of calls. I'm going a call pretty much every week for the first couple of weeks, I strongly recommend that all of you participate in the Orientation call, because it's--I'm going to completely redesign it from the ground up, and you know, it's really going to be about how to make the most use of your membership and make it pay for you. Awesome! Have a great couple of weeks, and we'll talk soon!

Callers: Thank you, bye!