

Getting It Together
all things. organized.

Top Tips - Ten Things



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I work with clients every day who are challenged with getting and staying organized – who feel overwhelmed and don't know where to begin.

Getting “all things organized” can be daunting, and I certainly have a lot more tips to share beyond those in this guide – but, this provides you with some of my easiest, top tips in ten significant areas of life – to show you how to take action and get you on your way to moving from overwhelm to calm.

Did you know that our environments – where we live and work – impact our psyche and how we feel, both emotionally and physically?

When we are surrounded by clutter in our homes, without even realizing where it's coming from, we can feel depressed and stressed, and become paralyzed in many areas of our lives.



I'm no psychologist, but I know that many personal development regimes will promise that if you work on yourself from the “inside out”, that you will heal and feel better.



But I know from my own personal experiences and those I've worked with that approaching things from the “outside in” goes a long way to empowering you, clearing your mind and helping you to feel better.

And if you feel better, you'll then feel motivated to keep going. It'll be a spiral of the good kind!

So – let's get started! The biggest area is your home, so the first few top tips are going to focus on getting and staying organized in the home:

1) All Things Organized – Your HOME:

- The 15-Minute Rule

- You might be surprised that it's possible to get a small area organized in 15 minutes or less. The key is to stay focused on the one thing.
- Your spice rack or drawer: pull out all jars or bags, wipe down cupboard, toss out old spices and ones you don't use (how many bags of old, dried up garlic powder do you need?), and put the spices you do use back in your cupboard or drawer.
- Your bathroom toiletries: just one drawer or one shelf – same idea as above. You will get the idea and get the hang of it quickly.
- Ask yourself: what one area can I do today in 15 min. or less? Start with the area that's bugging you the most. But be sure to start with small bites.

80% of the clutter in homes is a result of **DISORGANIZATION**, not lack of space

- Front Entrance

If your place is small, these same tips can apply but just be scaled down, and remember your vertical space!

- Ideally you will want to have a basket for each family member. Their backpack, hat, gloves, and one pair of shoes would go in that basket once arriving home. Or hooks if space is limited.

Either way, you want to have each persons' items hung/stored individually as opposed to a big basket filled with gloves. This way you can keep better track of what each person has and needs as they grow.

- If you have a small entrance way closet only keep seasonal items in there.

We use **20%** of our things **80%** of the time.

- Try this bite-size approach to downsizing: have a 'to-go' box in your hall closet at all times.

Most people cannot imagine having to go through an entire closet to purge – so by having a 'to-go' box right there, when you put on an item of clothing that doesn't fit, you don't feel good in, it's worn etc. – toss it in the 'to-go' box.

If you use a kitchen utensil and it does not work properly or you do not like it, toss it in the box. If you go to grab a purse and realize that there are several in the closet that you are no longer loving, toss them in the 'to-go' box. If your kids have outgrown clothing or toys, put them in the box.

Once the box is full, drop it off at your local donate center. Or call your local donation pick up service. They will give you a date and time when they will be in your area. A 'to-go' box will ensure you're eliminating clutter on a steady and ongoing basis!

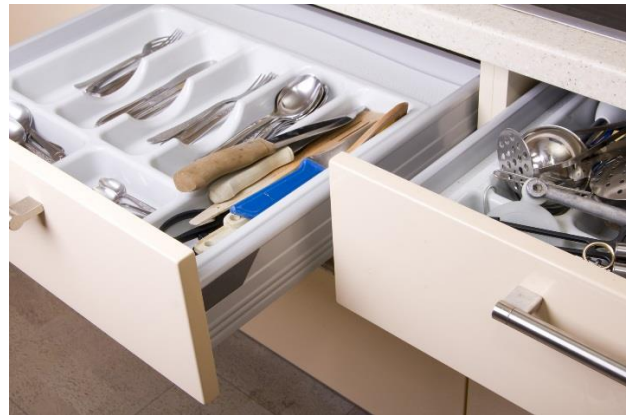
- **Kitchen**

A cluttered kitchen makes for a stressful household. If you cannot prepare meals or sit down as a family you will want to start with this tip first.

- Get rid of everything in the kitchen that is not being used.

That means the bread maker, the melon baller, the endless supply of takeout food chopsticks etc.

Keep only the things you use!



- Try to have all food items in one area of the kitchen cupboards. Limit the number of footsteps it takes to prepare a healthy meal. Keep all "like" items together. Your aim is to have your kitchen flow and have logic.
- Have an area for incoming mail. A small basket on the counter or on top of the fridge.
- Fridge: keep the outside of your fridge clutter-free. Too many magnets, photos or artwork on a fridge create visual clutter, which contribute to mind clutter.

Date the top of your condiment jars with the date you open them. This way you will be able to see how long they are in your fridge at just a quick glance.

Every 2-3 weeks give the inside of your fridge a good clean with warm water and baking soda. Toss out all unrecognizable food.

- **Bedrooms**

- If you take it off, hang it up or put it in the laundry bin.
- Clear plastic bins for underwear, bras, socks etc in a closet can be effective for people who are very visual. For some people, having their clothing tucked away in drawers is not the best system.

Know what works best for you and design a system to work around that.

- Keep nightstands clutter free by using a small basket to hold your eye glasses, book and lotions.
- Avoid all non-bedroom items from entering into this room. For example computers, TVs and any work related things.
- Put all your hanging clothes hangers facing the opposite direction. Once you have worn something and hung it up, put the hanger back to the “normal” direction.

At the end of six months pull all the clothes off the hangers that are still going in the opposite direction. Clearly you are not going to wear those clothes!

- **Organizing Your Kids!**

- Kids work best if they have ‘zones’. A toy zone, a reading zone, craft zone etc.
- If you have toys all over the house and tell your kids to go play, they may not know where to go. I suggest dividing your childrens’ toys into three bins, then rotate the bins periodically. Your children will feel like they are getting new toys each rotation!



- Once things are in each designated zone, enlist your children for tidy-up duty.

And just like having zones for activities, break up their tasks: get them to pick up the cars, or the dolls, books, legos ...

Breaking the tasks down for kids makes for a smoother clean up.

- Pass outgrown clothing, toys and baby equipment on before it is no good to anyone. Trust me, if you have more children down the road these items will come back to you tenfold.
- Kids socks! Where do they go? Buy 12 pairs of white socks. You will always have a pair and it does not matter if one or two go missing.

- As for kids' arts and craft items, it's important to have a system: I love the small stackable clear plastic drawers for pens, crayons and felts. Label each drawer.

Have another stackable set for tape, glue, scissors and stapler. These drawers are the perfect size. Not too big and not too small.

Keep in mind, the more supplies you have, the more room you need to store them. Kids do not need 500 colors of crayons!

2. All Things Organized: PAPER

Whether or not you have a dedicated office space in your home, "What do I do with all my papers?" is a very common question and an area that many people get quite literally buried in!

- You can stop the amount of paper coming into your space by placing a "No Junk Mail" sign on your mailbox.

Or try searching on (the internet) "stop junk mail from coming" for your region – every region has different associations etc. regarding 'stop junk mail campaigns'.



- Stop printing things off of your computer! It's a waste of paper, and literally a waste of your money because of all the ink you'll use, and paper you'll buy. *Later on, I will give you tips on how to file and find what you are looking for on your computer.*
- Get all your bills delivered electronically.
- If you must keep paper be sure to have system. See what paper items you have left and either scan them to your computer or set up a file system.

One of my Favorite apps is *Camscanner*. You can take a picture right from your phone and upload to a document in your computer.



- Many of us cannot be completely paperless which is why I created my indispensable [1to31 organizing system](#).

This one-time investment will house all the papers you need to reference on a daily, weekly, monthly and yearly basis.

All your Birthday invitations, concert tickets, school notices for your children, things you would like to read or file, bills that need to be paid and so much more!

3. All Things Organized: Your HOME OFFICE

These areas can become a dumping ground for all the things in your home that do not have a proper place. It is critical that this area of the home has systems in place.

First, decide who is going to use the space and what you would like the space to be used for. Are you sharing it with the kids, your partner, or is it off limits to anyone except you?

- Then set up zones. A computer zone, an area for writing notes, organizing papers, maybe a sitting / reading area if you have the space, etc.
- Do you need to keep paper files or can you be paperless? A small portable file system keeps papers at bay.
- Have minimal supplies like pens, sharpies etc. The more you have the more you have to store.



- Take 15 minutes at the end of your work day to tidy up your space and prepare for the next day.
- Use your [1to31 organizing system](#) to keep track of daily to dos', bills that need to be paid, things you want to read, party invitations etc. Take a quick look at your system just before ending your day so you know what is in store for tomorrow.

4. All Things Organized: FINANCES

- Set up a small file cabinet or portable file box. The reason you want to keep it small is so you will toss out the outdated information as the new information comes in.
- Create File Folders for:
 - Bank Accounts
 - Credit Card accounts (*I suggest having two credit cards especially if you travel*)
 - Retirement accounts
 - Mortgage
 - Investment accounts
 - Insurances: life, critical illness, disability, home and car
 - Loans
 - Will and power of attorney
 - Tax return from past year and current year
 - Miscellaneous

- Set up online banking and telephone banking. Like it or not sooner than later we will have to do 90% of our banking online, and why not? It is a great way to save time.

You can do all of your banking while the kids sleep or on your coffee break at work.

- Set up automatic bill payments. One great way to get financially organized and earn money at the same time is to set up all your bills to automatically go onto a credit card that gives you either cash back or rewards points (that gets you free things, like a gas card).

Then once a month your credit card gets paid automatically from your bank account. Yes, it is important to check your credit card statement to make sure that all of the purchases are yours. And yes, you need to have enough money in the bank to pay your credit card in full.

- If you're not comfortable with automatic bill payments, then set yourself up a little area in your home where you pay bills. Is it in the kitchen or do you have a small office area?

Once the bill is paid, file it until the next month's bill comes in at which point you can shred the last month's bill. There is no need to keep a life time of phone bills. Even if you are in business for yourself you only have to keep 7 years record of receipts.

- Use a 1to31 system. Getting it Together offers the cadillac of 1to31 binder systems (you can learn more about it [here](#)).

If you are still getting paper bills, the 1to31 system is the best place to keep track of them and ensure they are paid on time.

5. All Things Organized: COMPUTERS

- Back up your computer. An astonishing 30% of people do not back up their files and every 3 seconds someone's hard drive fails. Yikes!

You can get an external drive, or rely on the "cloud" (a virtual backup on a website that uses multiple servers.) But I still feel that the most important papers in your life need to be backed-up on your computer and you also need a hard copy.

- Empty your recycling bin or trash. Have you kept every single solitary email, file, document, etc. that you have ever received on your computer?

You could be headed for a crash and burn situation. Just like you take out your paper recycling each week, you need to do the same with your computer. Clean it up.



Take 15 minutes each week and delete what you no longer need. Exit out of all programs you are using; then empty the trash and do your back-up.

- Organize your desktop: don't save unneeded files. It slows your computer down and is clutter to the mind. Take a second to put these files in a hard-drive folder like "My Documents" or "My Photos".

Before you move any files, ask yourself "do I need this information any longer or can I toss it?" For example you might have thought it was cool to have "Google Earth" on your desktop. How often do you look at it? Is it necessary to keep it?

- Naming files and the folders they're in on your computer is no different than naming paper files. Be very clear and use logic. If someone else was looking for a file on your computer would they logically know where to look?

For example: "Important Papers/Will etc" instead of "My exit plan", or "Home Insurance/Mortgage etc" not "Home stuff " as that might mean design ideas or repair ideas or maybe mortgage. Be specific.

6. All Things Organized: MOVING

- Hire movers. Let's face it: you are busy, your friends and family are busy. Professional movers have all the right boxes, packing supplies, dollies and manpower. They can get you packed and moved quickly and efficiently.
- Pack a suitcase. Pretend you are going on a 2 week camping vacation. Pack a suitcase with clothes, your kids' favorite toys, towels, exercise attire, toiletries and a good book. This saves you time searching in your boxes for some much needed necessities.

- Start early.

People often underestimate how long it takes to pack up a house or condo.

Start early by packing non seasonal clothing, china, books and any other items that are not needed day to day.



- Pack a cooler. On moving day pack a cooler filled with must have food items. Have snacks for the kids, movers and yourself. Remember some of your favorite drinks as well.
- Hire an organizer. Did you know a professional organizer will support you in a stress free move? You will save time, energy and most importantly, money. You will only move items you love, need and use. Unpacking will be a dream.

7. All Things Organized: DOWNSIZING

- You will want to have a family meeting to decide when a good time to start downsizing is. If this is done – and agreed to – proactively (before it becomes necessary), it will save a lot of stress for everyone involved.
- Decide who will help you or your aging relatives with downsizing. Your grown kids may have a family of their own, plus work. You might find that hiring a professional organizer to help with your downsizing is the best option for your family.
- Where do you want your items to go? This can be sensitive for many people, but it's really best if the person / couple who are downsizing can tell their family members openly – this will help to avoid any misunderstandings. And then people can put their names on tape on the back of items while they're still in the home.



- Well in advance, when family members are over, have them work on a certain item / small area of the home.

For example, cookbooks one day.
Encyclopedias the next.

Perhaps it'll be linens or family heirlooms the next time they're over.

- Are there collections that need to be sold? Are there family heirlooms that need to be preserved? Are there other household items that need to be donated or tossed?

This is where a professional organizer can really be worth their weight – as we can literally take this overwhelm from you.

- When should you start downsizing? Today! If you have allowed yourself enough time you can break your downsizing project down into bite size pieces.

Change is hard on most people and downsizing is one of the biggest changes a person might do in their life. By proactively thinking about it, and discussing it openly with family members, it will help you to embrace that 'next phase' of your life.

Do you consciously own things or do they own you?

8. All Things Organized: ORGANIZE YOURSELF HEALTHY

- We hear it all the time, and it is true that exercise is our #1 ally to increasing our energy and living a healthier and more robust lifestyle.

What can you do to increase your daily activities, in the way of exercise? Treat exercise like you would treat a very important doctors appointment or business meeting. Schedule it in your calendar.

Or is it better for you to take a specific exercise class on specific nights? Do you workout better with a friend or do you like solo exercise? Make it fun and enjoyable or you will not keep it up – and plan for it. Make walking / hiking dates with friends.

Have your gym bag ready to go at all times. Clean gym clothes, water bottle, towel and membership card.

- Take 15 minutes at the end of each week to plan your meals for the following week. We generally eat about ten different meals over the course of a two week period. Taco night, fish, chicken dish, vegetarian meal, etc.

Week one and week three can be the exact same menu and week two and week four the same. If you plan four week's worth, you'll have a meal plan for two months. Choose recipes or simple meals for each week that use similar ingredients to simplify your shopping list. And be sure to make extra for leftovers and or lunches.

- Wash and cut all produce as soon as you bring it home and before putting it in the fridge.
- Have pre-cut carrots, celery, cherry tomatoes, peppers and cucumbers in ready-to-go containers. Same goes for fruit (have it washed).
- If you can eat them, have hard boiled eggs ready to go at all times too – they're a fast and easy way to add protein to your meal or snack.
- When preparing your evening meal take the extra 10 minutes to make your next days' lunch.
- Have a small bag of unsalted nuts in your car at all times.



- Starting your day with a high protein shake is a fast and easy way to get nutrition and energy into your body. I love my hemp protein! In a blender add a banana, frozen fruit, yogurt, hemp protein powder, seeds, nuts and water.

You will be full for many hours plus all the protein goes right to muscle rebuilding. Protein shakes are also a great meal replacement for busy people on-the-go.

- Drink loads of water. How many times do we need to hear this? Cold water boosts your metabolism by up to 30%. I like to add lemon to mine. This acts as a natural cleanse and tastes good.

The key is to always have water with you. This takes some organizing. Carry your refillable water bottle to the gym, to work (and to meetings), beside your bed, in the car and to the dinner table. The more water you drink the more daily activity you will have because you will need to be running to the washroom ;)

9. All Things Organized: TRAVEL

- Plan in advance by letting your major clients know that you will be away. Have an out of office reply on your email, and voice message.
- Save the day before you go away to tidy up all the loose ends. Have you ever found how highly productive you become those few days before going on vacation? You work with a sense of urgency like never before.
- Budget ahead of time. The best vacations are the ones that are paid for before you even leave. Then your only expenses are food and entertainment. Check online for FREE activities. Most places have several to pick from.
- Be pet smart. Make arrangements in advance for Fido. This is one task that can be taken care of long in advance so it is not being left to the last moment.



- Packing: as soon as I get back from a vacation I refill my toiletries bag. This way it is ready to go the next time I head on out.

I also have a rule about clothing for travel: make sure that each item in your suitcase goes with at least three other items.

Pick a color theme – for example, black and an accent color. A bright scarf or pashmina sets off any outfit. Keep accessories to a minimum when traveling.

- Have you ever seen the lost and found at hotels? It is full of chargers. Have a system for yours. I use twist ties around the cords. I travel with three cords and have three twist ties. At the end of my stay I make sure all twist ties are around a cord then I store them in a small clear bag that is labeled.
- Travel documents: keep all travel documents and passports in one clear bag, and store in the hotel safe. Just remember to pull your passport out of the safe upon departure!

- Travel with some of your favorite healthy snacks. Protein bars, nuts and seeds are a good bet as well as a refillable water bottle.
- Enjoy yourself!! Disconnect. We all need a break from our electronic devices at some time or another. I know most of you are saying “ya, but then I return to 100’s of emails” ...

The challenge with this is that it does not give your brain a chance to fully turn off and get into vacation mode. You could end up reading a work-related email that requires your attention. Then what?

Interruptions to your family time, your relaxation time and fun time. What did we all do before we were so “addicted” or connected to our technology?

If you feel you simply cannot go without checking work emails then have a strict schedule. Say 15-30 minutes first thing in the morning and that is it.

- Once back home, have a place for all of your travel accessories. Ear phones, ear plugs, passport, specialty meds, plug adaptors. All things travel.

10. All Things Organized: YOUR WALLET / PURSE

- Go through your wallet and discard anything that doesn’t belong. ATM receipts, expired coupons or gift cards, frequent shopper cards for places you no longer shop, old shopping lists, etc.

You want your wallet to hold important things like money and ID. You do not want it to look like a filing cabinet.

- Photocopy: take your credit cards, drivers license, medical card, etc and copy the fronts of them, then turn them all over exactly in the same spot and copy the backs.

Usually the back of the card displays the phone number to report lost or stolen cards. If your wallet gets stolen or lost you will know exactly what was in there and will have all of the correct phone numbers handy to call and report them as missing.

Keep these copies in your online files and in your safety deposit box.

- Putting the contents of your wallet in my favorite purse organizer makes for very fast and easy purse-changing!

The *PoucheePurse Organizer* can house your credit cards, money, lipstick, eye glasses and receipts. Click [here](#) to learn more



- Clear out. Once a week take a minute or two to clear out all the unwanted papers and receipts from your wallet.

Take the excess change and put it in your piggy bank, laundry money or parking meter money.

I keep a small change purse in my car for parking. All that change can really weigh your wallet down. Better yet use a Pay by Phone parking app.

- Sort your wallet contents by type: Suze Orman would agree with having all your money facing the same direction.

Have your bills starting from smallest to largest. Organize identification, credit cards, medical cards, shopping/membership/gift cards, etc. Use the sections of your wallet to keep these categories separated so you can find your cards quickly.

Since writing checks is not that common, only carry one check with you at any given time. As for your frequent used loyalty cards use the app *Stocard*

- Condense. Do you have kids? Do you carry ALL of their medical cards with you? No need to. Take a blank business card. Write all the medical numbers on the card. Place it in your wallet.

If you have 4 kids, that just saved on space and weight. Store the original medical cards in your files.

I hope you've enjoyed my 'getting started' top tips for ten things / areas in your life. I would be pleased to hear from you with any questions or feedback. For more ideas on clearing the clutter, may I suggest checking out my [Clearing the Clutter](#) audio program.

For hands-on professional organizing services in the British Columbia area, call us at **604-520-9550**. Coaching services are available world-wide over the web. And I will speak anywhere you'd like to fly me to.

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If you don't take the time to DO IT RIGHT,
when will you find the time to DO IT OVER?