



Solutions for Life

from **Solutions Counseling & EAP**
by *Keri Forbess-McCorquodale, MS, LPC, LMFT, CEAP*

Getting Ready for the Future

I've got that itch again. The itch to organize. I have friends who are moving to new homes, and I feel the urge to ask "can I set up your kitchen?" Or, I want to blurt out, "I can help you unpack!" All I can think about is the great opportunity for my friends to purge and clean out all their belongings. Ooh, aah...I know, it's kind of creepy, isn't it?

I think if I weren't a therapist, I would be a professional organizer. All the closets and junk drawers in the world would be under my spell! In my role as a therapist, I have been able to work with a few people on organization skills and what might be the underlying cause of their messiness. Fascinating!

So what do you do if you tend not to be so organized? Fortunately, there is no "organization gene" that you either have or don't have. It's a skill, which means it can be learned and implemented to whatever degree you would like.

People who are more organized think differently than those who are less organized. We're always thinking in future terms. Everything we do is about making our lives easier tomorrow. If we struggle with something, we automatically begin to think of what we could do differently so it wouldn't be such a struggle next time.

If you want to become more organized, you need to start thinking in future terms too. Here are some suggestions:

Buy for the future. No, I don't mean you should stock up for the future (that's called "hoarding," and that's another article). What I mean is every time you purchase something, you need to ask yourself a few questions:

- **Do I really need this?**
- **What is the true likelihood I will wear/use this?**
- **Where is this going to live?**

Organized people tend to purchase only what they truly need and will use repeatedly. And we are already thinking about where we will keep the object as we are pulling out the credit card to pay for it. As I've become a better organizer, I have fewer "why did I buy this? I've had it for 2 years and have never worn it" experiences.

Pick up for the future. I know you don't want to do the dishes right now. But if you do them now, you won't have to keep seeing them in the sink every time you walk by. Which makes you feel bad. Which impacts your day negatively. Why not just get it done so you can enjoy the rest of your day with nothing hanging over your head?

Along these lines, one of my big things is unpacking after a trip. I don't care how late it is, I will unpack everything and get the dirty clothes into their respective piles to be washed before I fall into bed. Honestly, I sleep better if I don't have a big, dirty task to face in the morning.

Cull for the future. Organized people tend to put things where they go the first time they touch the item. Mail is gone through over the trash can. Emails are dealt with as they arrive and then deleted so the inbox does not get overwhelming. There are very few piles of things - you know, the piles that keep getting moved from place to place as you need the current space the pile is occupying? I even do it with my contact list. Whenever I am on hold, I cull through all the contacts I have that begin with the same letter of the person I am calling. All of this is in an effort to cut down on the brain clutter that can so easily accumulate.

It's always a great time to declutter your life. Start small, reward yourself for progress, and watch yourself become lighter. Free up your mind so you can plan for the future!