



Do you ever feel like you are spending too much time looking for your glasses, wallet, car keys, or those papers to mail that you were *sure* you left right on your desk? It's not your imagination. Statistics show that Americans **waste nine million hours a day** looking for misplaced items¹. **"Organizing your life"** not only saves time, but also reduces day-to-day stress, because you begin to see yourself as more competent and feel more in control. Believe it or not, **by getting organized you'll even save money**, whether it's by paying bills on time; or, simply knowing "where that stapler is" so you don't have to run out and buy another one for your critical project.

But how do you start? Here are some ideas on how to organize your work and living spaces.

- **Set goals.** Many people try to organize their homes or office spaces without knowing what they actually want the space to do for them once it's organized. *Visualize the result*, and *then* tackle the project.
- **Organization is not one size fits all.** Find a system that works specifically for *your own* personality and your unique lifestyle. If you try to adopt someone *else's* organizational system, it's unlikely that you'll feel motivated to stick to it. If your friend Sally raves about how she's organized her 366 pairs of shoes in perfect rotation so that she doesn't wear the same pair twice in a year, but you wear your one favorite pair everyday, then her system will be useless to you. The same holds true for organizing your kitchen or desk.
- **Define areas.** The utility room may have shelves for your extra crackers, but out of sight can be out of mind...and you may end up buying more crackers before you need to. *Defining your space* can help; for example, a specific corner for luggage, a space for extra gifts, and an entertainment area for DVD's, CD's, etc. That way, you'll know *where* to look for things.
- **Make it easy.** You're more likely to put things where they belong if storage is *conveniently located* and easy to use. Design a logical system, and be sure that the things you use frequently are truly *accessible*.



Getting Started

- **Buyer beware.** Though it can be fun to purchase storage equipment and organizational tools, **evaluate your needs before setting off to buy office products or storage units.** You'll save valuable time and money by determining what new supplies you need—if any—first.
- **Don't strive for perfection.** There is no such thing as a "perfect organizational system" - so don't expect to create one. Let yourself off the hook! **Just make sure it is easy and functional for you**, and your goal will have been achieved!



Many people procrastinate getting organized, as they tell themselves that it is "a waste of time, because I know I will just revert to my old habits anyway!" But it doesn't have to be that way. Personalize your organizational system to make it fun and easy, and you'll be able to follow through with it.

UW CareLink - Faculty and Staff Assistance Program, with services provided by APS Healthcare, is available to help you and your household members cope with the numerous stressors and life challenges.



For confidential assistance call toll free: 1-866-598-3978

References:

Morgenstern, Julie. Organizing from the Inside Out. Henry Holt and Company, New York: 1998.

<http://www.ineedmoretime.com>

<http://www.get-organized.com>



¹ <http://www.homeoasisinternational.com/PressRelease4.htm>