

Introduction

Organizing As A Path to Growth

Would you like to stop running late or find things easily? Do you wish it would take less effort to manage day-to-day tasks? Would you like to reduce your stress and experience your home as a pleasant haven? Ten years ago, as I fruitlessly tried to clean up my office yet one more time, I would have answered yes, to all of the above questions. I was looking for genuine relief from my chaos, mess, frenzy and lateness. Now, my life is much easier because I applied some known principles of self-transformation to my chronic disorganization and I now live an easier, more creative, more connecting life. I wrote this book to help people who really want a way out.

Living as a disorganized person is tough. We often pile up belongings that we don't use, spend hours looking for lost papers or other objects, pay our credit card bills late, or lose our credit ratings. We make our homes and workplaces uncomfortable and unattractive. We take on too much, overbook ourselves, can't keep appointments or get to them on time, and we miss important events. Disorder can be a nightmare, and those who suffer from it often feel locked in, unable to escape.

We suffer because we betray deeply held values such as integrity, dignity and responsibility. Disorganization damages reputations, self-confidence and relationships. Even though we can get a lot done and are often very successful, we are often haunted by the sense that we could do or be more, if we weren't looking for things so often, or under so much pressure. We get in our own way. Those of us who are disorganized often feel tremendous shame about the way we are living. So, in addition to everything else, we have to hide (as much as we can) the disorganization.

Most disorganized people truly want to live without the chaos. They want to arrive at appointments on time. They want a sense of calm that is difficult to find in a swamp of disorder. There are plenty of books and classes about how to create order in one's life, but the advice doesn't take into account the depth and meaning of being disorganized. Transforming chaos into order – getting organized – is often described as a series of action steps fueled by will. The message is: don't do X; just do Y. This book is different. I help you understand *why* you are disorganized, and I'll give you a clear method to follow to help you change your ways over time. Not only will you learn how to get organized, but you will acquire new skills, work through emotional wounds, develop more powerful ways of thinking, and deepen your connection to life energy. Clearing up your external messes can lead you to a path to deeper self-knowledge and a sense of inner peace and order.

By profession, I am an organizational development consultant. My job is to help people in organizations work together better. I enable people to build stronger teams, communicate better, and develop effective organizational strategies. I am interested in change at all levels. I use a multiplicity of theories, approaches and tools to support people to live more fulfilling lives.

It took me years to apply my knowledge to my own crushing habits of disorganization. I had aversion to organizing. I thought I would become rigid and compulsive, that I would have to give up my creativity and self-expressiveness. Yet, as I took on more responsibility, raised my sights and saw more possibilities for myself, I kept stumbling over myself. I ran late, missed appointments, forgot to return important phone calls, couldn't find vital documents, lost airline tickets, and got overwhelmed by my long to-do list. It became an impossible way to live.

I read many organizing books and tried to “fix” my problem. But I couldn’t do it. Much as I tried, I couldn’t make the changes in my life that I wanted to. I discovered that I was up against something that was harder and more complex than I realized. I was going to have to draw on all of my tools and knowledge to be able to accomplish my goals.

The first step was to take my disorganization much more seriously, I needed to stop thinking that I could “solve” my problem. I abandoned quick fixes and became much more interested in the complexity of my challenge. I brought respect and compassion to my messy ways instead of disdain and impatience. I studied how I was creating my mess. As I became more responsible about the unwanted consequences I was creating, I changed the behaviors that led to those consequences.

As I became more organized I faced a number of paradoxes. Contrary to my belief, I became more, not less, creative. That was a big surprise. I freed up time and attention to be even more expressive and more creative. I experienced an emotional aliveness that wasn’t possible for me when I was in a frenzy so much of the time. I discovered that busyness and frenzy are different from emotional fullness. And I discovered that I was often well repaid for the “wasted” time I invested in getting organized. I got time and energy back in spades.

In some ways, the path of organizing is an inquiry into how to live well and fulfill our potential. Perhaps the most surprising benefit is that through getting organized you can learn valuable lessons that foster growth and character development. You’ll start to see that organizing is a way to express self-love and self-care. We discover that beliefs such as “I have too much to do to get organized” or “organizing is a

waste of time” don’t support us any more. We also discover that we can manage our own tendencies to be distracted easily or forget what we meant to be doing. We balance the time we spend in a “flow” state, in which we are deeply engaged with what we truly love, with creating the conditions for this flow state to take place. Living well is ultimately about loving ourselves and others, connecting with what really matters to us, and taking actions based on what we truly care about. Being organized can actually improve our chances of doing so.

This program is founded on the premise that it is the whole person who creates disorder, and therefore it is the whole person who must create a new, meaningful way of living. It shows you a path for change, identifies many crossroads along the way, and points out where and how you can choose to modify your actual behavior. It enables you to reframe organizing from an unpleasant *should* into a vital and exciting part of your quest for growth and learning.

This book is for you if you want to experience more clarity and freedom in daily life. It's for you if you can no longer bear the stress of running late or losing things; if you have been longing for sanity and simplicity, but have been unable to make it happen; if you have realized that you can't move forward in your work because you are hampered by your clutter and lateness; or if you have been meditating for years, and still live surrounded by clutter. It's for those of you who have attention deficit disorder and who want a sympathetic guidebook on how to manage distractibility.

This book is for those of us who are suffering and know it. We are painfully aware that disorganization:

- Blocks our true self-expression because we are mired in details, can't find things, or can't get comfortable
- Reinforces our distractibility, which in turn reduces our creativity or effectiveness
- Fosters an ugly, unpleasant environment which impacts our sense of well being
- Causes stress and worry, which is exhausting and drains our vitality over time
- Causes us to feel stuck, depressed or ineffective, which can lead to a deep depletion of spirit
- Leads us to break agreements, offer more than we can give and then let others and ourselves down

The disorganization often feels stuck – and yet it does not have to be a permanent state. Healing is possible. Deep personal change can come from addressing disorganization in your life. Join me and others who have explored this path of learning and reaped great benefit from changing their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. It takes courage and receptivity to move from self-blame and impatience to inquiry and learning, but it is worth the effort. You'll start feeling more self-confidence, more energy, and more joy in just living your life. Welcome!