



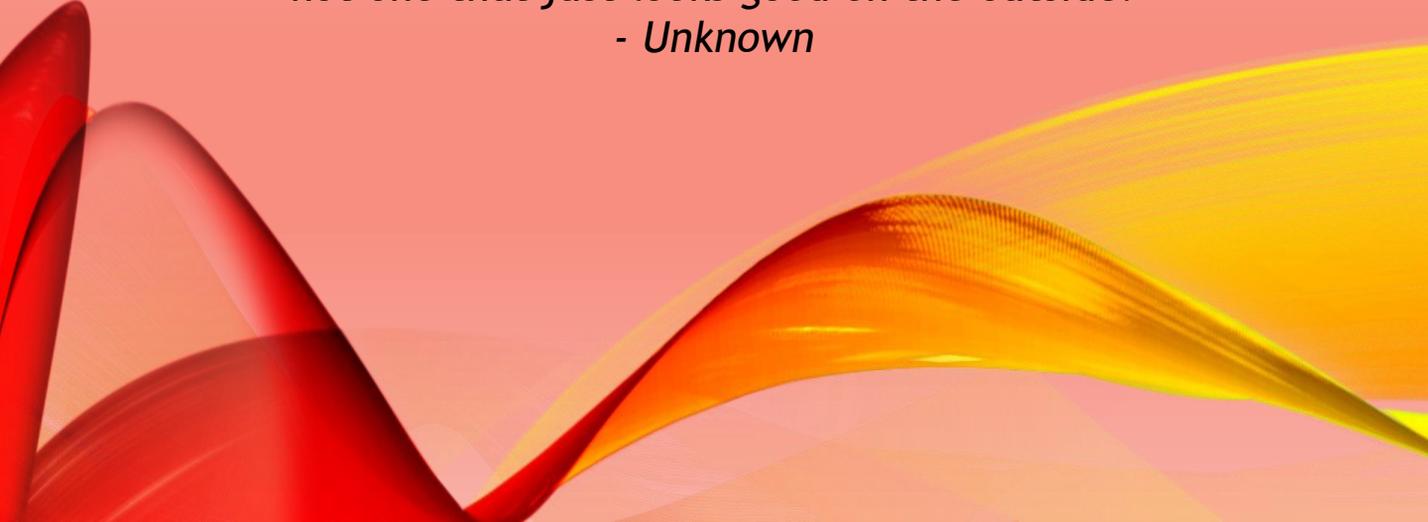
# ***ORGANIZING 101***

## ***INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW***

**Amy Jones**

*Create a life that feels good on the inside,  
not one that just looks good on the outside.*

*- Unknown*



# ORGANIZING 101

The information contained in this publication came about due to the feedback, observations and information I gathered while speaking to over 1,000 people on the topic *Getting Rid of Possessions, It's Harder Than You Think*. This program was created specifically for Senior Access/Generations Group at Methodist Health Systems.

During this series, there were some common threads:

- #1 Being organizing means something different to everyone.
- #2 Clutter means something different to everyone.
- #3 People will justify keeping almost anything if it has sentimental or perceived value.
- #4 Higher value is typically placed on items that have a high level of emotional attachment.
- #5 People tend to keep things out of guilt or obligation.

These are the common threads that I've experienced working with thousands of clients as well. Typically, it is only when someone is forced to make a change that they will do it. Becoming open, willing and able to accept advice, help and solutions creates a healthier course for positive actions and transformation. My ultimate organizing goal is to get you to the point where you only spend 15 minutes per day maintaining the plan that has been created for you.

***I have found getting organized involves these simple concepts:***

It is about making you comfortable in your own home.

It is about walking in your home  
and the first thing you see makes you smile.

It is about surrounding yourself with things  
you love and that bring you happiness.

***Only YOU can define YOUR feeling of happiness and comfort.***

# HOW CLUTTER HAPPENS

You collect things for a variety of reasons: you'll use it someday, it has sentimental value, or you spent good money on it, so you feel you need to keep the item, even if you haven't touched or used it in weeks, months, or years.

You might be holding on to that book you bought a year ago that you know you'll read when you have time or those amazing pair of shoes that you'll wear for just the right occasion (even though they kill your feet).

But what you hate to admit is you probably made a mistake in buying those things in the first place. And in the second place, it literally hurts your brain to come to terms with that fact.

Researchers at Yale recently identified that there are two areas in your brain associated with pain. These areas actually light up in response to letting go of items you own and feel attached to.

This is the same area of the brain that lights up when you feel physical pain from cutting your finger or drinking hot coffee. Your brain translates the loss of one of your valued possessions into something that causes you physical pain.

***And, the fact of the matter is, the more you've committed emotionally or financially to an item, the more you want to keep it around.***

***Then, when you introduce new items into your life, you immediately associate value with these items, making it harder for you to give them up in the future.***

***This psychological connection to things is what leads to the accumulation of stuff.***

# CLUTTER'S IMPACT ON YOUR BRAIN

*It is a fact: things in your surroundings can have a negative impact on your ability to focus and process information.*

A study conducted by neuroscientists at Princeton University, found that physical clutter in your surroundings competes for your attention, resulting in decreased performance and increased stress.

A team of UCLA researchers recently observed 32 Los Angeles families and found that **all** the mothers' stress hormones spiked during the time they spent dealing with their belongings.

*Like what multitasking does to your brain, physical clutter overloads your senses, making you feel stressed, and impairs your ability to think creatively.*

## Clutter Isn't Just Physical

When you have to-do items constantly floating around in your head (thought-soup) or your phone rings or vibrates regularly, your brain doesn't get a chance to fully enter creative flow or process experiences.

When your brain has too much on its plate and doesn't function to its full capacity which can have serious negative results:

- You become awful at:
- filtering information
  - switching quickly between tasks
  - keeping a strong working memory

*The overconsumption of digital stuff has the same effect on your brain as physical clutter.*

## **WHY MESS CAUSES STRESS THE MENTAL COST OF CLUTTER**

RESOURCE: SHERRIE BOURG CARTER PSY.D (PSYCHOLOGY TODAY)

Clutter can play a significant role in how we feel about our homes, our workplaces, and ourselves. Messy homes and work spaces leave us feeling anxious, helpless, and overwhelmed. Yet, rarely is clutter recognized as a significant source of stress in our lives.

### ***Why does mess lead to so much stress?***

Clutter bombards our minds with excessive stimuli (visual, olfactory, tactile), causing our senses to work overtime on stimuli that aren't necessary or important.

Clutter distracts us by drawing our attention away from what our focus should be on.

Clutter makes it more difficult to relax, both physically and mentally.

Clutter constantly signals to our brains that our work is never done.

Clutter makes us anxious because we're never sure what it's going to take to get through to the bottom of the pile.

Clutter creates feelings of guilt ("I should be more organized") and embarrassment, especially when others unexpectedly drop by our homes or work spaces.

Clutter inhibits creativity and productivity by invading the open spaces that allow most people to think, brain storm, and problem solve.

Clutter frustrates us by preventing us from locating what we need quickly (e.g. files and paperwork lost in the "pile" or keys swallowed up by the clutter).

# ORGANIZING STATISTICS

Over the course of our lifetime, we will spend a total of 3,680 hours or 153 days searching for misplaced items. The research found we lose up to nine items every day—or 198,743 in a lifetime. Phones, keys, sunglasses, and paperwork top the list. *The Daily Mail*

The \$8 billion home organization industry has more than doubled in size since the early 2000's—growing at a staggering rate of 10% each year. *Uppercase*

65 % of nationwide consumers polled noted that their household was at least moderately disorganized, 71 % said their quality of life would improve if they were better organized and 96% indicated they could save time every day by becoming more organized. *NAPO*

The top areas in homes where organizing services are requested are the home office or den, kitchen, closet, master bedroom and the garage/attic/basement areas. *NAPO*

When asked what the biggest challenge to improving organization, 32.9% said “lack of space”, 27.3% said “finding the time”, 25.2% said “too much stuff”. *Homeworld Forecast Consumer Survey conducted by NPD Group*

1,397 people were asked “How long would it take you to get your house ready for dinner guests” and gave these answers: 65% said 4 hours or less, 11% said they would never invite anyone inside, 10% said 8 hours, 7% said 24 hours and 6% said 40 or more hours. *NAPO*

80% of our medical expenditures are stress related.  
*The Centers for Disease Control*

Stress-related illness costs the nation \$300 billion a year in medical costs and lost productivity. *American Institute of Stress*

# ORGANIZING STATISTICS

More than 1 out of 4 Americans would like to be better organized. *NAPO*

Home storage products have become a \$4.36 billion industry. *Newsweek*

55% of consumers polled say they would save 16 minutes to one hour a day if they were more organized. Those consumers are then wasting 2-15 days a year! *NAPO*

Average Americans spends one year of their life looking for lost or misplaced items. *US News and World Report*

On average, we spend 6 minutes looking for our keys in the morning. *IKEA*

The top five items men look for in their homes are clean socks, remote control, wedding album, car keys and driver's license. For women, the top five items are shoes, a child's toy, wallet, lipstick and the remote control. *IKEA*

The average American wastes 55 minutes a day (roughly 12 days a year) looking for things they own but can't find. *Newsweek*

Americans waste more than 9 million hours each day looking for lost and misplaced articles. *American Demographic Society*

***80% of the clutter in your home is a result of disorganization, NOT a lack of space.***

# WHAT DOES GETTING ORGANIZED MEAN?

*Getting organized. De-cluttering. Becoming a minimalist.*

We hear about it; we want to do it and then when it comes to taking action we have a tendency to go into avoidance or distraction mode.

It is typically one of our new year's resolutions along with eating healthier, exercising and quitting a bad habit.

We become motivated and psych ourselves up to get organized.

Then time after time we become exhausted with the mere thought of cleaning out, de-cluttering, donating, selling and getting organized.

*What does getting organized even mean?*

To some, it means cleaning out everything that is no longer useful.

To others, it is keeping a tidy desk, a clean refrigerator or even establishing a “command center” for home business.

If having items on your desk such as papers, pens or photos of your family or significant other on your desk doesn't feel like clutter to you, then it's not.

*You should seek to create spaces that make you feel at ease.*

# WHAT DOES GETTING ORGANIZED MEAN?

As you go through this publication, keep the following in mind:

## Apply Constraints

The number of items we can purchase and consume is unlimited. What we are ultimately limited by is the area where it will be kept or stored. Limit the number of items you purchase to those you will realistically have room for. If you don't have room for it, don't get it until you have made room for it.

## Use Small Storage Spaces

Limiting your storage space can help with limiting consumption. Apply constraints to your storage spaces as well. You'll be able to quickly identify what you really need.

## Conduct a Monthly Review of the Key Indicators of Disarray

Every month, review your master closet, kitchen and garage for items you haven't worn, are expired or haven't used. Establish a deadline for when you will get rid of the things that you no longer use.

## Store Things Where They Make Sense

If you have an excess amount of china or silverware, don't store it in your master closet. Make room for it in the kitchen or pantry. If it doesn't fit, get rid of something so that it can live in the place where it makes sense (not where you have room to store it).

*TreeHugger founder Graham Hill, who traded in his million-dollar mansion for a 420 square foot apartment, in an interview with the New York Times, stated: "I like material things as much as anyone. But my experiences show that after a certain point, material objects have a tendency to crowd out the emotional needs they are meant to support. While clutter has been shown to negatively effect your performance, it is your perception of clutter that matters, not someone else's."*

# 7 PROBLEM AREAS & KEY INDICATORS OF DISARRAY

## 1. Paper

What can be done with the never-ending supply of paper?

## 2. Photographs

The family history in photos—who's even in them?

## 3. Kitchen (Fridge & Pantry) - Key Indicator of Disarray

When is the last time you cleaned out your fridge or pantry?

## 4. Garage

Do you use the garage for a storage area?

## 5. Master Closet & Clothes - Key Indicator of Disarray

When is the last time you went through everything in the closet?

## 6. Storage - Key Indicator of Disarray

Do you keep excess items in a storage building, unit or off-site?

## 7. Sentimental Items & Collectibles

**(Emotional Value vs Market Value)**

Who are you keeping the mementos, memorabilia and family heirlooms for?

## ABOUT AMY JONES

Amy Jones lives and breathes one simple philosophy:  
*live in the moment.*

“People are so consumed with planning for the future that they fail to focus on the life right in front of them; the here and now. All of us know someone who, due to a life event (health, divorce, death, loss of income), are unable to do the things they’ve always wanted to do, like travel. There are so many dreams that never come to fruition because of circumstances out of our control,” she says.

Amy Jones is a personal growth visionary, author and international speaker. For over two decades, she has inspired thousands of people; intent on helping facilitate their personal growth and self-healing process by creating opportunities for significant and lasting life changes.

She is the author of *Better for Being Broken: How to Put Yourself Back Together When Your World Has Shattered* and co-author of *Break Through: Stories of Triumph Over Tragedy* with Johnny Wimbrey, Nik Halik and Les Brown.



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