

## **10 Secrets of Healthy Wealthy Organized People**

### **1. Walk away from bargains**

Just because you can buy a cashmere sweater for \$20 or three bottles of ketchup for the price of one doesn't mean you should. "Ask, 'Do I have something similar?' and 'Where am I going to store it?' before making a purchase," advises New York City professional organizer Julie Morgenstern, author of *Shed Your Stuff, Change Your Life*.

### **2. Make peace with imperfection**

Efficient people give "A-level effort" to the most important projects (say, work assignments or a kitchen redesign), and for the rest they do just enough to get the job done, says Renae Reinardy, PsyD, a psychologist who specializes in hoarding disorders. Maybe you give yourself permission to bring store-bought cookies to a school bake sale or donate a bag of stuff—unsorted!—to Goodwill. "Trying to do every task perfectly is the easiest way to get bogged down," says Reinardy.

### **3. Never label anything "miscellaneous"**

You put a bunch of things into a file or box and write this catchall across the front. "But within a week you've forgotten what's in there," says Morgenstern. Instead, sort items into specific groups—"electric bills," "lightbulbs," and so on.

### **4. Schedule regular decluttering sessions**

Rather than wait until an industrious mood strikes (we all know where that leads), have a decluttering routine in place—whether it's spending 15 minutes sorting mail after work or tackling a new project every Sunday afternoon.

### **5. Stick with what works**

"I have clients who will try every line of makeup, every cell phone—it's exhausting," says Dorothy Breininger, president of the Delphi Center for Organization. Don't waste time (and money) obsessively seeking out the best thing.

### **6. Create a dump zone**

Find a space to corral all the stuff that you don't have time to put away the moment you step in the door, says Breininger. Once you're ready to get organized, you won't have to hunt all over the house for the dry cleaning or your child's field trip permission slip.

### **7. Ask for help**

"The organized person is willing to expose herself to short-term embarrassment and call for backup," says Breininger. Which is to say, that elaborate four-course dinner you planned? Change it to a potluck.

### **8. Separate emotions from possessions**

It's healthy to be attached to certain items—a vase you picked up in Paris, your grandmother's pearls. But holey concert tees or cheap, scuffed earrings your husband gave you years ago? Just let them go.

### **9. Foresee (and avoid) problems**

You wouldn't leave the house on a gray day without an umbrella, right? People who appear to sail through life unruffled apply this thinking to every scenario, says Breininger. Have a cabinet packed with leaning towers of Tupperware? Organized folks will take a few minutes

to short-circuit an avalanche before it happens. (In other words, rearranging that cupboard now is easier than chasing after wayward lids as they scatter underneath the fridge.)

**10. Know where to donate**

It's easier to part with belongings if they're going to a good home. Identify a neighbor's son who fits into your child's outgrown clothes, or choose a favorite charity. "It will save you from searching for the perfect recipient every time you need to unload something," says Morgenstern.

Online article

## **The Information White Water: Building Your Own R.A.F.T. To Navigate the Cyber Rapids**

Is your life on track? Not so long ago, this question seemed eminently sensible. Everyone was trying to get on track, stay on track, move further down the track. We all chugged along like Thomas the Tank Engine, making scheduled station stops (schools, corporations, banks) to pick up the usual cargo (education, job, house) and passengers (friends, spouses, children). A divorce, illness, or job loss constituted catastrophic derailment. Everyone's goal was to claim, "You betcha, my life's on track!"

Today that answer makes no sense. Because, honey, there is no track. Not anymore. We're living through the most dramatic era of change in human history. A flood of new technologies and accompanying social transitions has altered everything. It's not just that we're on the receiving end of a torrent of messages, texts, and e-mails. The way we interact and build relationships has been turned upside down; whole careers and industries have been swept away. There's so much to do, to know, to learn, to master—and the floodwaters are rising.

To negotiate this new normal, we don't need locomotives.

We need kayaks.

Now, it's not easy, letting go of the *chugga-chugga*, iron-engine mind-set. Kayaking, after all, is much less stable than riding a train, but these days, that's a huge advantage. This new approach allows you to go with the flow of change, turn quickly in any direction to avoid danger or pursue opportunity, pop upright again after you've gone under entirely (try doing that on a train).

Once you've learned a few paddling skills, you'll find that your nimble craft can ride the tide of change, accessing all sorts of interesting places and things no train could ever reach

### **Paddling Skill #1: Don't Swallow the River**

I've noticed that people who are still in train-track mode try to handle every demand or request that reaches them. That's like trying to drink the Nile. You just can't do everything. You shouldn't try. When your to-do list threatens to spill over, examine every item on it while asking two questions:

1. Is this task absolutely necessary to keep my life afloat?
2. Does this task buoy me up emotionally?

If the answer to either of these questions is yes, do the deed. If not, do nothing. Let that problem or opportunity float past you. Wave and smile, if you like, but don't bring inessential, unpleasant things on board. Your kayak isn't big enough. Anything unnecessary could sink you.

Right now my various mailboxes—voice, paper, and electronic—contain about 120 messages waiting to be answered. Today, about 15 of those messages—ten from work, five from loved ones—are essential to keep my professional and personal life from sinking. A couple more are from funny friends; they'll make me laugh. I'll get to those 17 messages today. The others, later. Maybe. I've found that important messages tend to bob along beside me, bonking against my kayak, until I get to them.

Each day, ask those two river-runner's questions about every request or assignment you encounter. Do the things that are absolutely necessary or make you happy. Let everything else drift away. If you overlook something important, you can always paddle over to it later, or snag something similar floating by. That's one of the joys of the crazy, fluid world we've created.

## **Paddling Skill #2: Find Your Water Tribe**

So that addresses the incoming flood, but what about the oceans of data beyond your inbox? Somewhere out there is the specific help, advice, and knowledge that's crucial to your life. The question is how to find it without getting carried out to sea.

Fortunately, modern communication technology greatly facilitates something called the wisdom of crowds. Simply put, when many diverse people answer a question (say, guessing the number of jelly beans in a jar), the mathematical average of all the responses is more likely to be accurate than any single response.

We're able to access this knowledge better than any other group of humans in history. When my son, Adam, was prenatally diagnosed with Down syndrome more than 20 years ago, no one around me knew what to say. I agonized, grieved, and feared without much social support.

This was before Google.

You see, the algorithm that makes Google work is also what makes it a good indicator of crowd wisdom. Just now, I googled "prenatal diagnosis Down syndrome" for the very first time. The third article on the screen said, "Advice for women whose baby will be born with Down syndrome often comes from a perspective of misinformation and discouragement rather than celebration."

Celebration!

How different my life would've been if Google had existed on the day Adam was diagnosed. A wise, diverse, knowledgeable crowd would've been there—right there!—to counsel and support me better than my friends possibly could.

Today's information flood can be very kind. If you need to know which of the 12,000 recipes for healthful but tasty chicken are actually nutritious and delicious, consult the crowds. If you're looking for the best place to meet people who share your love of nude pot-throwing, start typing. Same goes for when you have to figure out what's happening in your industry,

your neighborhood, your cable TV system. You'll gather not just the facts you need but the support and advice you never knew was out there.

### **Paddling Skill #3: Make Computers Your BFFs or FOFs**

At this point, I should mention I have the computer skills of a hamster. So in 2006, I asked a computer scientist client to teach me to build a Web site. During the following months, my brain felt like a raisin on fire as I tried to fathom HTML, JavaScript, encryption software, and so on. It was like learning Swahili...in Turkish.

Maddeningly, my kids mastered this technology effortlessly. Children love Water World. Their brains are almost 100 percent "fluid intelligence," absorbing new skills fast. Adults rely on the "crystallized intelligence" stored in memory, which has been perfectly useful in the past—hey, why reinvent the wheel every day? Ha ha! Except now the wheels have come off. They're at the bottom of Davy Jones's locker. Here's the hard truth: Suck it up and deal. Learn to use computers.

I dish this out because I can take it. I spent nightmare months achieving minimal computer competency, losing all muscle tone except in my mouse-clicking finger, developing acne and insomnia. At one point I became so deeply geeky that I completely broke my eyeglasses, and the only way to use them was to packing-tape the lenses to my face. Which, God help me, I did.

It was so worth it.

If your head exploded at the idea of stapling yourself to a chair for months on end, you may never have a BFF in your computer. Okay, make computers your FOFs—friends of friends. Find computer lovers (your son, your sister, your minister) and exploit them ruthlessly. Get their help sending e-mail, setting up a blog, finding information, watching "stupid pet tricks playing dead." In fact, do that last one right now. Seriously. I'll wait.

See? It really is worth making friends with computers, or at the very least making friends with their friends. You'll find this is your basic paddling technique. Now you just have to learn how to steer your kayak.

Paddling skill #4: Site your purpose

### **Paddling Skill #4: Site Your Purpose**

One rainy night long ago, I was fleeing a PTA meeting in my minivan when I drove into a puddle that turned out to be four feet deep. The motor went eerily silent just as the vehicle became waterborne and began floating sideways. In the quiet, I heard a still, small voice within me. It said, "I hate PTA meetings, and I hate this %@&ing minivan."

In that moment, I was steering my life. By articulating what I hated, I began articulating what I loved—not the train-station life of a PTA mom but a kayaking life where I kept my kids home from school to watch YouTube. A life where adults would pay me to say, "Your true purpose is whatever makes you feel most joyful. Try steering toward that."

It's advice I've taken myself: During the months I was obsessed with computers, I felt very much "in the flow." The obsession vanished as inexplicably as it arrived, but it left me tech savvy enough to do research that informs my work—and manage a team that trains life coaches all over the world. Who knew the current would carry me there? I didn't. But I must say: Mama like.

I'm certainly not the only middle-aged mom to use current innovations for career development. Paula, a teacher, thought she'd never get to travel—until she did a deep dive online and discovered something called "location independent lifestyle." She's found jobs all over the world doing teacher-training workshops.

I've just come across another interesting story: Gina is—I kid you not—a massage therapist for dogs. I know this because (a) it says so on her Web site and (b) she's currently in my living room with our golden retriever, Bjorn, who's recovering from knee surgery. I can hear the strains of Enya from Gina's portable CD player, smell the aromatic ointments that have put Bjorn into a bliss-coma. A ridiculous luxury? I thought so, too, until I learned that a massaged dog heals faster. Gina saves money I'd otherwise spend on more vet appointments. I'm thrilled she paddled her kayak toward what gives her joy (though not as thrilled as Bjorn).

Right now, as best you can, write a statement of purpose for your life. If this feels impossible, there are Web sites created specifically to guide you through the process. I'm sure your minister will be glad to help you find them. If you need an example, my purpose statement today (I revise it often) is "To remain in continuous conscious awareness of the one Life in which all singular lives exist." Yesterday it was "To survive until bedtime." Your purpose statement can be grand or silly, as long as it rings true. It is to your kayak life what tracks were to trains: It determines your direction.

This column can't begin to describe the infinite opportunities you'll find as you navigate today's vast seas of possibility. If you learn basic paddling skills and steer by your inner purpose instead of predetermined social tracks, you'll have a joyful voyage. Maybe you'll meet your soul mate online, earn a degree at a distance, start a virtual business, or do something no one's even named yet.

These days, I'm not trying to read the future. I'm just paddling along my own trajectory as a coach, so I can pay BFFs to run my Web site (I'm now the site's FOF). I'm paddling by downloading instructions to help me call my daughter in Japan, on a cell phone that can play a thousand songs and show me satellite photos of almost anyplace on Earth.

Where will this white-water change take us next? My imagination doesn't stretch that far.

I'm content to ride the tide. My own little kayak of a life can take me anywhere I need to go.

## Declutter Your Life Teleclass Script

There's at least one area in almost everyone's life that could stand to be decluttered. You can admit it right now, hey, if not to me then who, right? For me it's ideas. I chase, catch and store way too many bright, shiny ideas – whether they're business or personal. More than I'll ever have a chance to see to fruition in a couple of lifetimes. That bulging trunk of possibilities can distract and confuse me – cause me to lose focus and “leave undone those things which I ought to have done.”

All of our material and mental excess is about so much more than the objects themselves. In my case I know I need to unpack that mental suitcase, but sometimes, doing so causes anxiety. Yet I know that letting go leaves space for more to come. That's true of our relationship to all things in the physical and the spiritual world.

Here we are in the spring of a brand-new decade. I've heard so many people say they feel this will be their best year yet. I feel that way, too. There's something about 2010 that makes us hopeful. We sense an invitation to begin this next decade of the millennium with more conscious attention to our lives.

And cleaning house—both literally and as a metaphor for life—is a great way to hit the Refresh button.

When you look at your relationship to *things* —and the energy they contain—ask yourself if they promote joy, beauty, and usefulness, or are they burdensome?

What I know for sure: Life is about an energy exchange. Everything and everybody is vibrating at different frequencies. And you get to choose the vibration you want to resonate with and how to manifest that choice through your actions. Which is what I'm trying to do this year.

So I started 2010 not on a diet. (We've all seen how well my diets worked in the past.) Instead, some friends and I are doing a lifestyle cleanse. It began with a concerted effort to eat foods that give you real energy and "love you back" , as featured in the January issue. Also from that issue, we decided to take Michael Pollan's advice: "Eat [real] food. Not too much. Mostly plants"

This principle alone eliminates a lot of clutter. And once you get that far, you want other areas of your life decluttered as well. In case you're looking for inspiration, here's my list:

- Relationship to self—good riddance to decisions that don't support self-care, self-value, and self-worth.
- Relationship to others—do the people in your life give you energy and encourage your personal growth, or block that growth with dysfunctional dynamics and

outdated scripts? If they don't support you as a loving, open, free, and spontaneous being: Goodbye!

- Relationship to emotional life—out with stagnant patterns that no longer serve you.
- Relationship to work—not only reducing the "clutter" of paperwork, inefficiency, and overcommunication, but also striving to create a balanced workload and make your work invigorating, inspiring, collaborative, and empowering to others.
- Relationship to nature and play—seeing these as expressions of love and opportunities to fill your life with truth and joy.

To me, all of this is the real deal of de-cluttering, a process that's ever evolving as you move closer to the self you were meant to be.

And saying goodbye to too many shoes is a darn good start.