

**May, 2008**  
**Organizing for Women**  
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## **Five Things Every Mom Needs:**

- 1. One and only one calendar:** There is only one you, there should only be one calendar. Having more than one means stuff gets missed. If the family needs access to your calendar, print up a weekly / monthly copy of yours. Better yet, if you are tech-savvy, sync you and your spouse's PDA's together.
- 2. One and only one home in-box:** Some of us are very organized at work, but things get a bit out of hand at home. Why? There is only one in box at work, either on the desk or via email, so we can monitor and process the flow as it comes to us. But at home, information and stuff flows in the front door with the mail, the back door with the groceries, the gym bags, the back-packs from school, you get the point.  
Everything that comes in to my house gets filtered through the desk in the kitchen. Boxes to unload, school papers from the kids, daily personal mail and weekly business mail, etc. Everyone knows to dump their stuff there. Then to process, there is a box for stuff to get re-distributed, the files for the kids and their activities, a bulletin board, the master grocery list, recycling and trash cans, etc.
- 3. One hour a week for personal planning:** I just instituted this for myself, and I am so glad I did. Monday mornings are historically crazy in our house, just getting back to the regular school week. I also work Monday mornings, so I was finding myself crazy busy trying to take care of everything on the fly. Now Monday mornings, from 8:30 – 9:30, I call and make appointments, fill out birthday cards to mail, pay bills, place catalog orders, collect clothes for the cleaners, put laundry away, vacuum, the options are endless. But the hour is spent at home, getting my own stuff in order. And Monday works for me. The time is arbitrary, find one that works for you.
- 4. One Mantra for your life:** For me, it is "God, Family and Community, in that Order". This phrase helps guide my decisions for acquiring new stuff, new responsibilities, new friends, etc. Sometimes I have phrases in my head that I attribute to other women in my life, like  
"It's better to light a candle than curse the dark." (Wendy, which reminds me to act instead of complain!)  
"God doesn't like ugly." (Danielle, which reminds me that our actions have consequences.)"  
"God won't ask me if I died with a clean house" (Pat, reminding me some things are more important than others)  
"Shut your Mouth (count to 10) and Breathe." (Marge, reminds me to relax!)  
"Life is too short to hang out with negative people" (Grandma, god bless her!)
- 5. One great outfit for winter and one for summer,** so you can take advantage of spontaneous invitations for swanky restaurants, theatre tickets, speaking engagements, whatever.

## **Organizing for Women**

To celebrate Mother's Day, I want to share a few organizing secrets that I have learned since becoming a mom. I dedicate this article with deep affection and appreciation, to all of the incredible women who have taught me so much. Most especially, I dedicate this to my grandmother, who passed away on April 18<sup>th</sup>. God bless you, Grandma.

As a professional organizer, I have found that the three most problematic areas for many women in terms of organization are: time, clothes and stuff. For moms, in particular, those areas may be a little different: time, laundry and toys. When it comes to household tasks, moms often set the rules and the organizational tone. Here are some quick tips to help you in this endeavor:

### **Time**

- Spend 10 minutes focusing on your organization issues now; these 10 minutes will save you hours later.
- Always have a back up for everything: work shirt, babysitter, travel plans, snacks, etc.
- Prioritize. When homebound after a C-section, I was reminded that my pre-eminent obligation is feed, clothe, protect and educate my children. Everything else is extra.
- Dream big, but cherish small.
- Look at time in spans of weeks, not days, when seeking balance.
- “Take time for your self. No one is going to give it to you, and if you don’t recharge, you’ll have nothing left for anyone else.” This was the advice that an 80-year old great-grandmother recently gave me.

### **Clothes, Closets and Laundry**

- Keep only current size and seasonal clothes in the closet. Purge your wardrobe of clothes that no longer fit, and store everything else, somewhere else, labeled and “containerized,” of course.
- And, Moms, get rid of your “fat jeans”. I read that tip in January, grew smaller than my fat jeans in February, and purged them immediately. Now there is no going back!
- Invest in a few quality pieces instead of cluttering your closet with heaps of cheap and poorly made outfits. Remember, quality is more important than quantity. Sort and discard your closet’s current contents, accordingly.
- Designate a bag for every activity—sports, crafts, work, etc. For example, pack your daughter’s soccer uniform and shin guards in a duffel bag, and place it in a location where she can quickly grab it and run to practice. Replace the bag’s contents immediately after cleaning the items, and return it to its appropriate location in time for the next game or practice. Do this for your briefcase and handbag, as well.

### **Stuff and Toys**

- Adults: There are a few things that are vitally important, and even when other things get crazy, we know where those vital few are. Pick a permanent spot to store car keys, diaper bags, cell phones, purses, etc.
- Kids: Store like items, e.g., Legos with Legos, American Girl clothes with American Girl dolls. Design a system that is simple. Label storage containers clearly for easy identification of the contents.
- Rotate toys every month, with or without your children’s assistance. You may want to sort and purge toys with your children, so that they can learn the process (and you learn what items they truly value). Then take another sweep through the toys without their assistance; be a bit more ruthless this time, but make sure you retain their true treasures. If your kids are young, and you sort and purge without them, arrange their remaining toys in an appealing way, so that they don’t focus on what’s gone.