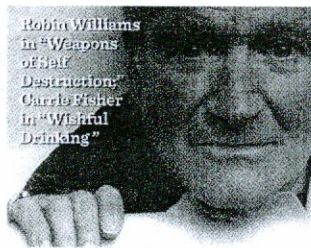


Robin Williams in "Weapons of Self Destruction" Carrie Fisher in "Wishful Drinking"



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Getting It Together

Home is where my keys are

To get organized, you just have to be willing to stop being disorganized

By ANDREW J. MELLEN

It doesn't feel safe outside. Perhaps it doesn't feel safe inside either. Where you live.

These are chaotic times out in the world right now. News and events swirl and churn with fear and uncertainty. And whether that's intentional to keep people feeling off-base and uncomfortable, or just the product of a whole heap of crazy, stacked high and teetering, the result is the same. The world outside is unpredictable and unreliable, and it's hard to find stability when the ground keeps shifting as rapidly as it has been lately.

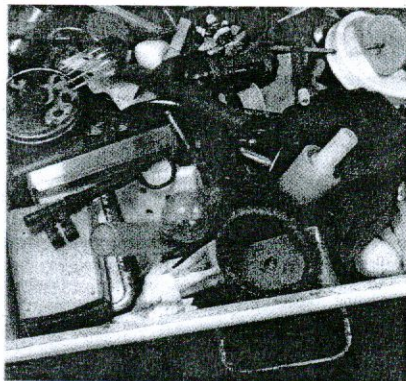
After another busy day out in the city, you head home for some peace and quiet. When you lock the door and collapse into your favorite chair and look around, do you find that your home offers you the comfort that you're craving? Or do you find the chaos of the outside world reflected back at you inside your home as well?

If home is a jumble of random things, half-finished projects and unfulfilled promises, it probably doesn't feel safe and warm and cozy. More than likely it's noisy and unsettling.

Between the visual assault of piles of clothes or papers or dirty dishes, and the silent (or not so silent) conversations about not finding your keys or phone when you're on the edge of running late, it's hard to find a quiet moment. The good news is, while you can't turn down the volume of a city street, the noise inside your home (and inside your head) can be controlled. Just by getting organized.

Getting organized is no mystery

Whether you share a bedroom or live alone in a spacious Upper East Side townhouse, whether you're the chairman of Goldman Sachs or you've just been sacked from a lousy job, you can still come home to calm and order and a clutter-free environment, where you can rest and recharge, and



Getting organized is about doing less and focusing on the things that are really important.

let go of the chaos outside.

Getting organized is not a mysterious process that only happens on the third full moon of the planting season when Jupiter is in alignment with Pluto, nor is it any more complicated than always putting your toys away. In the same place. Every day.

People may resist getting organized because they fear that it will add one more thing to their already impossibly long list of things to do. But here's the great secret. Getting organized is about doing less.

To get organized, one simply has to be willing to stop being disorganized. That may sound like doublespeak but that one sentence contains the key to shifting your thinking about organization from something you do, to recognizing that it's actually something you don't do.

What you don't do: just set something down, telling yourself you'll get back to it later. Later and someday no longer exist. It takes no more effort to return something to its proper home than it does to drop it on the first clear surface and keep moving. Add it up. The time you save now, you'll spend later in sweat and panic as you race around trying to find whatever it was you thought you didn't have time to put away in the first place. Pay now or pay later.

What you don't do: defer decisions to some mythical future time when apparently all the demands you're currently juggling are no longer vying for your attention. You don't steal time from the future to pay for today's indecisions. You actually live here in the moment where there is enough time for what's important.

What you don't do: multi-task important things. No one is able to split their concentration equally among significant tasks and remain focused and productive. You can wash the dishes and talk on the phone, or defragment your hard drive and read a magazine. But you can't perform open heart surgery and bake a seven-layer cake at the same time.

And here's the best part—getting organized isn't even an end in itself.

Not that it isn't great to not tear around the house frantically looking for your misplaced glasses or book. Or to look around and no longer feel overwhelmed with all the tasks deferred that threaten to keep you agitated until you either make another list or close a door, if you have a door to close.

That's a wonderful feeling, that sense of liberation. But that's just the beginning. The big payoff of knowing where everything is, of not having to scramble and waste so much time in relation to objects is to free your time, your energy and your mind to focus on the things that are really important—relationships with ideas and people.

Friends, family, meaningful work, service—that's what matters. Knowing where the ice-cream scoop is only makes serving ice cream that much sweeter, so you can get back that much quicker to the fascinating conversation you were having with the folks you love.

And that's definitely not something you want to put off until someday.

Andrew J. Mellen's book "Unstuff Your Life" will be published in August 2010.



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