

Organizing & Decluttering Principles

Shawn Kent Hayashi's philosophy on organizing and decluttering includes these 4 steps:

1. **Keep only what you love and use**
2. **Group like things together and have a place for everything**
3. **Keep everything in its place**
4. **Have a system to return things to their places**

STEP ONE: *Keep only what you love and use.*

Go through your possessions one by one. If a file folder, chair, or picture on the wall does not represent you, let it go. If you can't say, "I love that!" then donate it to someone who would appreciate it so you have space for new things to show up that trigger you to feel good. Your things have a vibration – they trigger an emotional wake. Are you keeping only the things that trigger a positive emotional wake?

This works in your office, calendar, closet, or anywhere you go. To prove this to yourself, choose one area, perhaps your office. Begin in one corner and go clockwise around the room, look at each item – every single one.

Ask yourself these questions about your possessions:

- Does this trigger a good feeling?
- Do I want to keep it?
- Will I use it?

When you can't answer "yes" to these questions, then place the item in a to-donate box or trash pile and let it go. If you have been keeping something purely for sentimental reasons, take a picture of it. Keep the picture if you need to enable your emotions to let you part with a sentimental possession.

Do the same thing with the regular appointments or meetings in your schedule. Ask yourself:

- Does this standing appointment add value; is it useful?
- Do I want to continue doing this?
- Does my schedule make me feel great?

...If not, it is time to declutter!

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How we organize paper, time, and space is the same skill.

If you feel overwhelmed by too much stuff, begin in one area: start to the right of the door to the room. Stay focused by picking up each item and asking yourself the questions above. Decide now: *is this a keeper, or to be donated or trashed?*

Put every item in one of these three piles until every item in the room has been touched. You may want to set a timer for 15 or 30 minutes. When the timer goes off give yourself a short 5-minute break to listen to music you enjoy, to dance, meditate briefly, or go to a favorite spot in your home or office to remind yourself that you can do this. When the 5-minute timer goes off, come back and start where you left off.

Once you have everything in one of the three piles, move onto step two.

STEP TWO: *Group like things together and have a place for everything.*

This principle applies to everything you own. Have a specific place for pens, tape, scissors, financial files, a place for books to read and a place for books you've already read. As in a kitchen, each item has its own place.

On my **laptop** I have a place for my schedule, client folders, a place for the budget, and every other chunk of my business and life. In my **email**, there are folders for emails I've already read and filed so that my inbox is only for emails not yet read. Once an email has been read, it is moved out of the inbox into an appropriate folder (i.e. Waiting for, Action Required, or a topical or client folder).

Also have a place in your schedule for the key commitments that are vital to you. These commitments are the habits that support your success. For example, I have a place in my schedule for responding to emails, handling administrative details, exercise, and family dinners. Also consider a place in your schedule for learning new skills or retreats to keep you refreshed.

STEPS 3 & 4: *Keep everything in its place, and have a system to return things to their places.*

Think about your kitchen. You have places for your glasses and plates. When you use them, you put them in the dishwasher, and then you return them to their places so you know where everything is, right? When you cook, you can go from organization to chaos to organization quickly in the kitchen because you have a place for everything and you return items to that place.

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You can apply the same process to your paper, time, and space.

I keep a list of everything I commit to doing – one ongoing list. I use one list for everything I agree to do, need, or want to do. This is my ongoing project list. I map it to my schedule. If I agree to do something for you, I put in my schedule the time when I will do that action. My schedule then drives my actions.

When you use this system faithfully, your life will be transformed – become more peaceful – and you will be able to relax when you want to relax because you know that the things that need to be done will be done.

When a way of grouping like things together or if the first spot you identified for things does not work for you, try another way.

Planning is about creating the structure to bring your goals alive and it requires that you are organized in your thinking. Organizing comes before planning.

As Napoleon Hill said, “The primary reason for failure is that people do not develop new plans to replace those plans that didn’t work.”

To organize your *thinking*, ask and answer questions like:

- What are my goals?
- What are my priorities?
- What are the next steps that need to occur to move each of my projects forward?
- What are my accountabilities?
- What does the desired outcome look like?
- Who knows how to accomplish what I want done?
- Would I be willing to ask them if they will share their action plan or consider having a coach who could teach me how to do it myself?

NEXT STEPS: *What happens when you apply these principles...*

We all have blind spots! If you work with someone who is outgoing, friendly, gregarious, and loves to share what is going on socially (a high Influence communication style), he or she may especially need guidance in planning and organizing.

For example, Lora is a high Influencer. She is very charming, people gravitate to her, and she loves

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interacting with all types of people. However, creating structures that enable her to meet her own goals or organizing her space and time have been long time issues for her. When I began working with Lora she was already a star performer in sales – she won many awards for outstanding achievements in her organization. Yet, her home office was filled waist-high with papers and brochures, and her schedule was scattered. It was costing her time as she tried to find things; the physical clutter distracted her, and it slowed her down. It also created emotional clutter for her.

Lora and I spent hours together in her space and created order and clarity. I taught her how to maintain the organization following the four steps and organization principles outlined here.

“When you keep only what you love, it is much easier to make decisions. I feel so much better about myself and my own ability to change the things I do not want in my life,” Lora said after we organized her space and she began to keep it that way. She also won a national sales award six months later and she claims being organized was what enabled her to do so.

Several years later, I am excited to share that Lora is now the Vice President of Sales for a major pharma company and attributes much of her success to learning the principals of organizing and applying them to every area of her life.

Let's bring this alive for you, too!

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