



# Exploring Leadership

## PLANNING & ORGANIZATION: ORGANIZATION

Organizing your life isn't just about tidying up—it's about creating systems that help you achieve your goals, manage your time, and reduce stress. When your physical space is organized, your mind can focus better and feel less overwhelmed. Whether it's a messy desk or a cluttered schedule, taking the time to organize can lead to greater productivity and a sense of control.

### CONVERSATION STARTER:

Say, "Organizing isn't about strict rules—it's about creating a system that works for you." Then, ask, "How does this perspective change your view on what it means to be organized?"

The process of organizing can be very grounding. It helps you gain control over your environment and time, making your daily life run more smoothly. Remember, organizing is a personal journey—it's about finding what works best for you and your habits. Be patient with yourself as you develop new organizational skills; they take time to build.

### KEY OBJECTIVES:

- Recognize the connection between organizing your physical space and mental clarity.
- Understand that organizing isn't about changing who you are; it's about creating systems that support your habits and goals.

### WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- At least 20 Flash cards per every 3 participants with pre-written words and categories (ie, 21 participants would be 140 flash cards)
- Copies of "How Organized Are You? Quiz" and Organization Tips (see Appendix A & B)
- Pens or pencils

## EXPLORATION ACTIVITY:

This activity helps you explore your current organization habits, test your memory, and practice organizing in teams to see how planning can improve your daily life.

- **Part 1 - Reflective Discussion**
- Reflect on the areas where you feel the strongest need for organization. Are there parts of your life where you prefer less structure? Have you considered that establishing greater control over your life could lead to increased freedom?
- As Alan Lakein states, "Control starts with planning. Planning is bringing the future into the present so that you can do something about it now."
- Julie and Jessi Morgenstern, in their book *Organizing from the Inside Out*, emphasize that you don't have to change who you are to be organized. Instead, work with your natural habits and goals to design a system that supports you.

### FACILITATION TIPS:

- **Optional:** Ask participants to share times when they wasted time on unproductive tasks, and discuss how pre-planning and organization could have helped.
- Prepare 20 cards per group, each with one word. Write 4 categories of 5 different words (e.g., types of animals, vehicles, flowers, etc.), then shuffle before handing them out.



## EXPLORATION ACTIVITY: CONTINUED

- **Part 2: Worksheets**
  - Distribute the "How Organized Are You" quiz and (see Appendix A) to all participants. Alternatively, read questions aloud and have participants answer individually on a plain sheet of paper. Encourage honest responses.
  - Once completed, pass out and go over organization tips outlined in Appendix B.
- **Part 3: Memory Organization Game**
  - Another important aspect of organization is memory. For this part, divide participants into groups of three.
  - Pass out 20 cards to each group with one word written on each card. There should be 4 groups of 5 words in a particular category. For example, one group of words could be about animals and another about vehicles.
  - Lay the cards face down on the table. Instruct participants to pick up a card and put it in the correct category as quickly as possible. When the first group finishes, check each pile for accurate organization. The group who has scored the most points wins.

### Organization: It's as Basic as the ABC's.

- To effectively prioritize your daily tasks, consider implementing the ABC Priority System in your "To Do" list:
  - A: High-priority tasks that are urgent and important.
  - B: Medium-priority tasks that are important but not urgent.
  - C: Low-priority tasks that are neither urgent nor important.
- Begin with your A tasks. If any A task feels overwhelming, break it down into smaller, manageable steps and begin with the easiest part. B and C tasks can be addressed later.

### Additional Tips to Enhance Organization:

- Aim to arrive 15 minutes early for appointments. This buffer time helps you feel more relaxed and less rushed throughout the day.
- Develop a daily relaxation routine to relieve stress.
- Don't underestimate the power of a good night's sleep; it's essential for maintaining your health and well-being. Techniques like deep breathing or listening to calming music can be effective.
- Concentrate your time and energy on projects that really matter to you. Author Cheryl Richardson suggests focusing on one or two things and dedicating your energy towards them.



## REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- Ask participants if they felt comfortable sorting through the flash cards with their group.
- Did making decisions come easily, or did they need more time?
- Did the sorting process become easier as the game went on?
- Do they think this skill, of quickly distinguishing one thing from another with the goal of organizing or cleaning a space, could be useful in their home or work environment?

## APPLICATION DISCUSSION:

- What area of your life needs the most organization?
- What areas of your life are you already doing well in terms of organization?
- What is one thing you can do to plan better in your daily life?
- How can you make sure that the items on your "A" list come first?
- Encourage participants to look around their environment-homes, offices, and cars, school, etc.
  - How do you feel when you look around?
  - Do you feel relaxed and at ease, or agitated and overwhelmed?



## CONCLUSION:

Did you know that most people lose an average of 1–2 hours per day due to disorganization? While organizing may seem time-consuming task, the long-term benefits include increased efficiency and reduced stress. As you start to feel more in charge of your mind and environment, be kind to yourself. New behaviors in organization take time and making decisions about how we choose to spend our time can be complex and difficult. As Alan Lakein's work proves, only good planning and organization will let you reap maximum benefits from minimum time investments.

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## REFERENCES

- How Organized Are You? Quiz: <https://organizingpro.com/quiz/>
- Book: *Take Time For Your Life* by Cheryl Richardson
- Book: *How To Get Control of Your Time and Your Life* by Alan Lakein
- Book: *Organizing From The Inside Out* by Julie and Jessi Morgenstern
- Career Trend: <https://careertrend.com/>



## APPENDIX A:

### HOW ORGANIZED ARE YOU?

1. Do you know how long it usually takes you to get ready and leave the house each morning?
2. Do you arrive on time or early for appointments?
3. Do you make it a habit to return calls and/or emails on the same day?
4. Have your bills and credit cards been paid on time for the past six months?
5. Do you keep track of much money you have in your wallet, purse, or bank account?
6. Do you know how much gas is in your car? Is your car free of clutter?
7. Are all clean clothes put away, and do you make sure dirty clothes fo into the hamper?
8. Do you know what you are having for dinner, and how long it will take to prepare it?
9. Would others describe you as an organized person?
10. Do you feel like you're organized?

\*Bonus question: Did you organize and simplify something in your life in the last three weeks?

#### WHAT'S YOUR SCORE?

How many times did you answer "Yes": \_\_\_\_\_

Now, multiply that number by 10: \_\_\_\_\_

Add 5 points for the bonus question: \_\_\_\_\_

YOUR SCORE

#### RATING SCALE

**90 points or higher.** Congratulations! You have excellent organizational skills and could be teaching others how to get organized.

**70–89 points.** You're a generally well-organized and have a good handle on things.

**50–69 points.** You're somewhat organized, but there's room for improvement.

**10–49 points.** Uh-oh, it looks like life's getting the best of you. Consider simplifying your weekly and looking at ways to apply different kinds of organizational systems to make things easier.



## APPENDIX B:

### ORGANIZATION TIPS:

#### TIME MANAGEMENT PROBLEMS & SOLUTIONS

Adapted from Alan Lakein's book *How To Take Control of Your Time and Your Life*.

- **Problem:** "I feel like I waste so much of my time doing things that don't really matter, and I feel like my life is slipping away."
  - **Solution:** Focus on refining your plans, making sure your time goes toward what truly matters.
- **Problem:** "I have so much to do, and I never feel like there's enough time to do it all."
  - **Solution:** Understand that planning and decision-making are important steps in managing time effectively.
- **Problem:** "I feel overworked, tired, and tense. It feels like I'm always pushing myself and can't fully relax."
  - **Solution:** Taking care of your own time needs is important for managing both your work and personal life.

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#### "SPACE" FORMULA

To tackle disorganization in your space, as recommended by Julie and Jessi Morgenstern in their book *Organizing from the Inside Out*, follow these steps in order:

1. **Sort:** Go through your possession and group similar items together.
2. **Purge:** Remove duplicates, excess, and anything irrelevant.
3. **Assign a home:** Decide where each item will go.
4. **Containerize:** Use bins, baskets, or cubbies to keep categories separate and make cleanup easier.
5. **Equalize:** Maintain and update your system to keep up with your changing needs and priorities.

#### TIPS TO MAINTAIN AN ORGANIZED LIFESTYLE

1. Clearly designate areas for work, living, and sleep.
2. Establish objectives to keep these areas tidy and free from clutter.
3. Create and maintain a daily or weekly to-do list, focusing on key tasks.
4. Allocate specific times for tasks in your daily schedule for each task.
5. Organize your materials to ensure they are arranged for efficiency.
6. Reward yourself for maintaining organization and staying on track.
7. Strive for a healthy work-life balance to support overall well-being.