

Exploring Leadership

PLANNING & ORGANIZATION: ORGANIZATION

Figuring out a system to keep your life running smoothly often starts with some form of organization. Being organized can help you achieve your goals, establish priorities, keep to a daily schedule, and achieve internal satisfaction. In all planning, regardless if short term or long term, you should make a list and set priorities.

CONVERSATION STARTER:

Organizing is not about discipline. It's about design." Does this quote dispel any preconceived notions you may have heard or believe about being an organized person?

The process of organizing can be very grounding. It is a great way to gain control of your life and make your space and time work for you. Organizing is only worth the effort if you are motivated to do it for yourself and understand why you want it.

KEY OBJECTIVES:

- Understand the connection between clearing your space physical space & mental space
- Seeing how valuable time and energy can be, once your living and work space accurately reflect and serve your lifestyle.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- 60 Flash cards with pre-written words and categories
- Copies of Organization Quiz and Organization Tips (Appendix A, B)
- Pens/Pencils

EXPLORATION ACTIVITY:

Alan Lakein, author of the book "How to Get Control of Your Time and Your Life" points out that different people require varying degrees of structure and spontaneity in their lives and in their different roles.

What area(s) of your life do you feel the strongest need for organization? What area(s) of your life do you prefer to not be as organized? Did you ever think that by establishing greater control of your life, you could experience greater freedom?

As Lakein states: "Control starts with planning. Planning is bringing the future into the present so that you can do something about it now."

In the book "Organizing from the Inside Out" by Julie and Jessi Morgenstern, they share that you don't have to change who you are to be organized. You have to work with your natural habits and goals so that you can design a system that supports you, not changes you.

FACILITATION TIPS:

- Ponder the quote: "It is not worthwhile to make a big effort for a task of little value."
- And ask participants to share examples of how they may have wasted their time on something that produced few rewards and if that could have been prevented by intentional pre-planning and organization.
- Encourage participants to view planning more as "writing" than as "thinking" to encourage momentum in their productivity.



EXPLORATION ACTIVITY: CONTINUED

- **Pass out Organization Quiz** (see Appendix A) to all participants. Alternatively, questions could be read aloud by the facilitator and answered individually on a plain sheet of paper. Ask for participants to answer each question honestly.
- Once completed, pass out or go over organization tips outlined in Appendix B.
- **Memory Organization Game:** Another important aspect of organization is memory. Employ a simple memory game by first grouping participants into groups of 3.
- 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.

For help distinguishing the top priorities in your days, try using the ABC Priority System in your daily To Do List. **A** is for those of high value, **B** is for those of medium value, **C** is for those of low value. Advise that those marked with A's should be done first (if the A activity seems too overwhelming, divide into smaller segments and start with the easiest), B's and C's can be saved for later.

Here are some things to try:

- Try arriving 15 minutes early for every appointment you make. This gives yourself room to breathe and not feel so rushed throughout your day.
- Develop a daily relaxation practice to help relieve your mind and body of any stress and be sure to prioritize a good night's sleep. Sleep is a key fuel source for the body that can't keep you feeling healthy and able to enjoy life fully.
- Narrow your focus by only investing your time and energy on projects that really matter to you. Author Cheryl Richardson recommends deciding to do one or two things well, and to work on channeling your energy towards them.

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REFERENCES

- <https://organizingpro.com/quiz/>
- *Take Time For Your Life* book by Cheryl Richardson
- *How To Get Control of Your Time and Your Life* book by Alan Lakein
- *Organizing From The Inside Out* book by Julie and Jessi Morgenstern
- <https://careertrend.com/list-6524726-games-organizational-skills.html>



REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- Ask participants if they felt comfortable sorting through the flash cards with their group. Do they feel making decisions comes easy to them, or do they require more time? Did the sorting process become easier as the game went along? Do they think this skill set of quickly distinguishing one thing from another with the intent to clean or organize a space could be applied to areas of their home or work environment?
- Encourage them to survey their environment by taking a walk around their homes, offices, and cars, school, etc. Take notice of how you're feeling when you look around. Do you feel relaxed and peaceful, or agitated and overwhelmed?

APPLICATION DISCUSSION:

- What area of your life needs the most organization?
- What are you already doing well?
- What is one way you can plan better in your daily life?
- What can you do to make sure the things on your "A" list come first?



CONCLUSION:

Did you know that most people lose an average of 1-2 hours per day due to disorganization? Organizing may be viewed as a time consuming task, but not in the long run if you'd like to be more efficient with your time. 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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APPENDIX A:

HOW ORGANIZED ARE YOU?

1. Do you know how long it takes you to get up and out the door each morning?
 2. Do you lower your stress by arriving on time or early for your appointments?
 3. Do you 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 know how much money you have in your wallet or purse and bank account?
 6. Do you know how much gas you have in the tank? Is your car clutter-free?
 7. Are all clean clothes put away and all the dirty clothes in the hamper?
 8. Do you know what's for dinner and how long it will take to make it?
 9. Would people say you are organized?
 10. Do you feel 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 you could be giving seminars on this topic.

70-89 points. You're a generally well-organized person who has things together.

50-69 points. You're a little organized, and that's what I'm afraid of – you're just a little organized.

10-49 points. Uh-oh. Life's getting the best of you. Try to simplify your weekly calendar and assess ways you could apply various kinds of organizational systems in your lifestyle.



APPENDIX B:

TIME MANAGEMENT PROBLEMS & SOLUTIONS

taken 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 are not really important to me, while my life is slipping away."
 - **Solution:** Put time and effort into refining your plans.
- **Problem:** "I have so much to do; there's just not enough time for me to do it all."
 - **Solution:** Be aware that planning and making choices involve careful thinking and decision-making.
- **Problem:** "I feel overworked, tired, and tense. I seem to be forever pushing myself, and can't ever relax completely."
 - **Solution:** Taking care of your own time needs helps you to cope with the needs of others.

SPACE Formula

To tackle a messy space as recommended by Julie and Jessi Morgenstern, co-authors of the book *Organizing from the Inside Out*. The key to this SPACE Formula being a success is to complete each and every step in order.

1. **Sort-** Go through each possession and group of similar items.
2. **Purge-** Get rid of the duplicates, excess, undesirable, and irrelevant.
3. **Assign a home-** Decide where each item you are keeping will live
4. **Containerize-** use bins, baskets, and cubbies to keep categories separate and make cleanup a breeze.
5. **Equalize-** Maintain and update your system to keep up with your changing interests, needs, and priorities.

TIPS TO MAINTAIN AN ORGANIZED LIFESTYLE

1. Create defined areas such as: work space/living space/sleep space.
2. Identify goals necessary to keep these areas clean and free from excess clutter.
3. Build a daily or weekly to-do list and prioritize each task.
4. Input tasks into your daily schedule.
5. Organize your materials to ensure there is adequate space.
6. Reward yourself regularly.
7. Maintain a healthy work-life balance.