

# Empowering Women Through Organizing Strategies

By Darla DeMorrow

Decision fatigue. Even if you haven't heard this term from behavioral research studies, you've likely felt it. Decision fatigue means that we each have a limited reserve of mental and emotional resources each day which gets used up as we make decisions, one after the other. If our resources are finite, how do we make the most of our energy throughout the day to power our potential?

## Systematize Everything

Steve Jobs was famous for his minimalist wardrobe (black turtleneck, jeans, white sneakers) not because it was fashion forward, but because it meant one less minor decision in his day. Women feel the pressure to have a broader wardrobe repertoire, but you've likely observed that your favorite female power broker has her own version of a professional uniform. Celebrities delegate routine tasks to assistants because they need time and energy to make the decisions only the celebrity can make. Hospitals use forms, processes, and manuals to ensure people are providing the best care consistently. All these systems (processes used in a certain place, using designated supplies, at a certain time) allow the many little decisions to be made routine so people can spend brainpower on the big decisions. Not sure how to systematize something like organizing a closet, managing your family photos, or clearing out your email? SORT and Succeed is five simple steps you can use to organize anything...including your crazy calendar.

- 1- Start with a written plan of 5 words or less
- 2- Organize into groups
- 3-Reduce, release, and reset
4. Tweak the outcome
5. Succeed and celebrate

## Give in to Nudges

A mountain of decisions can feel like, well...a mountain. But researchers have found that it's the little nudges in the right direction that often make the most difference in our lives over time. Saving for retirement? Uhg. But auto-enrolling in your company payroll deduction plan with just 3% of your paycheck? That's do-able. Unhooking from social media entirely? Not a chance. Removing the app from just your phone is a good first step. Re-organizing the whole house? Exhausting! Nudging yourself into a tiny do-able habit to run the dishwasher every night and put away clean dishes every morning. Small nudges can often have outsized payoff.

## Remove Clutter

Researchers have long documented the paradox of choice. Although we demand options, having three or more choices will paradoxically paralyze most of us. We see this in our homes and professional lives, too. Faced with multiple looming deadlines at work, some people will freeze or start an entirely new project instead. When we organize playrooms, children will often think they've received new things, and play with formerly abandoned toys. Crafters are able to finish incomplete projects (or part with uninspired ones) after removing clutter. Aspiring chefs find they enjoy cooking more after organizing their kitchen.

## Beware Invisible Work

As my friend and colleague Regina Clark, Ph.D says, organizing requires healthy executive functioning, planning, and follow-through; it does not require a uterus (paraphrasing). Make the invisible work you do visible. The planning, caretaking, scheduling, and shopping might, truly, fall on your shoulders, but don't assume they have to. And even if they do, use systems to make your invisible work visible. Keep lists and schedules where other people can access them, instead of just on your phone. Assign carpool duty to your partner sometimes or often. Hire a cleaner or order groceries, and then talk with your partner about the cost of those choices. Have the discussion about what life insurance would need to replace if the worst were to happen to your family.

## Celebrate

SORT and Succeed's Step 5 is to succeed and celebrate your progress for organizing or any project. We naturally celebrate even small achievements for our children with praise and prizes. Bring back rewards for your own achievement. Don't wait for perfection or total completion, as both are rare for adults. Instead, choose a reward for your effort, and then follow through by claiming those rewards. I often allow myself my second cup of coffee only after I get a critical office task done each morning; sometimes it takes me nearly until lunch. A glass of your favorite wine with dinner might be the perfect reward after organizing your closet. You might have been planning to have wine with dinner anyway, but by stating your reward up front, you tie the activity and the reward together. An afternoon nap might be the perfect reward for organizing the garage in the morning. Hosting a dinner with friends in two weeks can be a fabulous reward (and motivator) for organizing your kitchen this weekend. It's tempting to say that the result is reward enough, but go ahead, make that external reward official. You've earned it, and it will train your brain to get organized faster and with less procrastinating next time.

Bio:

Darla DeMorrow is a Certified Professional Organizer® and owner of HeartWork Organizing (<https://HeartWorkOrg.com>) since 2004. Based near Philadelphia, PA, she is mom of 2, international speaker, and author of the best-selling book series SORT and Succeed (<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B079BC6485>), which outlines five simple steps to help you organize stuff, time, paperwork, money, and photos. *The Upbeat, Organized Home Office* is the third book in the series (<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B082J5SVYT>).