



From Clutter to Calm



Five S.T.E.P.S. to Family Organization

Cluttered homes and cluttered calendars are stressful!

Tammy Schotzko, professional organizer and owner of *We Love Messes*, teaches her clients that the keys to organization are:

1. finding a system that fits your life and daily routine.
2. gives you easy access to your belongings.

While not every organizational technique works for everyone all the time, Tammy shared some simple steps that *anyone* can use to get clutter (and the stress it can cause) back under control.

When you're beginning, start with something small, like a single drawer. Tackle bigger projects, or tasks that have a lot of emotion around them, after you've mastered the STEPS by practicing them on easier jobs.

SORT - Put like things together.

TOTAL - How many of each thing do you have?

ELIMINATE - Ask yourself: Do I need this? Do I use it? Do I love it? If the answer is NO - donate it, recycle it, or put it in the trash.

PLACE - The things we use most often should be where we can get to them easily. If it doesn't have a place to go, we need to ask ourselves why we have it at all.

STRAIGHTEN - This isn't cleaning; it's putting things where they belong. Try to do it every night.

In planning your organization strategy, think about:

1. the daily, unchanging realities of your life.
2. your expectations for help from the people that you live with.
3. how you've conveyed those expectations to them.

Clutter is really just Delayed Decisions!

Kids, Clutter, & Cleaning

Getting kids involved in clutter control is important because...

- As you're teaching them how to organize and clean, you're modeling important life skills. A kid that knows how to clean and organize will carry that knowledge with them into adulthood.

Like all skills, beginners aren't able to work at the same level of speed or accuracy as people with more experience. Adults may have to lower

their standards while their kids are learning, but it's worth it.

- You're providing your kids with experiences that help them to build their self-confidence. Everyone wants to know that they have the ability to take care of themselves. Knowing how to organize possessions and time is an important component of feeling capable.

Make sure the tasks you're teaching them are developmentally appropriate and reasonable. As kids grow,

our expectations of how they can contribute to family organization can grow along with them.

- It's a great opportunity to let them know that their contributions to the family are valued. Thank them for helping keep your family's home tidy and comfortable. Nobody likes to be taken for granted; everyone is more likely to do chores more willingly when they feel noticed and appreciated.



If your kids can use a smartphone, they can use these!

In this issue:

S.T.E.P.S	1
Kids, Clutter, & Cleaning	1
Drowning in Paper	1
Crunch Time	2
Staying Connected	2
Resources	2

Baby Steps

Little ideas that can make a big difference!

Donation Box - Keep one handy and keep filling it. We tend to bring stuff in, but not take stuff out.

Quick Pick - Set a timer (check out the Time Timer website), and then speed-straighten!

Clutter Buddy - find a partner and tell them about your organizational goals. Choose a buddy that will be encouraging, not judgmental.

Give gifts that aren't stuff!

- *Future* (savings bonds, college savings accounts...)
- *Time* (share a talent or interest: baking, carpentry, reading...)
- *Experience* (a trip to the zoo, rock climbing, concert tickets...?)

Drowning in Paper

Worksheets, art work, permission slips, event flyers, fundraisers... how do we keep paper clutter from taking over?

- Apply the S.T.E.P.S. as soon as you get home - time up front will save you time down the road.
- Use a "limiting bin" for the things you decide to keep. This is a box, bin, or tote into which everything is placed. When that's full, something has to go to make room for more. This is great decision-making practice for kids.
- For artwork, you can keep the memories, without keeping every piece of paper, by:
 - A. Taking pictures of the art. Digital files don't take up any room.
 - B. Label what you decide to keep so that you'll remember the details down the road.
 - C. Turn their art into greeting cards, wrapping paper, placemats, or a calendar.

Crunch Time

"Crunch Time" is different for every family. For some it's mornings, for some it's after school, for others it's supper or bedtime. Having a consistent routine can reduce some of the stress.

- The minute you get home, backpacks get emptied and hung up. Have a trash can right there. The rest gets sorted into limiting containers, 'parent paperwork' trays, or reference folders.
- Any information on event dates and times gets put in the calendar right then too.
- Have a place for "Parent Paperwork." Review it every evening and return to child's backpack.
- Keep a folder for reference paperwork, such as sports schedules, contact information....
- Prep the night before as much as possible: pack lunches, choose clothes, fill backpacks.

Staying Connected

Sometimes it can feel like family members are all going in different directions. How can we all stay "in the loop," and keep track of everyone's schedules?

- Weekly family scheduling meetings can help keep everyone connected. These meetings are only to discuss schedules and events. Behavioral issues, grades, or disagreements should be dealt with at another time.
- Parents can sign up for a shared email account for all event and school emails. When the kids are old enough, they can have access to the account too. This helps make sure everyone has the same information at the same time.
- Shared calendar apps (Cozi, Apple Calendar...) can be helpful.
- Keep it old school too! Post a large paper calendar in highly visible place. Put all events on it ASAP. This is great to pull out for the weekly scheduling meetings.

Don't put it down. Put it away!

Resources for tools and information

Books

[The Berenstain Bears and The Messy Room](#), by Stan and Jan Berenstain
www.berenstainbears.com/index.html

[Benji's Messy Room and Suzy's Messy Room](#) by Diane Quintana & Jonda Beattie
www.timespaceorg.com/books/
www.dnqsolutions.com/books/

Websites

Get in touch with Tami Schotzco here, and check out her free organizational tools. www.welovemesses.com/

Fun creations featuring your child's art. www.plumprint.com/

Make memories and manage what matters. <https://www.dandelionvault.com/>

Visual depiction of "time remaining" provides stress-free time management at work, school and home. www.timetimer.com/

Facebook

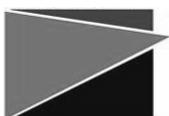
Want to learn more? Check out Tammy's in-depth video presentations!

Tater Tots - For families with little kids:

www.facebook.com/SawtoothMountainClinic/videos/514950332306935/

Hot Potatoes: For families with tweens and teens:

www.facebook.com/SawtoothMountainClinic/videos/359077644855833/



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