

What Not To Do

By Sarah Welch and Alicia Rockmore



Have you heard of the television show on TLC called “What Not to Wear?” Well, this is our little organizational twist. Our organizational instincts tell us to make “To Do” lists, and only when everything is crossed off are we able to truly say we are organized. Unfortunately, that state of perfection is next to impossible. There will always be some new task to take on, or some old task that needs to be done again. It’s a never-ending cycle!

The secret to getting organized lies not so much what you have to do, but in knowing what you don’t have to do. Of course, this is easier said than done. By even acknowledging that something could be a task, you’re going to think about taking it on. But, believe us, by creating a “Not To Do” list, you’ll end up realizing what is most important, and you’ll feel much more accomplished when you’re finished with your actual “To Do” list.

Alicia on “Turning off Distractions”

“The biggest upside of identifying those things you don’t have to do is that you gain some focus. Our lives, both at work and at home, are overflowing with notepads and sticky notes, each full of reminders of all the things we haven’t done yet. Unfortunately, these supposedly helpful reminders only serve to interrupt and distract us from doing what we actually need to do.”

Sarah on “Getting Momentum Working for You”

“Another benefit of making a “Not To Do” list is that it feels good! The happy truth is, you don’t need to have your clothes perfectly hung and color coded, your photos cataloged and in elegantly labeled boxes, your DVDs alphabetized and on index cards, or a paperless desk in order to be truly ‘Buttoned Up.’ But all too often they’re still on our mental organizational “to-do” list week after week, month after month, even year after year. And we wonder why we get stuck! Since the simple act of completing an organizational task, no matter how small, gets the magic of momentum working for you – you can get the ball rolling today by crossing needless tasks off of your list!”



Streamline your to-do list with these three simple tips.

1. Embrace Imperfect Organization

Imperfect organization is a novel concept that examines organization within the broader context of your total life. The basic premise holds that in order to get more sanely buttoned up overall, you may need to let go of the need to be perfectly organized in some individual areas of your life. Organization should be a means to an end (freeing up time to do what you really want to do) not the end itself.

2. Stop Worrying

If you feel yourself resisting the idea that you can choose amongst your long lists of to-dos, you might be concerned about what will get left behind. You may worry ...if I cross it off my list today, will my bedroom ever get painted, will my lawnmower ever get fixed, will my holiday cards ever get written, or will I ever get to go to the gym if that to-do doesn’t make it into my top priorities? The quick answer is: if you decide it needs to get done, it will get done. You pick your own priorities. They can be for the month, for the week, or for the day. You decide.

3. Make a “Nothing Else” List

Once you let go of the fear that some things might not get done (at least today), turn your attention to what must get done. Make a list of ‘top three tasks’ in a few areas of your life. If you were able to accomplish only three things today, what would they absolutely, positively have to be? What three phone calls do you definitely have to make? What three emails must you send? What three errands must you run? Writing them down as if “nothing else” matters increases their urgency and generally the speed in which you are able to get them done!

We are the co-founders of Buttoned Up, inc., a company dedicated to helping stretched and stressed women get themselves organized (along with everybody else they’re responsible for too!). We welcome your thoughts! Please send ideas and questions to us at: yourlife@getbuttonedup.com or visit us at www.getbuttonedup.com