

## Richmond Review May 1-2, 2004

### Get organized

#### Organization helps people learn how to cut down on the paper flow

*Tia Abell, Staff Reporter*

When you're trying to organize your home, desk or life, it helps to remember the 80-20 rule.

"We use 20 per cent of our stuff 80 per cent of the time," says Sherry Borsheim, a Richmond productivity consultant.

Which means most of what we have just gets in the way, cluttering up our lives and our minds.

If this sounds like you, Borsheim and other members of the B.C. chapter of the Professional Organizers of Canada want to help.

They've declared May 3 through May 7 National Organization Week and will be making weekend and weekday organization presentations throughout the Lower Mainland. In Richmond, the organizers will speak from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Ikea on Saturday, May 1, and the Home Outfitters Store on May 8.

Getting organized usually means getting personalhaving a look at oneself or one's household and figuring out what system will work best for all involved.

Your goals need to be clarified and aligned with your habits, Borsheim explains during a phone interview.

A big challenge for most households is "paper flow"managing school papers, incoming mail and bills. Each family member needs a personal paper tray, she says.

"Paper flow is a huge problemusually it's all over the kitchen counter, all over the home, it's piled everywhere. And late payment fees cost money. Disorganization carries a huge cost emotionally, mentally, physically and financially."

The stuff we put aside to deal with later or save for future use can become a huge burden. Often these collections get out of control, leaving the collector feeling trapped, oppressed and, often, depressed.

"The whole idea of organizing is to create easy access to the things you love and the things you use. If you only use 20 per cent of your stuff, then it gives you the freedom to put the other things away."

Sherry Borsheim © 2001-2007 all contents

Borsheim asks her clients to consider why they're keeping things. Getting clear often helps them realize what they want and need in their lives.

Another reason people cling to things is because of sentimental attachment. Some items represent happy times in their lives, or an identity they may feel they want to hang on to.

"For one lady her clothes, bought 15 years ago, represented a past life when she was a working woman. But now she was a mother and wasn't a size 6 anymore. And it wasn't just taking over her closet but also her daughter's."

She doesn't tell people to throw things out. Instead, Borsheim will suggest people put their clutter (or clothes they no longer wear) in a box and stash it for six months with a scheduled review date marked on the calendar. Often people are ready to let the stuff go by the time the date comes up.

Borsheim has a few other tricks to share about organizing.

"When you're organizing any particular room or space, you need three things: a box for charity, a box for things to toss out, and a box for things that belong in another room. Then set the alarm for one hour or two hours and don't leave that room until you're done."

Leaving the room is a no-no, even if you're just putting something back where it belongs.

"Then you'll start moving stuff around, or get distracted, and you'll come back four hours later, you've made no progress and you'll get discouraged. It's really important that you work on one room at a time otherwise you do zig-zag organizing and get no results."

Another common mistake is rushing out to buy attractive containers or tubs without first assessing your needs.

"What I do is sort the stuff first, then pare it down. I figure out where the stuff will fit on the shelf. Then get out my measuring tape and figure out how much space it takes up. After that I go out and buy the containers."

A critical last step: label everything clearly. Borsheim says things that are labelled get retrieved, while containers without labels "just become collections of miscellaneous stuff."

Labelling is especially helpful when it comes to children's rooms. Parents can sort items into sports gear, toys, art materials, and others categories.

"Kids love this and they're used to it because of school. It takes a huge load off mother and clean up is easy everyone knows where things go. Clean up should only take five to 10 minutes."

Once you're organized, it's a good idea to set up regular times to re-evaluation. When new responsibilities or activities come into your life, they may need to be assimilated into your system.

"As life evolves your system needs to evolve with you," Borsheim says. "Organization is a journey not a destination."

Sherry Borsheim © 2001-2007 all contents

mailing 178 - 8623 granville street  
address vancouver, bc v6p 5a2

telephone 604.233.7076  
facsimile 604.648.9874

website [www.simplyproductive.com](http://www.simplyproductive.com)  
email [info@simplyproductive.com](mailto:info@simplyproductive.com)