

# Faculty Development

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## Getting Organized

An e-newsletter of organizing tips for faculty members. January 2007.

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**"I gotta work out. I keep saying it all the time. I keep saying I gotta start working out. It's been about two months since I've worked out. And I just don't have the time. Which is odd. Because I have the time to go out to dinner. And watch tv. And get a bone density test. And try to figure out what my phone number spells in words."**

**-- Ellen DeGeneres**

I want to wish everyone a Happy New Year. I hope 2007 will be a peaceful, happy and productive year for you. After all, you deserve the very best.

In this season of new resolutions, getting organized usually ranks in the top five for most Americans, and it's no coincidence that every store -- especially the Container Store -- features bargains on plastic totes, drawer organizers and other doo-dads aimed at making your life a little more organized. Even the National Association of Professional Organizers declared January as "Get Organized Month."

Ironically, the new book [A Perfect Mess: The Hidden Benefits of Disorder \(How Crammed Closets, Cluttered Offices, and On-the-Fly Planning Make the World a Better Place\)](#) has generated several [articles](#) on "not getting organized." Authors Eric Abrahamson and David H. Freedman say moderately messy people are more creative, resilient, efficient and more productive than someone who is highly organized.

We all know life is messy, and organizing has never been about perfection. Except maybe to Martha Stewart. For the rest of us operating in the real world, it's best to aim for getting organized enough -- enough to make your boss happy, enough to find your shoes, enough to pay your bills on time, enough to spend more time with your loved ones. You can't judge yourself by the super neat person down the hall. You're just setting yourself up for failure by doing that.

The key phrase here is moderate clutter. But who defines moderate? How do you know when your piles are moderate or something else? The definition of moderate really depends on the individual and how they're wired. For some people, having a few extra pieces of paper on the desk will send them into a tizzy. For others, the stacks don't bother them until they fall on their heads, and even then, they'll walk it off. The rest of us are in varying degrees in the middle. We all have our breaking points.

Ask yourself: Is the clutter bothering you? Have you lost something? Did you have to spend extra time looking for things? Did you miss a deadline or pay a bill late? Do you feel overwhelmed everytime you look at your desk or living area? Does the clutter stress you out?

If you answered no to most of the questions, then you're okay and in acceptable parameters for

what's good for you. If you answer yes to two or more of these questions, you're probably experiencing more than moderate clutter. If that's the case, then it's time to take a few moments and clean up a stack or two, just enough to make you breathe a little easier.

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### **The Lowly Shoebox**

Like I referenced above, this is the time when stores entice buyers with organizing tools of all shapes and sizes, but there is one often overlooked tool: the empty shoebox. It's so much more fun to shop for shoes than plastic organizing boxes. You can use a shoebox to actually house shoes, but it can be used for other items as well.

- Use it as a dresser drawer organizer. Toss the lid or place it underneath the open box to make the bottom a bit more sturdy.
- Cover the box with fabric or contact paper and use it in a children's room to stash smaller toys and treasures. The kids can even help cover the box as one of those rainy day projects. When it gets too beat up, just make a new one.
- Stash software disks, unused computer cables, and other computer parts in your home office. Having one box is much easier than storing several bulky software boxes.
- Store photographs while putting them into albums. This needs to be a short-term solution since shoeboxes are not acid-free and would damage photos in the long run.
- Store craft supplies, including stamps, glue guns, brushes, stickers, etc.

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### **Recycling Your Old Computer**

If you received a new computer over the holidays, here's your chance to unload your old computer. The National Association of Professional Organizers (NAPO) Houston Chapter and Scrap Computer will host a computer recycling day from noon to 3 p.m. on Saturday, January 13th in the parking lot of Micro Center, 1717 West Loop Drive South (near the Galleria).

Bring your old computers, monitors, laptops, CPU's, printers, and power supplies, just to name a few. For more information on computer recycling, visit [www.scrapcomputer.com](http://www.scrapcomputer.com). It's free to recycle your computer equipment, but if you want to erase your hard drive, the company will charge \$8.

NAPO-Houston also will collect eyeglasses for the Lion's Club and old cell phones for women's shelters. For more information on NAPO-Houston's event, please visit their [website](#).

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### **Got Clutter?**

I have developed 15-minute, 30-minute and 45-minute presentations on organizing and time management. Moving to a new building? I also have a 15-minute presentation on preparing for a move for your department.

I also do one-on-one sessions in your office and help you come up with a solution. To schedule a presentation or a one-on-one appointment, call (713) 792-8061 or e-mail [Janice Simon](mailto:jsimon@mdanderson.org) (jsimon@mdanderson.org).

To subscribe to this newsletter, e-mail [Janice Simon](mailto:jsimon@mdanderson.org) (jsimon@mdanderson.org).

*Happy Organizing!*

-- Janice

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