



October 2008

“You can rebuild power stations, sewer plants, water treatment plants and gas lines. But you can’t rebuild a community without kindness, friendship, neighborliness. It’s just not possible.”
- Heber Taylor, Editor, *The Galveston County Daily News*

Hurricane Ike and A New Normal

After Hurricane Ike, people keep using the phrase “back to normal.” After a big event like Ike, Katrina or 9/11, there is no getting back to normal. We return to a “new” normal – whatever that looks like for each of us. My organizing friend Ellen and I recently talked about the hurricane aftermath and how each of us, our organizing clients, family and friends are still grappling with everything that happened. Even if you don’t have house damage, the hurricane was a traumatic experience, and you don’t just merrily skip away from it. Between the hurricane, the economy, and even the election, we’re probably all dealing with post traumatic stress disorder of some kind. You may find yourself being forgetful or stressed out more so than usual.

After you go through something traumatic like a hurricane, you can have a reaction such as overshopping or overeating. It’s a normal reaction, but you don’t want it to get out of control. Do you really need to completely restock your refrigerator in one grocery trip? Do you need extra canned goods “just in case”? Do you need to eat out every day because you can? Do you need to have the giant bacon cheeseburger because you’ll feel better? With the economy being the way it is right now, none of us can afford to overspend. Just make a conscious decision to make conscious decisions, and be sure to give yourself a break for a little while.

Restocking the Pantry

Most people in the Houston area had to dump the contents of their refrigerators and freezers because of the hurricane power outages. One of my friends was relieved when she had to throw out a few items – you know those things that linger just a little too long in the freezer but you haven’t thrown them out yet. You can treat the power outages as a “do-over.” Want to eat healthier? Want to try different foods? What better time than when you have to throw everything out and buy new? If you haven’t been through a hurricane or other disaster and want your own do-over, use up what you have before buying more or donate the unopened, non-perishable items in your pantry to your local food bank. Toss anything that’s expired.

You don’t have to rush out and buy everything you lost. Buy what you need when you need it. Watch for sales and use coupons as you rebuild. Saving a few cents here and there really adds up! For a basic pantry list, check out these links: [Food Network](#) and [Nutrition Explorations](#). If you Google “pantry lists,” you’ll find many entries, and cookbooks also have basic pantry lists. Everyone’s needs are different, and you will need to make adjustments for your culinary lifestyle.

Organizing with Outlook

Here at MD Anderson, we have made the move from Lotus Notes to Outlook, and I’ve found it so easy to adapt to. Some of the features that I have found helpful:

- Click and drag an email to Calendar or Tasks. The email is automatically copied in the body of the entry, and you can delete the email.
- Color-coding emails, calendar entries and tasks by using the Categories. You can rename categories, create new ones or change the colors. You can see at a glance what you have coming up on your calendar.
- Flagging e-mails is also another useful tool. By clicking on the flag on the right of the e-mail, you can see right away which e-mails are critical to deal with.
- Using the color-coding feature, you can organize your Tasks by clicking on the “by category” feature. You can see what you had to do under each section, and it makes your to-do list much less overwhelming.
- The contact list can be arranged in a variety of formats, depending on your needs. For viewing, you can select a simple list or large business card type icons. You can insert a contact’s information into an email, task or calendar entry.
- You can click and drag an e-mail to Contacts to save the address. The e-mail address and names are entered. You can add more information or just “save and close” what you have. The original e-mail is saved in the notes section of the contact.
- If you want to share one of your contacts with someone else, open a new e-mail and click on “Business Card.” By selecting “Other Business Cards,” your contact list will pop up. Select the contact and hit “OK”. If your recipient has Outlook, they click on the attachment and save it to their contact list. No more re-typing!

The Holidays are Coming

Oh, yes, the holidays are coming. Ready or not, here they come.

Make a List. Like the song goes, make a list and check it twice. With the economy the way it is, you may want to whittle down that gift list. If a group of you always exchanges gifts, opt for a nice dinner together or draw names to reduce the number of gifts to buy. Better yet, do some volunteer work together or make a donation to a charity. Shopping early will be the key to economic survival for this holiday season.

Holiday Parties. If you’re entertaining this season, plan your menus ahead and see what you can make and freeze ahead of time. Look for sales on party items and food to get a jump start. Use Evite.com for invitations instead of sending paper ones. You can save money on stamps and paper by using the free online service.

Christmas Tree Bag Storage. If you have an artificial tree, you can use this [Christmas Tree Storage Bag](#) and Stand to make your holidays a bit easier, and you’ll never have to assemble the tree again. The bag is placed underneath the tree’s skirt. Once the holidays are over, you can lift the bag up over the tree and store it in a closet. The stands have wheels for easy moving too.

Got Clutter? I have developed 15 minute, 30 minute and 45 minute presentations on organizing, time management, and productivity. Moving to a new building? I also have a 30-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 your organizing problems. To schedule a presentation or a one-on-one appointment, call 713-792-8061 or email jsimon@mdanderson.org. *For past newsletters, click [here](#). Follow me on Twitter! Look up JaniceSimon. For Facebook, look for Janice M. Simon.*

Happy Organizing!

Janice

LINKS:

Pantry Lists

<http://www.nutritionexplorations.org/parents/pantry-list.asp>

http://www.foodnetwork.com/food/ck_cg_kitchen_essentials/article/0,3151,FOOD_29136_5461137,00.html

Christmas Tree Bag and Stand

<http://www.frontgate.com/jump.jsp?itemID=2114&itemType=PRODUCT&path=1%2C2%2C556%2C2970&iProductID=2114>