

October 2009

"You are what you are. But you can become whatever you set your mind to be."

Rich Brooks via @therichbrooks on Twitter

Can you believe it's already the end of October? Halloween is a few days away and then we'll start thinking about Thanksgiving, Hanukah, Christmas, New Year's..... It's all coming at us fast and furious. The recession has changed us a bit. Some people don't have jobs, and they may be our friends, neighbors, former colleagues, and church members. I'm certain the changes we've all made in our personal lives will trickle down to how we celebrate the upcoming holidays.



For way too long, the holidays have been about stuff – the stuff we get and the food we stuff down. The upcoming holidays are supposed to be about family and friends, thanksgiving and compassion, redemption and forgiveness, new beginnings and old traditions, and love and sacred beliefs. Too often, the focus shifts to finding batteries, wrapping paper, and shopping deals. Take a moment or two this year to think about those who are still struggling. Have your children (or nieces and nephews) pick out some gifts for the children who don't have anything, give money to the food banks for those who are hungry, send a box to a U.S. soldier through www.AnySoldier.com for those missing their family, and give time and a helping hand for those who need a lift up. You won't miss the stuff.

The Joys and Learnings from Social Media

I freely admit I am hooked on Social Media sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, Yammer, and LinkedIn. One of the best things about sites like Twitter is that everyone shares ideas, tips, and tricks to make your life easier and a bit more fun. Because of the brilliant and savvy people on these sites, I have picked up additional hints and helpful websites to share with all of you. All of the full links are the bottom of the newsletter in case the hyperlinks fail to work.

Do You Unitask?

The Dumb Little Man site focuses on improving productivity and saving time, money and sanity. A more [recent article](#) discussed the benefits of unitasking over multi-tasking, something most of us into productivity have known for a while. Everyone else is catching on to the concept, including scientific researchers who study the brain and stress. Studies already show multi-tasking lowers productivity 20 to 40 percent, and all this multi-tasking leaves us with frazzled, stressed out, and fuzzy brains. I'm certain more talk about "unitasking" will come down the pike. I wonder how long it will be before job applicants are asked how well they "unitask" instead of "multi-task."

What's for Dinner?

What to make for dinner is stressful. How many times have you stood in the kitchen trying to figure out what the heck to eat? Regain lost time by planning your meals. Check out www.thescramble.com and www.e-mealz.com. Each of the sites have a subscription service, and in return, you get a week's worth of menus for the number of people in your family (for us singles, they only go to two people) and a corresponding grocery list.

The sites have databases so you can change out the menus and create your own custom version. E-mealz.com even offers meal plans that are low-fat, low-carb, and the Weight Watchers point system, and The Scramble lets you customize your meals for low-fat, vegetarian and other special diets, focusing on available seasonable foods.

Check out www.hungry-girl.com for additional tips and menus for dining healthier. Her “ultimate” grocery shopping list is [here](#) (pdf), and all of the items are healthy, weight-conscious and low fat. This website is free, but the menus are not customized for your individual needs.

Productivity at Work and Home

Of course, I am drawn to websites featuring productivity, organizing, time management, goal-setting and the like. Here’s a few that I’ve stumbled across recently:

- **The Mogul Mom** mostly writes about being a working mother and an entrepreneur. Here is an [article](#) she wrote on saving time and sanity. I loved her ideas about meal planning and establishing a work “uniform” to make getting ready in the morning much faster.
- This [blogger](#) talks about the importance of Writing Stuff Down. Call it WSD, sort of like David Allen’s GTD (Getting Things Done) system. Another blogger used slightly different wording, but the sentiment was still the same. You can never go wrong by writing everything down and keeping it somewhere where you can access it quickly.
- **Productivity 501** loves using new Lifehack.com skills and other tidbits. This September [post](#) discusses how to use the different parts of your brain. There are other interesting articles posted on the website. Feel free to roam, search and learn.
- **Gretchen Rubin**, author of *The Happiness Project*, offers great tips on being yourself, getting real and finding your own version of happiness. In this [post](#), Gretchen discussed how the writer of *Fight Club*, yes *Fight Club*, wrote about a lovely Navy tradition that families and individuals can adopt when they’re working on a large project.
- And speaking of happiness, **Marcus Buckingham**, author of *Now, Discover Your Strengths*, has been talking about women and their happiness. In his new book *Find Your Strongest Life*, he talks how happiness rates for women have dropped in the past 40 years. I am currently reading the book, and when I finish, I’ll write about I’ve learned. In the meantime, here are a [couple](#) of links from [posts](#) he wrote for The Huffington Post.

Making Up Is Hard to Do. Cosmetics do go bad. I know some people keep things in their cosmetic drawer for a long time. If you can’t remember when you bought it or you’ve had it so long that it’s become vintage, it’s time for it to go. Here’s a great list someone posted showing the expiration dates: <http://stuff-flow.com/expiration>

There Goes the Bride’s Dress. Want to buy a wedding gown or sell yours? [This site](#) is like the eBay of wedding dresses to buy and sell new and used wedding dresses. Designers and sizes are listed, and potential buyers can search by size, designer, silhouette, and height in heels.

Getting in Shape and Working Out. [The Woman Within](#) is a plus size clothing store, but they have what many plus size stores do not: workout clothes. Even at Target, finding larger sized workout clothes is hit or miss. Find t-shirts, tanks, shorts, Capri sweats, regular sweatpants and bike shorts under their Activewear section.

And speaking of working out, visit [Girls Get Strong](#), a website devoted to providing assistance and tips to women who love – or want to love - working out. The website brings together the best articles, tips, and videos from the world wide web. Each section of the site has its own collection of articles, and they range from how to be a mother-in-law whisperer to personal success stories written by readers.

Organizing Products

- Clip-rite Durable [Clip-Tabs](#) are two products in one – a paper clip and a writable tab. Clip your papers together and write on the tab to organize your documents and action items. The clip-tabs can be used twice – once on each side, and come in different sizes and colors.

- [Post-It](#) has new pockets to help organize bills, mail and receipts. The pockets come in three sizes – letter, bill and receipt and are made from a plastic material so they won't easily tear. Peel the backing off the double-sided tape on the back and press the pocket to the refrigerator, a wall, or cabinet door. The tape shouldn't damage the wall and can be repositioned.
- Love color? Check out [Organize.com](#). You can search for organizing products by color by clicking on "organize by color" underneath the search bar for key items. So if you're hankering for a red food scale, ivory bath items, or hot pink plastic bins, this is the website for you.

Green Shopping and Trashing

- Eco friendly items – totes made from old juice boxes, messenger bags from made rice bags, bracelets made from recycle wine bottles or vintage buttons, or pendants crafted out of recycled safety pins, telephone wire and soda cans. <http://www.thepassionatecollector.com/boutique/ecofriendly/>
- Want to get money for your trash? Check out [Terra Cycle](#). They will take your trash and pay you for it too. The website features the products they make from trash, such as candy wrappers and drink boxes. They create and sell the Drink Pouch messenger bag, Clif bar holiday bows, and a pencil box made from cookie wrappers. Even Frito-Lay speakers to plug into your MP3 player.
- If you have a great deal of things to get rid of, call [Junk Goes Green](#). The company will pick up everything you want to go and charges you on how full the truck is. Junk Goes Green lives up to its name by donating or recycling all of your discarded items. If something cannot be recycled or donated, they will break it down to remove the recyclable parts. The stuff that cannot be recycled is picked up by their competitors and taken to the landfill since their trucks are not allowed to go to the landfill.

Got Space? For Your Office, Home and Mind. It's Get Organized Month – SAVE THE DATES

January is Get Organized Month for the National Association of Professional Organizers, and I'm planning another slate of activities for MD Anderson. The Organizing Expo will be from 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m., **Friday, January 8, 2010** in the CPB 8th Floor, Conference Rooms 1-8. Lots of vendors will be on hand to show the latest and greatest of organizing tools and products.

Other events for Get Organized Month:

January 7th – Family Management by Ellen Delap of Professional-Organizer.com

January 13th – Making Life Easier: How to Improve Productivity by yours truly

January 19 – Clutterbusting by Marla Regan of Organized Time

January 21 – Organizing at Home by yours truly

January 27th – Faculty Helping Faculty Technology Series – Using Sharepoint to Manage a Group by Dr. Eric Tamm

January 29th – TBA

Got Clutter? I have developed 30 minute and 45 minute presentations on organizing, time management, productivity, and creating Outlook rules. Longer workshops are available upon request. Moving to a new building? I 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. My personal blog is: www.theclutterprincess.com.

Happy Organizing!

Janice

Links:

Dumb Little Man: <http://www.dumblittleman.com/2009/09/arrt-of-changing-easily-gracefully.html>

The Scramble: www.thescramble.com

E-Mealz: www.e-mealz.com

The Hungry Girl: http://files.hungry-girl.com/Shopping_List.Jan_09.pdf

The Mogul Mom: <http://www.themogulmom.com/2009/09/7-ways-for-mom-entrepreneurs-to-save-time-money-sanity/>

Write It Down: http://workingsmarter.typepad.com/my_weblog/2008/01/write-stuff-dow.html

The Happiness Project: http://www.happiness-project.com/happiness_project/2009/10/a-lovely-family-traditionsuggested-by-the-author-of-fight-club-.html

Marcus Buckingham talked about his new book on Twitter and Facebook:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/marcus-buckingham/womens-happiness-what-we_b_295876.html

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/marcus-buckingham/what-the-happiest-and-mos_b_301406.html

Preowned Wedding Dresses: <http://www.preownedweddingdresses.com/>

Woman Within: <http://www.womanwithin.com/>

Girls Get Strong: <http://girlgetstrong.com/>

Eco Friendly Items: <http://www.thepassionatecollector.com/boutique/ecofriendly/>

Terra Cycle: <http://www.terracycle.net/>

JunkGoesGreen.com: <http://www.junkgoesgreen.com/>