

Get Better Organized at Home and in Your Medical Practice: 3 Tips

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By Jeff Davidson

When you feel organized at home, it's much easier to head into work with a clear head and with the right frame of mind.

Here are some great ways to foster a more organized, clutter free environment — both at home and in your medical practice.

1. "Manage the beforehand." Preparing for something in advance of a need, such as readying your files in anticipation of new items, is critical. In other words, rather than having files and cabinets filled to the brim with information, strip them of all excess materials so that at least 20 percent of your space is vacant.

With 20 percent vacant space, you have now created room for the things that you'll receive. At work these might include new insurance contracts, newsletters, and medical journals you want to review at a later date. The important point is to take control in advance — manage the beforehand — as opposed to dealing with the aftermath of too much information.

Once you develop the habit of clearing space in all the compartments of your life: your car, your closets, your office, etc., you accomplish many things. You demonstrate to yourself that you do have enough space to manage your affairs and conduct your life, and you remain in a ready state to handle what is next rather than trying to figure out where to store things or how to create ad hoc piles.

2. Create a holding bin. Another technique is to create what I call a holding bin. A holding bin is a temporary station — but not ad hoc — where you have decided to park new materials that enter your office or your life, such as mail, reports, memos, etc. This holding bin is not to be confused with an inbox. A holding bin is the area set aside where it is recognized at your own time and pace you will return to these rather non-essential or non-urgent materials and review them.

Not everything that comes across your desk goes into the holding bin: You be the judge. It is important to establish a holding bin so that you don't mix what you must deal with immediately with what you can deal with at your discretion.

3. Engage in

rituals. In an ultra-hectic world, brief daily rituals are important. For example, some people linger in the shower for several minutes, to collect their thoughts and gain a sense of satisfaction or even renewal.

In the workplace, a ritual might entail setting the window blinds "just right," clearing your desk, or having all calls held before tackling a project. Teams at work might have breakfast or lunch together, or engage in five minutes of friendly banter before the beginning of a formal meeting. Rituals can serve as little breaks throughout the day to keep noise and distraction at bay.

Such positive rituals — automatic forms of behavior or activities — help keep everyone on task and organized.