

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR MEN

The Organized Single Dad

What Every Single Father Should Know About
Raising Children and Having a Great Life

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<http://www.personal-development-for-men.com/index.html>

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	6
Part 1. What to Do First.....	8
Chapter 1. Eliminate Clutter.....	9
The First Step to Getting Clutter Free	12
The Second Step to Getting Clutter Free.....	13
Quitting.....	14
Elimination.....	16
Knowing What to Keep.....	16
Chapter 2. Maintain Your Most Important Things	18
Your Wallet.....	18
Your Keys	19
Money, How To Live On Less.....	20
Inexpensive Fun.....	21
Your Car	22
Your Garage.....	27
Your Body	32
Sleep	35
Planning for the Worst	36
Prepare for the Worst	37
Get Organized Now	39
Health Reserves.....	41
Part 2. Your Children	43
Chapter 3. Keep Them Safe	44
Do Not Procrastinate on Safety for Your Children and Yourself	44
Protect Your Children	46
Have a Place for Your Children, Always.....	48
Chapter 4. Have Fun with Them.....	50

Things to do with your Daughter	50
Things to do with Your Son	51
Help Them Have Fun	52
Chapter 5. Don't Be a Bad Father.....	52
Saving Stuff for Your Kids	54
Never Make Promises or Demand Them	56
Chapter 6. Be a Good Father	59
Find Easy Ways to Help Your Kids Succeed	60
Things to Tell Your Children	62
Things to Tell Your Son.....	62
Things to tell your son and daughter	63
Do Not Try to Control Your Children	64
Letter to a Young Man Considering a Military Career.....	67
Working with My Dad.....	71
Chapter 7. Dealing With Your Ex - Wife.....	73
More Tips to dealing with her	76
Part 3. Practical Ideas for Easier Living.....	77
Easy Cooking.....	78
Kitchen Ideas	80
Easier Housework by Multi-tasking.....	81
A Typical Weekday Morning.....	83
A Typical Weekday after Work.....	86
Meal Planning.....	87
Easier Laundry	92
Setting Things Out	95
Picking Up as You Go	96
Know How Long It Takes to Get Ready	98
Have a List of Things to Do that Only Take a Few Minutes.....	99
Family Organizing Tips.....	101
Christmas Organizing.....	103
What I Hate About Christmas.....	106
Organized Christmas Shopping	111

Thanksgiving Organizing.....	112
Fun and Organized at the Beach	114
The Grill Box	117
Your Home.....	119
Food.....	125
Bathroom Ideas	127
Clean House Tips	130
Easy Living Furniture	131
The perfect Couch	134
The most important chair in the house.....	134
Your Bedroom	134
Closets	135
Be Early.....	137
Keeping Things Short.....	140
Minimize Have To's	141
Never Sacrifice.....	142
Not.....	143
Get it How You Want It	146
Pick Up and Put Away.....	146
Do It Yourself.....	147
What an Organized Man Has and Does	149
Cleaning Up the Easy Way by Doing Things Outside.....	150
The Problem of Saving Good Things for Later.....	151
Weekends are for fun.....	152
Time.....	154
Self Help Advice.....	157
Freedom is not struggle.....	163
Stop Doing Things That Are Hurtful to Yourself	164
This Planet	165
Conclusion	166
About The Author.....	166

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INTRODUCTION

If you have just left your wife and you have children you are in the right place.

If your wife left you and you have children you are in the right place.

If you are wondering how you are going to deal with your children all by yourself you are in the right place.

If you are wondering if you can have any kind of life at all outside of caring for your children you are in the right place.

If your ex-wife has had the kids most of the time and now you are going to have them a lot more, you are in the right place.

I am a single dad. I was married for nearly 14 years but had to leave my wife due to her verbal abuse. During our marriage she took care of the kids and I worked, a lot. She was a stay home mom. I helped where I could but she did most of the things related to the kids. When I left her I left the kids too. I was hoping she would just handle that. She did for a time.

I did have the kids on the weekends and as needed. Then late last year I had to take my teenage son in with me full-time. I could not just stand by and watch him being mistreated by my ex-wife the way she mistreated me.

My daughter saw how well my son was doing living with me and she ran away from her mother to live with me. Now I have both children living with me full-time and it is wonderful.

But I know firsthand how difficult it is for men to get a handle on caring for kids and deal with employment and try to have a life. I know what it is like to only see your kids a little bit here and there and I know what it is like to have them with you all the time. I know what it is like having to do everything.

I am not interested in just being a dad or just having a job. I want to be as good of a dad as I can, have a career, write books, run businesses, buy real estate, date lots of girls, see my old friends, make new friends, travel, watch movies, watch sports and do what I want most of the time.

In short, I want it all. You know that you do too.

You could do this by getting up earlier or by staying up later. Of course this will wreck your health and send you to an early grave.

You could quit your job and spend all your time caring for your kids. Of course when you run out of money in a few days or a few months you can just go on welfare and be a deadbeat of some kind or beg on the street.

You could find a rich woman to take care of you. You could be the gold digger. You could rely on luck.

Or you can just get organized.

That is really the only option available to you if you want to have any kind of a life at all. You can try to learn this all by yourself or you can just read this book and start getting organized immediately and get a better life right away.

Getting organized is the key to it all. The more organized you get and stay the better your life will be no matter what you are doing. But it is especially important if you are a single dad.

Being organized is not something you do once and it is over. It is a way of being and how you think about things. As you become more organized you will develop an easier, better life filled with long blocks of time that you can use for whatever you want.

Part 1 is what I consider to be the main things you can do to get organized quickly and immediately free up your time to be a better dad and have a better life. Part 2 is filled with my ideas on relating to my children. Part 3 is a huge collection of get organized tips, techniques and ideas to get even more organized and live a better life.

This book is meant to be used as a reference. More like an encyclopedia than a novel. Use this book as a workbook. Read it and do it. Make your life easier. Give yourself the kind of time that all men deserve to be a great dad and to get the most out of your life.

Part 1. What to Do First

Part 1 is what to concentrate on first. These are the most important items and actions to work on. These are the big things to do and think about. Once you take care of some of these big things you will have the time to do other things. If you do not take care of the big things first, you will never really be able to create the kind of time to do what you want to do.

The biggest benefit of not being married is that you no longer will have to do what your wife wants. Most married men spend most of their time catering to the demands of their wife and chaotically running around trying to please their wives. Some of that time is spent either lying to your wife or trying to decide to tell her something that may make her upset.

The only truly happy men in the world are those who live life on their terms who do what they want to do most of the time. Use the ideas in this book to help you obtain the time to do what you want and enjoy your life to the fullest.

Chapter 1. Eliminate Clutter

Throwing out excess clutter is the most important part of getting organized. It is the backbone of being organized and of having a productive life. It is not really possible to be a well-organized person and to have a lot of stuff. The two do not go together. I throw and throw and throw some more. The more I throw out the better I feel and the more organized I become.

I make it a point to look for things to throw out. I throw out clothes, papers, containers, furniture, kitchen stuff and anything that doesn't work, doesn't fit, things that I'm tired of and anything else that looks like clutter. At the end of the day at my civil engineering job the paper garbage can is usually full.

I throw out bad habits, bad relationships and activities that take a lot of time. I am constantly tweaking and working on my schedule to make my life better. I look for ways to cut out what I do not want to do.

In spite of all this throwing I still have plenty of stuff. The point is that you do not have to be afraid that you will have nothing; you'll just have a lot less. The stuff you have left will be the things you want, love and are useful to you. I keep the books I want to reread or that are a good reference. I throw out the rest. I keep the hobby equipment I want to pursue; I just throw out the equipment from hobbies that no longer interest me. I keep my monthly calendar because it is important to me and has a lot of good information.

I throw out all the other calendars that I have for seeing the day and month. I only write on my one main calendar that I carry around with me. Those other calendars, even though they have nice pictures on them, get tossed at the end of the year. If you really love a picture from a calendar, then just cut out the picture to save, rather than keep the whole calendar.

I know what is important to me and do not feel guilty for throwing things out.

I think a lot of people do not know what is important to them. They don't know what is easily obtainable again. They don't spend any time thinking of how they could be more organized by having less clutter. So they just keep everything. They buy new clothes and keep the old clothes. They buy new books but keep the

old books they will never read again. They keep every paper they receive in the mail or print off from the computer. They just can't seem to get rid of any of it. Don't do that, your life and free time is more important than stuff.

Some people want to save stuff for their kids and grand kids. I always think that it is best to only keep what you want to keep and let others do the same. Do not force others to do what you want, even if they are your kids.

One way to keep your stuff under control is to use the one in and two out rule. I do see a lot of people who tend to have huge amounts of stuff and clutter to deal with. My boss at work has a desk piled high with papers. He cannot seem to do anything about it. A number of the other people in the office are the same way. But a number of others doing similar types of things have very neat, orderly, uncluttered desks and office areas. I think it is the way a person sees the world. I want my world to be uncluttered and free. Don't you?

My ex-wife is a cluttered person. She has huge amounts of everything. It seems that anything she had any interest in she collected. Then after she moved on to something else, she still keeps the older items. She just can't bring herself to throw anything away even if she has no interest in it.

I encouraged her to discard things from years ago that she wasn't using. She ignored my ideas. I guess she is happy that way. I know that her stuff was a big problem for me. I found it hard to get past. I am just so into having less clutter that it did affect our marriage, although it wasn't the reason we broke up (maybe a little).

She just would not part with anything. She was always buying more and more bins, containers, shelving and storage units to contain it all. I don't mind having good things to hold the good stuff. What I didn't like was the huge expense of buying more and more containers to hold more and more stuff that wasn't being used. I hate spending money on stuff to hold stuff. I hate spending time storing stuff away and re-organizing it multiple times. She would spend hours and days working on her stuff. Then she would insist that I help and be mad at me if I didn't want to. She would be furious if she ever caught me throwing anything of hers out. I found out early in our marriage not to do that.

Now, after years of being a clutter collector, my ex-wife is starting to get rid of some of her excess belongings. She is starting to realize that being clutter free and organized will help her improve her life.

One Sunday I took my kids to my brother's rental trailer. He bought it as an investment and for a place for his ex-wife, their daughter and his ex-wife's new son to live. He and my parents were going to be there to work on a project. I wanted to visit and have the kids see their grandparents, uncle and cousin.

We had a nice picnic lunch, visited for a while and then it was time for work. The trailer had a leaky roof and it needed repair before winter. But before we could work on the roof, my brother said that we needed to organize the stuff in the storage shed. My brother's ex-wife is quite a collector and she had the shed jammed with stuff. My brother decided to work on the shed first because he knew that his ex would insist that their daughter do it. Since he knew how big of a job that would be, he decided to do it for his daughter. He is really a good dad and protective of her.

My mom, dad and I all helped so it went fairly well. My dad and I think the same about clutter. If it was up to us it would all have been thrown away. We would have had a huge pile for the garbage man but it would be the last time anyone would have to deal with it.

I didn't mind the work. It was a nice day and I was with family. It was good exercise for me and the kids had a good time with their cousin. I probably won't have to deal with that stuff again. My brother will. He has been moving that same stuff around for years from house to house and from garage to shed.

Do you see the main problem with the stuff? It came before the real problem of the leaky roof. The roof should have been fixed. A leak in your roof will cause major and expensive damage to the building. But the stuff came first. If the stuff would have been thrown out years before, then the roof could have been fixed first. But that is what stuff does. It puts itself first. The more important things come second when you let the stuff come first.

Don't be that way. Let the important things be first. Let the stuff come last. Keep it in its place by always throwing it away. The dirty secret to live clutter free is to always be throwing. When your stuff knows you are a thrower, it will be more respectful of you and not try to push its way to the front. It will know its

place in your life. The clutter you allow in your life will know it's usefulness to you. It will know that you are in control. You control the clutter; the clutter does not control you.

Finally, and most important, remember that you are not so much getting rid of stuff as making room to live.

The First Step to Getting Clutter Free

Toss out the clutter that is slowing you down the most. This would be the stuff that is out in the open:

- Stuff in hallways.
- Stuff on the stairs.
- Stuff piled up by your doors.
- Stuff on the kitchen table.
- Stuff on the kitchen counters.

This is the stuff that bugs you when you are trying to leave the house in a hurry. This is the stuff you stumble over at night when you are tired. This is the stuff that gets in the way when you are preparing a meal. This is the stuff you always have to walk around. This is the most annoying stuff you have.

This isn't the stuff packed in closets, dressers, drawers and shelves. This is the stuff that is stacked up, piled up and strewn about that you have to walk around and climb over and deal with all the time.

This type of stuff is the worst offender, because you just get used to dealing with it. You get used to dealing with it and working around it. You are almost oblivious to it.

This kind of stuff includes shoes and coats by the back door. This would be the packages you brought back from the store. The mail you leave on the kitchen table or the counter. This is the dirty laundry on the floor near the bedrooms. This is the half-done project in the living room. This is the extra shelf unit in the back

hall you can't decide what to do with. This is the stack of newspapers you want coupons from and magazines you want to read. This is the extra chairs you have that no one sits on.

But this is the stuff that can kill you. Stuff on the stairways will trip you up and send you to the emergency room. This is the stuff that just makes your life so much more difficult. Deal with this stuff first and decisively and your life will improve dramatically.

The Second Step to Getting Clutter Free

Throw this stuff out in the garbage. Not to the garage. Not to charity. Not to someone you know.

A person trying to improve their life by getting rid of clutter is not in a position of helping others by giving things away. An overly cluttered person is the person in need. The need is to get rid of enough stuff to get back to a better level. Your excess stuff is in effect, making you a person in need.

I know this is counter-intuitive. You think that because you have all this stuff that you are doing fine. You are the person with your life together. You are the person who should be giving to those in need.

No. You are the person in need. You are the one who needs help. Having so much stuff that your life is much more difficult is the problem.

You need to take care of your need by throwing the stuff out. Only a person who is not cluttered can give it away. This is the huge consciousness shift that is needed to improve your life.

We are always told to think of others and to not be selfish. To give to those in need. In the process we spiral down until we are the person most in need. We are the unfortunate one. A home filled to the brink with stuff is not a home of abundance. It is a dangerous place filled with lack. It is a home of scarcity.

Once you throw away a massive amount of clutter and you become clutter free, you will be able to give to those in need.

Take care of yourself first.

Once you have completed these 2 steps your life will be much less cluttered and free. From this point you will have more time, space and energy to branch out to other areas of your life and home that need attention.

Quitting

Sometimes quitting is the best thing you can do. I think the word quit gets a bad rap. No one wants to be known as a quitter.

But isn't quitting things that are not good for you a good thing? Like quitting smoking or drinking.

Everyone associates the people who won't quit as being the best and most noble. We all hear the stories of people who never quit and stick with things. I'm not so sure. Everything I have quit has worked out great for me:

- I quit playing basketball before my senior season in high school. I hated basketball and the sport was destroying my ankles. Playing basketball just wasn't for me. I was not good at it in spite of practicing all the time. I dreaded practices and games. The only days I enjoyed during basketball were the days we had no practice or games. Quitting basketball allowed me to enjoy the rest of my senior year in high school.
- I quit trying to get a Masters degree in Structural Engineering. This was a subject I was not really that interested in and was really not smart enough for.
- I quit a boring dead-end City government job, twice.
- I quit a demanding, stressful low paying private sector civil engineering job.
- I quit eating so much candy at work. I would keep eating junk food until I couldn't eat anymore.

- I quit the thought that I needed to drink a lot every weekend when I was a young man. I choose to drink the amount I want.
- I quit over eating all the time. I choose to enjoy big meals when I want and eat less most of the time.
- I quit exercising so much that I was constantly sore, getting sick and suffering horrible injuries.
- I quit feeling sorry for myself.
- I quit always looking to the future so I could live now.
- I quit a marriage that was killing me.

My problems were worse because I didn't know when to quit or did not quit something soon enough. I just stubbornly kept hanging in there, not quitting, but not really getting anywhere.

It seems to me being able to quit something that is wrong for you is a mark of maturity and self awareness. Everyone says that we never should quit, that we should stick things out, see things through and never give up. But then how would we have time to find out who we are and what we want to do with our lives. So go ahead and quit whatever needs quitting.

If you are reading this book it probably means you quit a bad marriage. Good for you.

Elimination

The first mental and physical hurdle of being organized is realizing that the way to being well organized is eliminating what you don't want. The elimination principle is by far the most important organizing principle. This principle goes beyond just organizing your stuff. It will be most important in your relationships, your career and your accumulating money.

Is there any sense in keeping things you don't want and will not be using? Why keep anything that you aren't using and that you know you won't be using in the near future? It is so liberating to be constantly throwing things out and making room for the new. It's what I love. I throw everything, books, magazines, clothes, articles, magazines, kitchen stuff, anything.

I have gotten to the point where I have just about the right amount of stuff and a lot of free time.

It wasn't always this way for me. There have been times when my life was complicated beyond belief. I had way too much to do, way too many things I felt like had to be done and way too many things I had to do that I didn't want to do but that were forced on me.

Knowing What to Keep

There is a danger once you start throwing out. The danger is in throwing something you really wanted to keep. I have tossed out the following things that I'd really wished I hadn't:

- My high school yearbooks.
- A scrapbook that held newspaper clippings and programs from my high school football playing days.
- Awards I'd won as a high school student.

I guess that is about all the things I'd wished I'd kept that I ended up tossing out. These things were somewhat special to me. They had to do with things I did myself and was good at myself. I think mementos of the things a person does are important to keep.

You might want to make a list of the special things that you want to keep forever. Things like:

- Photographs.
- Birth certificates.
- Baptismal certificates.
- Passports.
- Social security card.
- Documents from court proceedings.
- Mementos.
- Memorabilia.
- Heirlooms.
- Antiques.
- Special cards and letters.
- Anything special that your children made for you.
- Things your children find sentimental or interesting.
- Things your children need for their comfort and well being.

Chapter 2. Maintain Your Most Important Things

Your Wallet

My wallet is the most important thing I own. I like to think I could start over anywhere with just my wallet.

I like to have a small slim one-fold wallet that I can put in my right hand front pants pocket. I keep it in my right side because I am right-handed. It has an outside pocket, a clear plastic pocket for driver's license, 2 inside pockets on the right side, 2 inside pockets on the left side, a hidden pocket under the left side inside pockets and a money clip on the inside. I keep it organized as follows:

- Cash in the money clip on the inside. I like to have quite a bit of money on me. I shoot for at least \$100.
- Extra cash in the hidden pocket. This is where I keep at least a few hundred. I am working toward a thousand or two.
- Credit cards (1 or 2) are in the right side inside pocket.
- Bank card(s) in the right side inside pocket. These cards have my bank number for deposits and withdrawals.
- Check card in the right side inside pocket.
- Driver's license in the outside plastic coated pocket.
- Library card in the left side inside pocket.
- Health insurance card in the left side inside pocket.
- Car insurance card in the left side inside pocket.
- Starbucks card in the left side inside pocket.
- Blockbuster Video rental card in the left side inside pocket.
- Sam's Club card in the left side inside pocket.
- Fishing license in the left side inside pocket.
- Small pencil in the outside pocket.
- A few folded index cards in the outside pocket. The pencil and index cards are really handy for making a few notes, random notes or phone numbers.

This is quite a bit of stuff but it is still slim as long as I am not carrying a lot of small bills. This wallet really works great to hold everything I need and still be thin.

Those big tri-fold wallets that you put in your rear pocket are not right for me. I find sitting on one very uncomfortable and hard on my back.

I go through it all the time to organize the money and check if anything can come out. I am fanatical about checking on it. I keep it in my front pocket so I can make sure it is there constantly. It is just a natural move to check on it.

Your Keys

It is very important to have your keys well organized and to keep the number of keys that you keep with you to only the number that you need. You may need to have a second set in your glove box if you have the need for a lot of them.

I have heard of some people only carrying their car remote in their pocket. They then keep all their keys in their glove box. It sounds like an interesting way to be organized and I may experiment with it someday.

I keep my keys on one ring. I hate those big dangling chains and key rings. I keep on my key ring organized as follows:

- Round screwdriver from Sears. This has 4 sizes of screwdrivers on it and is very handy tool for being well-organized. You will find it has lots of uses.
- Car keys (2). One to start the car and open the door and one for the trunk.
- House keys (3). One for the door knob, another for the deadbolt and the third for the door to the building.
- Post Office Box key (1).

Money, How To Live On Less

There are times in most people's lives where they will have to really scale back how much money you need to live on. After I left my wife was one of those times for me. It is probably that time for you if you are reading this book.

I know there were a lot of other times for me also. I think the idea of living on less can be quite empowering for anyone.

The knowledge of how to live on a lot less money can be one of the most important skills that you can have. There are so many cases of people staying with the wrong person only for the money. If you knew you could survive with very little money, you may choose to live your life in a way that makes you happy rather than not. I think I stayed in a bad marriage partly because of money. I certainly thought about staying because of money.

Think about women and men all over the world who stay in terribly abusive relationships because they don't want to give up the relative comfort that they have. I am telling you straight up that you can survive on not much money for however long it takes you to get to a more money situation.

Now let's look at the ways I save money:

- I cook at home most of the time.
- Whenever I do go out to eat I keep the cost under control by using coupons, rarely having a drink, no desserts and by ordering the less expensive items.
- I shop the sales at the grocery store.
- I use coupons for items that I would get anyway.
- I buy food at Wal-Mart, ALDI's and at the Dollar Store.
- I know what the low cost of the things I buy are and stock up at their lowest price. I have used a price book to determine what the low cost of things I normally buy is.
- I base what I have to eat on what's on sale and what I have on hand.

- I like to make a game of it, seeing how long I can go without going to the store.
- I watch for restaurant coupons.
- Everything I need for the house or personal items I get at the Dollar Store or at Wal-Mart.
- I get the most inexpensive items that I can find. I don't really think there is that big of a difference.
- I am continuing to drive my old car instead of getting a newer car.
- I am using hand me down furniture instead of buying new furniture.
- I furnished my apartment after leaving my wife with castoffs from other people.
- I drink inexpensive beer rather than expensive drinks.
- I do not go out for drinks very often and then control how much I spend.
- I rarely go to sporting events.
- I rarely go to concerts.
- I do not have any hobbies.

With this mindset you will be able to save big on normal survival needs. You may be at a point where you are just surviving or you may be working to have more money for your goals. In any case it can be done.

Inexpensive Fun

Since I left my wife I haven't found my fortune yet. I am working on it but for now I have been looking for ways to have fun that don't cost a lot of money. When I get rich I am planning on enjoying plenty of experiences that are expensive but for now I have the following list of ideas:

- Sitting or laying in the sun getting a tan. I look better with a tan and I know I feel better with the Vitamin D from the sun.
- When I go Starbucks or some other nice coffee shop I have a small coffee instead of one of the much more expensive drinks.

- Reading at Barnes and Noble bookstore.
- Checking out DVD's and books at the library.
- Renting \$0.99 and \$1.59 movies at the video store.
- Enjoying a free meal when one is offered.
- Shopping at the Mall but not buying.
- Shopping at any store but not buying.
- Surfing the Internet.
- Going to free festivals. Eating beforehand and only buying a few adult beverages when I am there.
- Going out to the bars and nightclubs later at night to avoid buying too many drinks.
- Going to Happy Hours.
- Going to free zoos and museums.
- Walking.
- Swimming at the beaches that are free or that only charge a few dollars.

Your Car

Do you drive your car until the gas tank is nearly empty? I always fill mine up when it hits half full. Keeping that tank nearly full is one of the best ways to look out for you and your kids. In winter you may need to keep it running if you run off the road in a blizzard. If you are traveling or are in an unfamiliar area you may not know where the next gas station is located.

The worst feeling you will have as a father is the stress you will feel when you are speeding to the hospital in the middle of the night with your barely breathing child gasping for air and you in terror of running out of gas. This terrifying experience happened to me when my son was small. I did make it to the hospital and my son is fine, but the lesson was learned.

You don't need that feeling. You may need to flee from something or someone, someday. You may need to save your life or someone else's life. Don't be low on gas at that critical moment.

Using organization ideas for your car might be one of the most important things you ever do. Besides the convenience of getting you where you want to go when you want to easily, it can save your life and the lives of others.

Even the act of having a car is probably the most important things you can do for yourself. You could get in your car right now and go anywhere you want. I think every person of driving age should have their own car. I think the expense of every person having their own car is justified.

I don't know how an adult living alone could live without having their own car. I know there are cases of older couples where the couple has one car between them. This would only work if the couple spends most of their time together and that they get along very, very, very well.

My ex-wife's parents only have had one car their entire married lives. They do get along well together but it just seems to me they have been lucky in the sense that nothing has happened to them that have required them to have a car each.

I prefer to not rely on luck, I want to be self-sufficient. This means I have to have a car.

I have listed some of the most important organization type things you should do to your car below:

- Keep the gas tank at least half full all the time. As soon as my gauge gets to half full I stop for gas. During emergency situations like getting someone to the hospital, driving away from a bad situation or escaping a disaster, having a full tank is the most important thing in the world at that time.
- Change the oil every 3,000 miles at a Quick Change place. I know it costs a little more, but the convenience can't be beat and the guys there look over your car a little and tell you if something else needs to be fixed by a regular mechanic.
- Take it to the mechanic when it's not running right.
- Follow the owner's manual on the service.
- Join an auto club like AAA. This service pays for itself with just one time.
- Lock it, always.
- Make sure you have your keys in your hand before you lock it.

- Have spare keys in your house and maybe in one of those magnetized boxes attached to the car somewhere.
- Keep the amount of stuff in it to a minimum. Sometimes you will have more like while traveling or when you have extra people. I know every time I have my kids with me there will be extra stuff in the car. After they go back to their mother I put the car back the way it should be quickly. Then I am ready for their next visit.

Here is what I have in my car right now;

- Large flashlight on the floor in the area between the driver door and driver seat. This is a large heavy steel flashlight that throws a lot of light and is so big and heavy that it can be used as a club if you need it against a bad guy or a vicious dog
- Organizer attached to the driver side sun visor. The organizer has zippered pockets and regular pockets. The organizer holds a car insurance card, gas charge card, business mileage recording book, some pens, and tire pressure gauge, small pad of paper, oil change coupons, oil change discount card and my grocery store discount cards
- Coins in the coin holder. Change is very handy to have available in the car.
- Organizer on floor between the driver and passenger. This has 2 drink holders and 2 other openings. I keep an absorbent cloth here as well as drinks and any other miscellaneous items I am currently working on. I also have gum and mints here. The cloth is used to dust the dashboard, wipe my face in hot weather, my hands if they need it, the windows if they are foggy and as a bib if I am eating messy food while driving. My parents and sister all keep a fairly good sized towel for this purpose. They put it over their lap when they drink coffee. This is a really good idea if you drink coffee a lot while driving. It may stop you from scalding yourself or at least from spilling coffee on your clothes.
- I keep the driver door pocket empty. I use this pocket for temporarily holding my important items like wallet, watch, cell phone, glasses or contact lenses holder while I am doing certain activities. The other day I picked up a friend to go to the fair. I wore my contact lenses. I placed my glasses, contact lenses case with solution in this pocket. I figured that I might crash on his couch after the fair instead of driving home late at night. I also put my cell phone here because I didn't feel like carrying it all night at

the fair. Sometimes I will do hot, sweaty work at my parent's house or at my ex-wife's house. I put my wallet, watch and cell phone in the pocket rather than ruining these things while doing strenuous, sweaty and dirty work.

- The glove box holds scissors, a fingernail clipper, large jackknife, some cassette tapes, cell phone charger cord and a flashlight that is powered by winding,
- The car owner's manual is kept under the driver seat.
- Passenger door pocket has napkins, Kleenex and a comb.
- The visor above the passenger seat holds sunglasses and clip-on sunglasses.
- Pocket behind driver seat has local maps. I have Wisconsin map, Milwaukee County map, Waukesha County map, a blow up map book of the region and MapQuest directions to people I am may visit.
- Pocket behind passenger seat has individually packaged hand cleaners.
- Box of tissue on the rear passenger seat.
- Trunk has hiking boots, work gloves, a baseball hat, roll of paper towels, bottle of glass cleaner, umbrella, plastic bags, mosquito repellent, 2 small light fleece blankets, battery jumper cables, window squeegee, organizer with first aid kit, safety cone, light that plugs into the lighter, fold-able shovel, hammer, adjustable wrench, pliers, screwdrivers, rope, bungee cords, instant air canister, flares, fire extinguisher and window shade that says CALL POLICE. During the winter I add an ice scraper, snow brush, another 2 blankets, wool socks, heavy gloves, heavy mittens, and a winter hat and winter boots. The ice scraper is kept by the flashlight, the snow brush is kept on the floor on the front seat passenger side, the heavy gloves are kept on the floor organizer and the rest is kept in the trunk.

This method keeps me well prepared for anything, yet the car looks totally neat and organized all the time. Plus it's easy to vacuum because there isn't much to move. This amount of stuff suits me perfectly. If I have more temporarily due to traveling or having extra passengers, I just get back to the right amount as soon as I can.

There are times where I relax my standard of always having my car nearby. I will take the bus to large events like Summerfest because it is so inconvenient to park at big events like that. But I will have the car at the park and ride and only be

away from it for part of a day. Traveling by plane will make it impossible for you to have your car nearby.

Sometimes I think that this adds to a person's stress level when they are traveling. The security of your car is not there. I guess the fun and excitement of traveling outweigh the security for the time you are gone. I think that is why I prefer to travel by car. I have had a number of great trips by plane and plan on more, but you will have to realize that you are vulnerable at that time and should be extra vigilant.

Keeping your car in good running order is one of the best ways of making your life organized and easy. This is the car schedule I am working on getting to:

1. November 1, Year One. Lease a new car or truck. Put on winter wiper blades and have the factory mats that fit the car perfectly. Wash and vacuum the car frequently. Obviously, you will have new tires.
2. May 1, Year One. Replace winter wiper blades with new regular blades. Oil changes and other maintenance as recommended in the manual.
3. November 1, Year Two. New front tire (rears if a rear wheel drive vehicle). Having new tires on the main drive wheels will make your winter driving much safer. Put on new winter wiper blades. Keep changing the oil, following the manual for maintenance and washing/ vacuuming.
4. May 1, Year Two. Replace winter wiper blades with new regular blades.
5. November 1, Year Three. New front tires and move one year old tires to rear tires (or opposite if rear wheel drive).
6. May 1, Year Three. Install new wiper blades.
7. November 1, Year Four. Lease a new car.

With this organization schedule you have nearly new tires always and nearly new wiper blades. The wiper blades and tires are the most important components of the car in bad weather. Following this schedule for tire and wiper blade replacement may save your life someday. At least you will be safer.

Replacing your car every 3 years is expensive, but you will avoid the big repair expenses.

I believe that having a well organized, well maintained car may be one of the most important things a person has. Just think of the people that didn't have a car when Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf States. The people who had a car were able to just drive away from the danger. The people who didn't were dependent on luck and on others.

Watching those tragic events was a total shock to me. It really made me see how important having a car is and how the organization of your car can make your life so much easier and maybe even save it.

Your Garage

An organized garage will be for you and your car, not your stuff. So many people see the huge expanse of their garage as a gigantic storage unit or dumping ground for all their excess stuff.

Think of getting home late at night and you are exhausted. You just want to get into the house and go to bed. Then you groggily get out of the car and the car door bangs on the shovels hanging on the wall, door ding. The shovel falls on your head and you curse under your breathe. You stumble over a skateboard and barely stay upright. When you finally stagger into the house you are not pleasantly tired and looking forward to a warm, soft bed you are angry, frustrated and your head hurts.

There is no type of cabinets or shelving that will help you to organize garage if you have too much stuff.

What I like to think about is getting into my car easily without banging the car door on the side of the garage or into a shelf or something hanging. I hate having to walk sideways along the side of my car. I get super annoyed whenever someone parks close to me in a parking lot and I have to somehow squeeze into my car.

Why would I set up my garage to do that myself every day? I don't.

I set it up so I can just get in. I don't have to walk through a gauntlet of hanging tools and duck my head under low shelves. I have what I need stored in front of the car and some on the passenger side. The driver side remains clear no matter what.

It is possible to store things properly as long as you keep it to the most useful items and you use the space properly. The absolute worst place to do any garage organizing and put any storage is along the left hand side when you are looking at the garage from the big garage doors.

This is the side the driver door opens on. If you put stuff here, every time you get into and out of your car you will have to walk sideways. You will be forever bumping into things, hurting yourself, scraping your arms and bruising your shoulders. You will be snagging your clothing on things and dropping what is in your hands. It is just so totally frustrating. These problems can be totally eliminated by leaving that side totally open from the back by the big overhead door to in front of where the driver side door opens.

I do love the garage organizing systems. They are very beautiful and hold a lot of stuff. I am just saying that you want to use those types of things in the proper place to organize. Garage shelving systems, whether they are homemade or store bought will help you to store what you need stored. But you want to keep in mind the main thing which is to store your car and to make getting into and out of your car easy, all the time.

You want to think how nice it is to just get in your car without struggle.

All the frustration involved with squeezing into and out of your car can be avoided if you just leave that space next to the driver door as wide open as possible.

It is unusual for a garage to be much bigger than for cars. Most 2 car garages are about 20 feet wide. Each car is about 6.5 feet wide. So you only have 7 feet extra on the 3 open spaces. If you divide 7 feet by 3 you only get 2 feet 4 inches. That is not that much space.

It is less than the width of a normal door in a house and much narrower than a normal front door.

There is really only enough room to walk, not enough to store stuff or do garage organizing on the side of your garage.

If you have a super wide garage, that is great. That really helps but for most people that is not the reality.

You will be better off not having anything along the side of your garage. That way you can get into and out of your car with less difficulty.

Sure it is possible to get in and out of a smaller space. But think about it, you will be doing this twice a day for years on end. It is just so much extra frustration to deal with just for the sake of storing extra stuff.

Put your storage units, cabinets and shelving in the front of the garage right in front of where your car is parked. If you have a longer vehicle, there will probably not be much room here. You could also store things above so that you can walk below it and not bump your head.

Think about it. Your car is one of the most expensive things you have. It is your stuff too. It deserves a special place.

Plus a car is the most important thing anyone has. Can you think of anything more important? You can live in a car, you can't drive a house. Your house can't get you to safety. Your house can't drive a loved one to the hospital. Your house can't get you to work or to see someone or to do something.

Leave your car inside when you look at garage organizing. Then see where there is room. You will see that there is really not that much room in your garage.

Where I live in Wisconsin, the winters can be brutal. Blinding blizzards and cold spells of days below zero happen at least a few times every winter. An easy winter is one where the incidents of terrible, terrorizing weather are not that frequent. When a big snowstorm hits at the wrong time, the results can be catastrophic.

So, knowing that the weather can be bad at least most of the time, you would think that anyone with a garage would be doing whatever they could to keep their vehicles inside it.

Wrong.

Their idea of garage organizing is having their junk more neatly stacked and put away rather than being able to easily drive their car into and out of the garage as well as easily being able to get into the vehicle without a lot of hassle.

Wintertime magnifies the hassle factor with your car if it isn't in the garage.

Even in fairly decent weather your cars windows will be coated with ice that needs to be scraped or a layer of snow that needs to be brushed off or a combination of the two.

Why isn't the hassle of dealing with all that a constant reminder to keep your car in the garage as much as possible and to throw away as much junk as you need to make that happen?

It is better to get some good products to help store your stuff away properly so that you can get your car in the garage.

It is almost like a red badge of courage to keep your car outside in bad weather or a bad joke.

Do you and the most important thing you have, your car, a huge favor and get it in the garage and keep it in. Do your garage organization around your car first and foremost.

They don't seem to think of their car as stuff at that point since it can easily sit outside. When I bought my first house in the City it had a large 2.5 car detached garage. I had a Honda Accord and my fiancé had a small Hyundai. Both cars fit easily into the garage.

There was nothing in the garage attic and not much on the sides or the front.

My fiancé did have a lot of stuff. As soon as we moved in the house filled immediately. It had 4 small bedrooms. We were in the master bedroom. I used one bedroom as an office and she used the other two bedrooms for storage of her things.

As soon as we were married a few months later we were expecting our first child.

With a baby on the way, my bedroom office was moved into the basement to make room for the baby's room.

My wife quickly started to buy everything that was available for babies. The house was overwhelmed. The basement was stuffed and so was the attic.

Then she looked to the garage, my beautiful, big organized garage filled with 2 cars and a few tools. I could easily get into my car when it was in the garage. Even when both cars were in the garage it still looked open. Not for long.

Within another few months, the garage was packed. Both cars fit but getting the car door open was another matter. I really had to squeeze myself to get in the car.

After our first child arrived, the first major remodeling project started and all the stuff that had to be moved for the remodeling was moved into the spot into the garage where my car was.

I never got my car back into that garage while we lived there. That was 6 more years. Six winters of scraping ice and snow every morning.

Having an organized garage means to keep your cars in your garage. Don't have so much stuff that you can't fit your most important possession, your car in the garage.

Your Body

How do you balance a full life with finding time to exercise? Having a method of working out that does not take long is the key.

I have discovered a method of lifting weights developed by Pete Sisco. His method is called Static Contraction training. Basically the method is to lift extremely heavy weights in only your strongest range of motion.

I have been using this method for a few years now and I have never felt better about lifting in my life. I did all the long bodybuilding workouts when I was in high school, college and then in my twenties. I loved lifting but gave it up when the demands of marriage, career and young children took all my time.

That is the biggest problem with conventional lifting. It takes a long time. There is the time lifting. There is the time going to and returning from the gym. There is the time dressing, undressing and getting ready. There is the time doing the extra laundry of sweaty clothes. There is the extra time you need to sleep because you are more tired. There is the extra time you need to do things because your muscles are sore. There is also more time involved because of all the injuries you incur over the years.

You can see my problem with it; it takes a ton of time.

When I left my wife, one of the first things I did was join a gym. I was totally unhappy with my body. I had just let myself go for over 15 years. I wanted to get back into better shape. I needed to for my health, my self esteem and my future with other women.

After I joined a gym I tried to ease into the lifting but within a month I was feeling better and lifting more. Then it happened, I hurt my right shoulder. This was an old injury actually that had always bothered me over the years. It was not terrible but I could not really use my right shoulder for pressing movements.

I hated to quit lifting after I had made some progress so I continued to work my legs and back as much as I could. I could do lifts with my left arm but just did really light work with my right.

So I started doing research on lifting methods that did not involve so much stress on old injuries and the Static Contraction method jumped out at me as a better way of having organized workouts.

The lifts are not done full range of motion and are done in a power rack or leg press sled so you are always safe. You only lift once a week at most and once you get stronger you may only go 2 times per month.

That is what I do, twice a month. My muscles have never been bigger and I have never been stronger. My shoulder is still not that great but because I am using the Static Contraction method I am working my chest, shoulder and triceps with huge amounts of weight.

What else do I love about Static Contraction Training?

- I only do a weight training workout once a week at the most. Sometimes twice a month. When I first started I could work out 2 times a week. After less than a month I had to reduce that to once a week. Now I am at twice a month.
- I don't feel guilty about this schedule because I am lifting so hard and heavy when I do workout.
- I have become stronger than I have ever been in my life.
- I have bigger muscles than I have ever had in my life.
- I am working safely in a power rack; pull down machine and leg press sled, so there is no danger of weights dropping on me.
- I do not need a training partner because I am well protected in the power rack and on the leg press sled.
- I am only moving the weight in my strongest position so the chance of injury is low.
- I can do this type of lifting with old injuries. I have a shoulder problem that makes it impossible for me to do full range of motion lifting even with tiny weights. With Static Contraction Training I can bench, do shoulder presses and close grip bench presses in spite of my shoulder problem.
- I love to lift, but not that much or that often. Going to the gym many times a week is just not what I want to do. I have so many other things I need to do and want to do that multiple trips to the gym would just get in the way.

Things you may not like about Static Contraction Training:

- If you like to go to the gym a lot, then this type of lifting will not work for you. You will quickly become very over-trained. If you need to go to the gym a lot you will not be able to lift on all those other days. You will have to do light intensity type stuff.
- You may get some funny looks in the gym. This type of lifting is just so different than what people are used to. I just concentrate on doing the work and rarely look around or talk to others. You will be in and out of the gym so fast others will not have much of a chance to bother you.
- You will only be in the gym 2 to 4 times a month so you will not have a chance to make friends.
- People may be afraid of you because the amount of weight you will be putting on the bar and the sled will be so huge. You will blow their minds.
- Your clothes will start to get tighter because of the muscles you will be developing.
- You will have to join a gym because it is rare to have a home gym with the type of strong equipment and all the plates you are going to need.
- You will be tired from your workouts because you will have to be gathering so many 45 pound plates. Then there is the putting them on the bar and then taking them off and putting them back a few minutes later.

In addition to my twice a month lifting sessions I go for a walk as often as I can. I try to go about 30 minutes. I set a goal to walk about 20 times a month. Sometimes I try to get a few more walks during the longer or warmer months. It is difficult to get in that many walks during the winter due to the weather. You could always use the treadmill at the gym.

I do some various stretching exercises nearly every day. Just stretch whatever part of you requires the most help. I stretch my right shoulder, my hips and low back from sitting.

Sleep

Most people need plenty of sleep in spite of what you hear from the so-called productive people. There may be some individuals who don't sleep that much, but my ideas are for the majority of people who need their sleep.

I think that because the 8 hours of sleep number has been talked about so often and so much, it is unclear how much sleep people need. I think now 8 hours is more psychological than anything else.

I mean I try to get 8 hours and sometimes I try to limit my sleep to 8 hours. Sometime I need more than 8 hours to feel good and sometimes I can feel good with less. It should be up to each person to determine rather than a number that is set in stone.

This will then work both ways, if you don't get 8 hours sleep you will say you are tired the next day even if you aren't. If you get more than 8 hours you won't brag about it, you may even feel a little guilty for sleeping too much.

This way of feeling seems like total garbage to me. It seems that the amount of sleep a person needs is up to that person whether it is an hour or 24 hours.

I make it a point to get enough sleep to feel good. I do use the 8 hour as a guide, but only as a guide, not a rule. The night after my heavy lifting workout I go to bed as soon as I can. I may sleep 9 or 10 hours that night. I also go to bed early the next night or two also.

I know that some weekends I will be up late so I take that into account. I will need to have some combination of sleeping later, naps and getting to bed early as needed.

Some people make getting as little sleep as possible a badge of honor. They will brag about how much they get done and how late they stay up working.

I would rather get my work done at a decent hour and if I choose to stay up late and lose sleep it will be for a good reason of my choosing.

My organizing principles are designed to minimize the time you spend on normal everyday things so that you have time for the really good things in life, including sleep.

Planning for the Worst

A planning schedule and list of things you normally need to do, have and get will help you to be more organized.

In order to determine what is really necessary to be planning for it is helpful to think of some of the worst problems, annoyances and frustrations that you have had. Things like:

- Running out of quarters when you are trying to do the laundry.
- Having worn out shoes when you are taking a walk.
- Running out of gas.
- Your car breaking down from a problem you know about.
- Running out of toilet paper.
- Having no money on you.
- Trying to pay with a maxed out credit card.
- An empty refrigerator.
- Having no condoms.
- Running out of any personal product.
- Not having the contact information.
- Wearing your worst clothes because your best clothes are dirty.
- Being late for anything.
- Not knowing where your children are.

Just about any annoyance and frustration you have can be turned around by thinking about past annoyances and frustrations and planning from that. Think about those old problems and then take steps to not let those problems happen again. Write down your past frustrating situations and determine what you can do to avoid those situations in the future.

So often, when a problem is solved or over we are relieved and then forget about it and move on. Then the problem happens again later and the cycle continues.

A huge problem for large part of the world is winter. Winter comes every year and yet most people are unprepared for it. Hopefully, winter comes gently. If it starts getting cold early and we get light snows, people will see this and then start getting ready.

But sometimes, winter hits you like a prizefighter right in the face in an instant. It goes from a nice balmy fall to a brutal, icy, snow covered mess in a few hours and this leaves people stranded, in the ditch and in bad shape.

These are the days when you are late to work because you didn't get up early enough to shovel snow and scrape the ice and snow off your car and you did not remember that it takes a huge amount of more time to get somewhere in the winter. These are the days when you are trying to get to the store in a snowstorm to buy salt, shovels, food and household needs.

At the beginning of October I put my snow scraper and brush in my car. I keep my car full of gas and I am getting right out of bed when I should. My snow shovel is handy in the garage. I keep my refrigerator full. I have my household products and personal needs stocked up. I have placed winter boots, wool socks, a warm hat, big mittens and extra gloves in my car, just in case. I have put my winter coats, boots, hats and gloves in my closet and have my other winter clothes shifted to the front of my closet.

Prepare for the Worst

Get your life organized for the most likely bad situations you may find yourself in by:

- Keeping your car full of gas.
- Keeping your car in decent repair.

- Having a bigger, more powerful car. Have a 4 wheel drive or all wheel drive if you live somewhere where it snows. A bigger car will hold more of your survival needs and stuff you may need to take in an emergency. It will hold the people you want to take. You can sleep in a bigger car. A more powerful, faster car is better if you need to drive away from or elude trouble.
- Keeping emergency supplies in your car. Emergency supplies include cash hidden in your car. Remember where you hid it. A bigger car is better because you will have more room for the emergency supplies and more potential hiding places for the cash.
- If your spouse or partner starts talking about only having one vehicle between you, watch out. It is absolutely essential that you have your own car. If you are an adult, you have to have your own car. This is the most important rule. Without your own car you are dependent on others to the point of helplessness. This is why older people resist giving up driving so much. Deep down they know that once they cannot drive, they are helpless. Whenever anyone talks about you not having a car, watch out. A car is a huge means of survival.
- Carrying cash. Have cash on you. Hide cash in your home. Have cash hidden in your car. Know how to get more cash from your bank quickly.
- Knowing all the roads where you live. Know the possible escape routes. Know where the hills are that will be treacherous during bad weather. Know where the low areas are that are likely to flood. Know where the police will most likely set up road blocks when the government sets up martial law.
- Trying to live where you have different routes to leave. Avoid living where you have only one direction to take.
- Having a reserve of health. Be well rested. This may be hard if you have a bad spouse. Bad spouses will make it hard for you to get enough rest. This will wear you out. When I first left my wife I spent the first 2 months sleeping. I was just so worn out.
- Having an extra pair of glasses.
- Having your prescriptions filled.
- Keeping your contact information handy.
- Avoiding bad people.

What do I mean by the worst situations you may find yourself in as a reason to get life organized?

- You have to leave your spouse or partner. There may be abuse of some kind.
- You have to leave your parents due to abuse.
- Natural disasters like hurricanes, earthquakes, tornadoes, floods and fires.
- Bad weather like blizzards, ice storms, flooding and drought.
- Your house on fire.
- Civil Unrest.
- Gang warfare.
- Martial law.
- Military takeovers.

These methods to get life organized will make a huge difference in your ability to cope with big problems.

Get Organized Now

If you are not satisfied with your life, the first step is to get organized. How can you hope to get ahead and do what you want if you are struggling with the basics of life?

You can't.

Get yourself organized first in order to start to climb out the bad circumstances you are in. Even if you never get farther ahead at least your life will be so much better being organized.

Life improves with each get organized now step.

It is just like learning a new sport. You need to start with the fundamentals.

In basketball you learn to dribble, you learn to pass, you learn the rules, you learn to play defense and you learn to shoot.

In getting a job you learn to fill out paperwork, you learn to get to work on time, you learn to take care of yourself so you feel good while you are working, you learn how to do the job, you learn to get along with others and much more.

All these things are just examples of being organized.

They are the fundamentals to basketball and a job.

The fundamentals to being organized are to stop doing things that do not add value to your life. Some of the main times wasting activities are:

- Smoking. Smoking takes a lot of time. If you are poor it will take a large share of the money you do have. If you will notice the higher up the pay scale you go the less likely it will be that people will smoke. I am not really even talking about the health effects either. I am mostly talking about the time it takes to smoke and the dollars it takes to keep up the habit. There is the time to go to the store to buy the cigarettes and the time away from the job to smoke. Back when people could smoke at their desks this was not an issue. But now it really is. I am sure that all the people who quit smoking really missed it but they could see that the direct cost of buying the cigarettes was rising plus the indirect cost of lost promotions and opportunities because of the time they were not working because they were smoking. If you have an outdoor job or career, job or business where you can smoke while working then this would not apply to you.
- Drinking alcohol daily. I love to drink beer but I cannot imagine drinking every day. I just do not see how a person can feel good every day if they are drinking every day.
- Going out for lunch every day.
- Huge breakfasts every day.
- Excessive TV watching.
- Excessive sports watching.

Health Reserves

Usually reserves are thought of in terms of reserves of money or food items or household supplies. These reserves are then stored, saved and used as needed and in case you need them. If you use them you need to replenish them. These types of reserves are fine and important.

But I think people also should create reserves of other things that are just as or more important than money, food or household supplies. I mean things like:

- Health.
- Energy.
- Time.
- Experiences.
- Options.

Feeling good and having energy is obviously one of the best things in life. Trying to maintain vitality is high on most people's list. Doing things that hurt your health on a consistent basis is one of the quickest ways into the grave. Things like:

- Smoking cigarettes daily.
- Drinking heavily daily.
- Overeating daily.
- Under sleeping daily.
- Overworking daily.
- Not doing anything daily that you want to do.

You will notice that I mention the word daily in this list. I think everyone can do some of those things occasionally without hurting themselves.

Smoking is terrible for you if you smoke a lot of cigarettes every day for years. Having a few cigarettes when you have a few drinks once or twice a month probably won't hurt you.

Having a huge Thanksgiving feast won't hurt you but eating like that every day for years will hurt you.

Drinking like its New Year's Eve is fun once in awhile. If you drink like its New Year's Eve every night for a few years you won't live to see that many more New Year's.

Working 14 hours a day to meet some deadlines or finish some important project shouldn't hurt you as long as it isn't continuous.

I don't get upset if I enjoy a cigar once in awhile, overeat at a great meal, have a fun time at a party with plenty to drink, stay late at the office to meet a deadline or miss a few hours of sleep for work or fun or some other pressing issue.

But I do get upset and know that I will suffer if I do these types of things too much. I know I will feel bad and my health will suffer if I don't get enough sleep 3 nights in a row. I missed lots of sleep when I was married. I never really felt rested during that time of my life.

I choose to smoke very rarely. It is just something that I do not want to do. I have no desire to drink every day. I do not even have the desire to drink every weekend. I prefer to enjoy drinking just once in awhile.

I can meet up with friends for a wild weekend of late nights at the bars, early mornings on the golf course and long afternoons on the boat and get along with minimal sleep, lots of beer drinking, lots of effort while golfing and boating and enjoying some big meals.

I just plan to go into a weekend like that well rested and a little hungry and plan on getting to bed early the next few days after.

It is hard for me to believe sometimes that I can enjoy a long, wild weekend. I am over 40 years old and not in that great of shape. I just have a reserve of health.

Trying to go through life being only concerned about your health is unhealthy.

If you go through life and you never do anything you want to do it just seems like you are not really even living.

Part 2. Your Children

When you are a single dad you will be relating to your kids in a different way than when you were a married dad.

In a marriage, the primary relationship is between the husband and wife.

Once you are no longer with your wife, and that primary relationship is gone, you will now have the opportunity to develop better and deeper relationships with your children. You can show them the real you, instead of the person you became to get along with your wife.

It would have been nice to be able to develop these better and deeper relationships with them as part of an intact family, but you can seize the opportunity to do that now.

I have a son and a daughter. I believe that my relationship with them now is much better than when I was with their mother.

When I was married all my energy went into dealing with my wife. The kids were very far down the list of what I had time and energy for.

In fact, there were times when I took out my anger at my wife on my kids. This kind of behavior is something I am deeply sorry for and I wish I would have left my wife before being this way. I am just pointing out that your kids do not have to take the brunt of your frustration against your wife.

The father's job is to protect his children. You must protect your children.

My wife just made everything difficult and I really did not care for the kids that well. I mostly cared for my wife.

I outline the reasons I left in my book "How to Leave Your Wife."

But now that I am single I can develop the relationships with my kids that I want and they deserve.

I want to be the kind, loving father that every child wants. It does not matter if your children are babies or fully grown.

I want to be the father that I want for myself. My father was great to me but he and my mom are still married and have always been wonderful together so I cannot just do what he did and does. I use my father as an example and think of the way I want to be based on my life and circumstances.

Chapter 3. Keep Them Safe

Do Not Procrastinate on Safety for Your Children and Yourself

Do not procrastinate when it comes to your own safety and security and the safety and security of your children.

Most people are concerned with their own safety and security. They are afraid. But they do not use this fear as motivation to do what they should; they use this fear to let governments run all over them.

Every time something bad happens more laws are passed, more regulations are enacted and more restrictions are put in place.

I am totally for my own safety and security and that of my children. But I am totally against more laws, regulations and restrictions. Why the contradiction?

It is because I believe that every person should watch out for themselves.

It is not up to me to look out for you. I watch out for me, my kids and the people close to me. I will help others in need if I can, I am not heartless.

What I really mean is that I can only do so much. You can only do so much. But if each person does not procrastinate and watches out for themselves and the

people closest to them there will not be a need for all kinds of ridiculous laws, rules, regulations and restrictions.

Even with the obscene number of laws in place bad things happen. They always have happened and they always will.

What I do and am encouraging you to do are to not procrastinate when you are planning for your own safety and security. Here is a small sampling of some of the things I do and have done to make myself safer:

- Replace the batteries in my smoke detectors when they need it.
- I replace burned out light bulbs. I do not want to stumble in the dark.
- I put ice melting salt on the walkways that I walk on. I do not want to slip on the ice.
- I shovel the snow where I walk and where I drive. I do not want to get stuck or slide into a building or car in the driveway or street.
- I fill my gas tank when it gets half empty. Never procrastinate on keeping your car gassed up. This may be the most important idea ever.
- I keep my car in good running condition.
- I keep the tires on my car fairly new.
- I replace the wiper blades on my car every 6 months.
- I keep some cash in my wallet all the time.
- I keep my cell phone charged up and on me whenever I go out of my house.
- I keep enough food and water in my house to last at least a week.
- I keep some emergency supplies in my car.
- I have spare keys to my car and house.
- I constantly check on the whereabouts of my keys, wallet and cell phone.
- I drive carefully always.
- I do not trust anyone, except for myself.
- I allow plenty of time to get where I am going.
- I am extremely wary when I am out.
- I am even more wary at night.
- I walk like I mean business. I look like I have a place to go.

- I maintain a large, menacing size. If you are not large you will have to do other things like avoiding being alone or carrying mace or by self defense training.
- I know what the weather forecast is.
- I avoid dealing with government types as much as possible, especially the police. I obey the traffic laws, not because I believe in the laws, but to avoid the police.
- I limit the information I provide.
- I do not fly that much. I love to travel, but the hoops you have to go through to fly make it a big hassle.
- I do not drink so much alcohol that I lose control.
- I assume the worst about people.
- I assume the worst case scenario.
- I am careful to not let myself get overly tired and rundown.
- I keep a reserve of health.
- I discuss these safety and security issues with my kids.
- I watch what my kids are up to and what they are into.
- I know where my children are.
- I do not wait to organize. I keep at it. No matter what position you are in life, being organized will help you.
- I buy and study books that discuss safety, security and things you can do to increase your safety and security.
- I learn what types of things I need in case of disasters and economic chaos.

Protect Your Children

I often think of what I would do in certain bad circumstances or steps I would take to help avoid bad circumstances with my kids.

My daughter is 13 and is not dating, yet.

I often think that a good way to set the correct tone with boys she goes out with is this:

When I meet the boy I tell him to give me his address, phone numbers, parents name and to draw a picture of his house with where he sleeps clearly shown. When he asks about why, I just tell him that in case something bad happens, I have to know where to come for him.

I do not expect anything bad to happen, but if it does, I want to make it clear to him that he will pay the price.

You may want to have those types of plans laid out for yourself.

To me, being a good father means I will take care of my kids no matter what. People who hurt them will have to answer to me. I mentally prepare myself for the potential in this. I physically prepare for this also. I lift weights and maintain a large, menacing size. I have whatever weapons I need to carry this out. I make plans and am capable of carrying them out.

The best part of this type of preparation is that the mindset you have makes the bad things happening extremely unlikely. That is the point of preparation, to be prepared for the worst, and it probably will never happen.

You expect that the boys that go out with your daughter will treat her well, but if they don't, you will take the matter into your own hands.

This lack of fathering toughness is really evident in the priest scandal.

I always thought it was weird to let little kids spend too much time with other adults, especially priests. I always wanted my kids to either be with me or my wife, not really trusting others that much.

They spent a little time away from us, but not much, just a few hours here and there.

I think that a good father, after hearing about a priest molesting his son, would deal with the priest directly. To me, once a father hears what a priest did to his child, that father would be hunting down that priest. It does not matter if it is decades later.

If you have younger children you want to keep them close to you as much as possible and limit their contact with other adults.

Have a Place for Your Children, Always

I think that a great way to be towards your children is to make it very clear to them that you will always have a place for them and that you will always be there for them no matter what happens in the future.

I think adults stay in terrible situations because they do not have a place to go or anyone to turn to when life gives them trouble. They do not think they can rely on their parents or they are ashamed to admit that they are in trouble or that their life is out of control.

In my case, I never told my parents about my marriage problems until I left my wife. I was hoping that they would help me and be there for me and they have been in a huge way.

But I did not know for sure. They never told me that they would. It was not something that was ever talked about. I never brought up my marriage troubles to them. I should have, but I did not. In my mind, I wanted them to love my wife and not suspect that anything was wrong with her or with our marriage.

But that is not how I want to be with my kids. I want them to be comfortable telling me when something is wrong. I want them to know that my relationship with them is first. I want them to know that they will be able to come to me with anything and I will stand by them. I want them to know that they will always have a place with me. I want them to know that they do not have to stay in a bad relationship or in bad circumstances. I want them to know that their happiness needs to come first and I will be there to help them through any hard times.

I believe it should be this way. I believe telling your children things like that may be the most important thing you ever do for them. I believe that setting up your life to help them is the most important thing a father does.

The knowledge of knowing that they could come and live with you if their life falls apart could be the difference between life and death for them.

So many people look to the governments or charities or someone else. So many people stay in terrible relationships because they think they have no one to help them, that they have no place to go.

That is not the kind of father I want for myself and that is not the kind of father I am.

My children are young now but from time to time I talk to them about these types of things. I tell them what I am telling you. I tell them they will always have a place with me and that I will always be there for them.

Now, these are huge promises. Difficult promises to keep. But these are your children we are talking about. You brought them into the world. They are your responsibility, not mine, not someone else's.

Knowing this it is crucial that you save your promises for who matters most to you.

I want to be there for my kids. Now, when they are children and later when they are adults.

I do not want my kids to fall into despair and have nowhere to go if their marriage falls apart.

I do not want my daughter to stay with a violent or abusive man when she could just stay with me for however long it took.

I do not want my son to spend years in a verbally abusive marriage, being hen-pecked and belittled when he could just as easily leave and be with me until he gets his life back on track.

Why did you even decide to be a father in the first place if you are just going to throw your kids to the wind?

Chapter 4. Have Fun with Them

Having children should be fun. There is nothing like the fun you can have with your children when they are young and the enjoyment you can have together as they grow up and how you can be good friends as you all grow old together.

I still love to be with my parents. I love to go out to eat with them, especially if they pay. I love to stay at their house for a few days. I love to travel with them, talk to them in person and on the phone.

Things to do with your Daughter

- Take her to a play or a musical.
- Teach her to drive when she is old enough.
- Go shopping with her.
- Take her to an amusement park.
- Take her to a zoo.
- Paint.
- Cook.
- Work around the house, especially her room.
- Organizing.
- Do crafts with her.
- Read to her.
- Take her skating.
- Take her to the movies.
- Go hiking.
- Go biking.
- Dance with her.
- Hug her and give her a kiss every time you see her.

- Give her undivided attention.
- Watch TV shows that you both enjoy.
- Tell her you love her.

These types of things are always fun depending on her age. I like to just grab my daughter and dance with her a little. I like to pick her up and carry her. I tell her that I am going to keep picking her and try to carry her when she is 60 and I am 95.

Things to do with Your Son

- Playing sports.
- Playing with radio controlled vehicles.
- Fishing.
- Hunting.
- Working on a car.
- Working around the house.
- Cooking.
- Biking
- Hiking.
- Going to sporting events.
- Video gaming.
- Camping.
- Watch TV shows that you both enjoy.
- Tell him you love him and give him hugs.

I like to just talk to my son. He is a teenager and it is really fascinating to hear that perspective. It makes me think younger. I want to talk to him enough that he knows I love him, think the world of him and want him to concentrate on his own life.

Help Them Have Fun

What I mean is that it is a lot easier to not help your kids have fun. Helping them have fun will mean more work, more running around, more driving, more money and more coordination. You will be tempted to tell them no. But reconsider. Your children are kids and need to have fun. Do what you can. You will be worried about them if they are staying over at a sleepover, but kids love to sleep at friends and relatives houses. It is less work for you and less of a hassle, but let them stay over. Get them to see their friends and have their friends over. Buy them the things that they want for fun. Be a fun person.

Chapter 5. Don't Be a Bad Father

I saw a video recently. It was of soldier returning from Iraq and surprising his young son at the son's school. The son was young and small, probably about in the first grade.

When the father stepped through the classroom door and his son saw him the son jumped up and ran to his father and jumped into his arms and started to cry. He cried and cried in joy and relief. The boy's happiness and relief could be felt through the screen.

It was so touching to watch that I started to cry but not why you are thinking. The idea of the video was that it was so great for the father to do. But to me it is just a sick, twisted story staged by the war generals to get people to think highly of soldiers.

To me it is just a terrible thing that a father would go off to war and leave his son like that. What kind of a father willingly joins the military when he has kids?

I think a bad father.

The love the boy had for the father was so intense. How could the man do that to a boy? That is not my idea of a good father. I do not think that father is good at all. Let's look at the problems of being in the military when you have children:

- You are thousands of miles away. When you are thousands of miles away how do you spend time with your kids? How can you help them when they need it? How can you be a dad who is just there? Is that the way a kid should grow up? With his father gone for months and months?
- You cannot just come and go as you want and need. A lot of men have jobs and businesses that require that they be away from home for periods of time. Contractors, salesmen, truck drivers are just a few examples. But that is different than the military. In the military you cannot just go home, you cannot just leave, you cannot just quit.
- You are at risk of being killed. Who you are fighting against wants to kill you. How can you care for your children if you are dead?
- You are at risk of being maimed and crippled. Who you are fighting against wants to maim or cripple you. How can you care for your children if you are maimed or crippled? Now you are just a burden on the rest of us.
- You will not be home for months and months at a time. That is just wrong to be gone from your kids for long periods of time.
- You have no time of your own. Having no free time is one of the worst things in the world.
- Your job is being a hired killer. How would you feel if your child told his friends that my dad kills people for a living?

Other examples of bad fathers would be the fathers that cheat on their mothers. If you don't love your kid's mother enough to stay faithful, leave her. Don't be an embarrassment. You can be a father, just not a husband. It is two different things. You are not helping the kid's mother by that. You should just leave. You can provide for with family without being married. It is happening every day around the world. You do not have to stay married to a woman you do not want to be married to. Be a good dad and leave her.

I think a bad father is so obvious to see, but there are so many bad fathers that I will list the bad qualities and what bad dads do:

- They spank their children.
- They beat their children.
- They rule their children with intimidation.
- They scream at their children.
- They criticize their children.
- They find fault with what their children do.
- They seem to find ways to make their children feel bad.
- They question everything their children do.
- They are suspicious of every move their children make.
- He can barely take care of himself.
- He is a burden on others due to addictions and problems like that.
- He acts like a little boy or a little girl.
- He will not stand up for you in you in a time of need.
- He is only proud of you when you are doing what he wants.
- He demands perfection.
- He yells instructions from the sidelines and bothers your coaches and teachers with his demands.
- He demands obedience.
- He does not have his life together.
- He does not seem to care about anything.
- He is not kind.
- He is unable to show any love.
- He does not show any respect to others.

I want none of those things from my father. I will not do those things myself.

Saving Stuff for Your Kids

Saving stuff like big plastic toys for your kids and grand kids just seems so wrong to me on so many levels. Parents do this all the time but that doesn't make it right.

It just seems like one more way that parents try to control their kids.

I know a lot of parents who save those big plastic toys even when their kids are teenagers and have absolutely no interest in going down the little slides or playing in those big toy houses. It was fun for the kids when they were small, but they have moved on.

The parents say they are saving those toys for their grand kids. That way they will have some nice toys.

Wrong, wrong, wrong.

First of all, this kind of saving stuff like this takes up an enormous amount of space in your home now. Don't you want to use that space for something your kids or you want to do now? All that space that those toys take up in your basement could be used by your older kids now. Your home should be set up for your use now and the people who are in it now, not some far off distant grandchild.

Second, couldn't you give that stuff to a family that could use it now? Wouldn't that be a better way? Some people cannot afford that nice plastic stuff while they have small children.

Third, and I think the most important, is that you are projecting what you want on your kids. You are saying that you want your kids to have kids so you can have grandchildren. You are basically using guilt to manipulate your children into doing something that they may not want to do. What if they cannot have children for some medical reason? What if they don't want any? What if they never find a suitable spouse? What if they want to wait till they are older to have children?

You may say, well, I am saving it just in case, I am not telling them they have to have my grand kids. But you are, don't you see? Every time your kids go into the basement and see all those plastic toys that they have outgrown, they get it. It will be seared into their subconscious. They know what you are saving that stuff for. They will either do what you want or they will feel guilty if they don't deliver. Don't do that to your kids. Let them decide for themselves how to live their own lives.

I know it is hard to get rid of those big plastic toys. They are well made and last forever. But that is not the point.

The point is that saving stuff for your kids means you are trying to control what they do and how they live and that is wrong.

Never Make Promises or Demand Them

Right before I got married, my fiancé's father came up to me, shook my hand and said "Take Care of My Daughter."

I do not remember exactly what I said but I think it was along the lines of I'll do my best. But it was a promise forced on me and an implied promise on my part.

That implied promise haunts me to this day.

A promise like that is exactly what you want to avoid giving and exactly what you do not want to demand other people to give you.

Making promises like that and forcing others to make promises is how people end up with ruined lives and stay in ruined relationships.

Promises like that leads to tragedy, death, destruction, loss of happiness and misery.

At the time, a promise, or implied promise seems innocent enough.

What husband just before getting married is not planning on taking care of his bride? Isn't that the point?

What if years later she cheats or starts treating you in a way you cannot accept? What if you are in utter misery and have suicidal thoughts to escape the pain?

What then? Do you just leave? Or do you remember the promise to her father or to some god or some church or to her?

I say all these promises are just for fools. Making promises and then trying to keep them is just for fools.

A better way is to never promise anything to anyone.

This will be difficult because most of society is so entrenched in the idea of promises.

We see this continually on TV and movies. There seems to be continuous promises going on. A character will promise someone they hardly know something and then spend a huge amount of time and energy trying to live up to the promise.

In the meanwhile, their own life is turned upside down.

It makes for an interesting story in a fictional show.

But do you want to live your life like a movie, making promises to whoever and whenever and then running around like a fool trying to do what you promised?

I mean every time I watch a show it is the main theme. If the person had just never promised something, then they would have avoided all the trouble. Of course, that would be a boring show.

But the absence of making promises makes for a better life for you.

What makes for a boring television show makes for an outstanding life for you.

What makes for an entertaining television show makes for a life of misery for you.

I think there may be something to this type of conspiracy from the television producers. It is kind of like religions in a manner of brainwashing.

I still think of my ex-wife's father telling me to take care of his daughter. It is part of the reason of why I took so long to leave her after she mistreated me. It is part of the reason of why I let her get her way in the divorce settlement.

Here is what I am planning on telling the man who marries my daughter:

I do not want you to promise me anything. Your relationship is between you and my daughter. I know you will do your best for her. That is all anyone can ask. She would not be getting married to you if she did not love you. I hope you would not be getting married to her without loving her.

The only thing I do ask is that if your marriage falls apart and you find that you can no longer be together, just leave her. Do not hurt her physically in any way. Do not verbally, mentally or sexually abuse her in any way. Just leave her. She can come and be with me.

You two may be together forever or for a short time. That does not matter to me. It only matters that you treat her right. She will always have a place with me. I will always take her in. She knows this. I have told her this for her entire life. She does not have to worry about not having a place to go or a dad to fall back on.

This is the kind of stuff you need to tell your daughter. This is the kind of attitude you need to convey. This is the kind of preparation you need to do. This is the kind of life you need to live. This is a good dad. This is the way for people to live.

Tell her this. Tell her this every day if you have to. Talk to her as often as you need to so that she understands. She needs to know that her father will always be there for her. That she can always come and live with you.

Tell your son the same thing. A person does not know what life will be like years down the road. It is good to know that your father will stand by you and help you no matter what happens.

Chapter 6. Be a Good Father

Here is what I want from my father and what I try to provide to my children:

- Unconditional love.
- Kindness.
- Decency.
- Respect.
- Good natured.
- Good humor.
- I can count on to love me no matter what.
- I want a father I can call when the chips are down and he will do what he can to help me.
- I want a father who in his heart would do what needs to be done when the bad times come.
- I want a father who is not just a part of the crowd.
- I want a father who has his own life.
- I want a father who is not a cog.
- I want a father who is not a killer.
- I want a father who is not a drunk.
- I want a father who is not an addict.
- I want a father who is not a yes man.
- I want a father who is not a power mad control freak.

Just think of what kind of a father you want and be that kind of a father to your children.

Find Easy Ways to Help Your Kids Succeed

Here is an example of helping your kids to succeed in an easy way:

When my son was a freshman in high school and it was close to the end of the first semester he had a number of assignments to finish and turn in. He was living full time with his mother at that time.

His main pastime is playing X-Box games. He and his friends can spend hours and days playing. He plays games alone, with friends at his house, at his friend's houses and on-line. It seems that he never tires of this. Of course all this time playing video games conflicts with doing his homework for school.

When I was over at their place and could see he was struggling to get busy with his school work, I said to him, why don't I take your X-Box player to my place for a few days so that you aren't tempted to play? I said, it would seem easier to not play if you couldn't play.

Surprisingly, he agreed with me. He went right away to his room to get it and gave it to me. He knows he will want to play right after school and no matter how much he needs to do school work; the temptation is too much for him.

His mother right away started to complain to me and to him. She said she told him to stop playing X-Box so much and to work on his schoolwork.

I know she said all that and that is how she thinks, but my idea is to make it easy on my son. Why does he need to use superhuman willpower just to do some homework assignments done when we can just remove the temptation for a few days while he gets back on track? Isn't that a simpler, easier method to achieve some success?

His mother is more into the willpower mode of thinking. She thinks it should be a simple matter to just not do something and do something else. I don't think so.

If it were a simple matter to just turn the games off and do the school work, my son would have done that. Since he did not do that, it should be evident that it is not simple to turn the game off.

I am more into doing what works best for the situation. Take away the game player for a few days and now he has some time to do school work.

Here is another example of an easy organizer method:

Do not keep junk food in your house if you have a problem with overeating. It is the simple solution to a huge problem. Make it easier on yourself to succeed.

I know firsthand how tempting junk food is. I have a problem with it. I love it and will keep eating it if it is easily available. When I was married my wife kept a lot of junk food in the house. She wanted a stockpile of chips, cookies and other junk food for parties, the kid's snacks and things like that.

I did not want to have too much available because I know how tempted I am by it. I am not always able to resist.

She said that I should be able to control myself and only have one cookie. I really can't. If cookies are available, I will eat them until they are gone or I am sick. I know myself. She would not help me in this area, insisting on keeping this stuff around.

But the having the junk food around caused me to fail. I ate it all the time, got fat and unhealthy. Now that I live away from her I choose to not have much junk food in my home.

It is easier to live this way. I do not want to require the superhuman effort and willpower to resist junk food. I am all about finding an easy organizer way to succeed. I find success to be sweet even if it is easy.

It is certainly a lot simpler to cut things out that aren't good for you and that you really don't want to do than to continue to do them.

The classic method is that if you are an alcoholic you wouldn't keep liquor in your home.

Things to Tell Your Children

Never put the feelings of others above your own. This is common in dating and friendship. You want to break up with someone or not hang out with them anymore but you know it will hurt their feelings, so you continue to go out or continue to hang out with them.

You have the feeling that you do not want to disappoint someone. But that is wrong. It does not help your own life and it is not fair to the other person.

This may be part of what went wrong in my life. I had hurt other girls when I broke up with them and did not want to keep doing that.

Now, with the benefit of hindsight, I should have caused the short term pain instead of the long term pain.

Things to Tell Your Son.

A lot of men are really smart. As such, this means that the people around you are not as smart. To you, they will seem dumb. In fact, you will wonder how they do what they do and say what they say and think what they think. You will think, are they really that stupid?

There are two main reactions you can have.

One, you can treat these people with derision, scorn, contempt and sarcasm. You can ridicule their actions, their sayings and them.

Or you can treat them with dignity and kindness.

I choose the later. I cannot be the bastard, the jerk.

I would rather gently poke fun at people not ridicule them with scorn.

There but for the grace of god go I. Meaning, it is just an accident that I am smart and they are dumb. You may have studied hard and applied yourself to get so smart, but mostly this is just born in you.

I just had this discussion with my son.

He has been upset with his mother, my ex-wife, saying he cannot understand why she is so dumb. She doesn't have any common sense. She is an adult; shouldn't she be smarter than I am?

I told him what I described above. She is not as smart as he is. I am not as smart as he is. She and I just have more experiences that make us know more of certain things.

I told him that each generation is generally smarter than the previous.

The difference is the experience that adults have so it seems that they are smarter.

How else can you explain children grasping things so fast?

Things to tell your son and daughter

One of the best ways to guide your children is to discuss important things with them that would affect them the most. A young person does not have the experience or the wisdom that comes with experience to avoid the entanglements that can seriously impact their lives. Things like:

- Joining the military when you get out of high school. Aside from the fact that you are a hired killer and the constant threat of being killed or maimed, you will not have any freedom whatsoever.
- Being in lots of extra-curricular activities you do not enjoy. These things take a lot of time and unless they have value to you, don't do them. For example only play basketball if you love it. Don't play because your parents

played, or they like it, or your best friend plays or you want to be in shape. Only play if you love the sport.

- Doing things because "they" say it is good for you.
- Going to college and majoring in something that you do not like or that is much too difficult for you.
- Trying to fit in or feeling like you do not belong. You may not fit in or belong where you are at. As you grow older you will have more opportunities to find places where you can be more comfortable
- Doing things excessively because others are doing them. Drinking, smoking, drugs, sex, gossip, bullying, TV, gaming, bad behavior, fast driving, celebrity watching, political discussion are all things that can very quickly overwhelm your life. All these things will become bad if done to excess. Plus they will take a lot of time. Obviously some things are worse than others.
- Thinking that their life is no good. Try to realize that this time will pass. If your high school experience is not what you want, it will end. It ends for everyone. It ends for the ones who enjoy it and it ends for the ones who do not. You will grow up and it will get better.
- Getting into a long-term relationship.
- Not being able to talk to your parents.
- Not being honest.
- Not being able to enjoy the moment.

Do Not Try to Control Your Children

Avoid putting pressure on your children to do things you want them to do. This happens to a lot of adult children. Parents pressure their adult children to do what they want them to.

I know someone who is married with 2 grown children. This person was expected to go to her parent's lake home every weekend for the entire summer. The expectation was just there and she felt like she had to do that.

But over time it seems that you would resent the feeling of having to do it. The feeling of having to do something is what I am trying to get you to understand. Everything you do should be something you want to do.

Going to your parent's summer cottage on the lake should be a wonderful family experience. It should not be a chore, and something you just want to be over.

The person I know left every Friday night after work, drove 4 hours to the cottage, spent Friday night, all day Saturday, Saturday night and most of Sunday at the cottage. They would then drive 4 hours to home on Sunday night.

This would be every weekend in the summer. This would be at least 16 weekends.

Now, I love going to people's lake homes. I love doing that. But I don't go every weekend. It is not expected of me. I may end up going 2 to 4 weekend in the summer. I have a great time on these weekends.

But going every weekend would be too much for me. I think it would be too much for most everyone. There are just so many other things people would want to do during summer weekends.

You have projects around the house. There are fun things to do where you live. You have friends and neighbors to visit. You will want to travel elsewhere.

Sometimes, what you want to do is nothing. And that is ok too.

Certainly, spending 8 hours in a car every weekend would be a chore to get over with.

Taking an occasional road trip is great fun for most people. Taking a road trip every weekend would be a burden for most people.

Some people have a summer place because they are stuck working and living in a place that they really don't like. In that case, going someplace else is a wonderful, liberating experience.

Unfortunately, they tend to expect that what they want, everyone else should also want, and therefore, expect others to do that.

I think that is what happened to the person I am thinking about.

Her parents lived in a large City and wanted to get out of it as much as possible. They probably loved being at their lake home a lot more than their main home in the City. It was just that they made their living in the City. They probably set up their whole lives around being able to get to their lake home every weekend.

That is great for them.

But, it seems like they may have forced the expectation on their adult children that they too, should go to the lake home every weekend.

Most adult children have lives of their own. It will be difficult to do exactly what you want to do with your own life if your free time on the weekend is not based around what you want to do.

If you are like most people your week will be mostly filled with work and/or taking care of your children.

If you do not work on the weekends you will probably have a number of things around your home that you would like to do on the weekend. Plus you may want to do as little as possible to recharge your batteries after a long week of work.

So, my advice to everyone, is to not have the feeling of having to go and do something all the time.

It may be very difficult to tell your parents that you cannot make it to their cottage every weekend. You will probably have to brace yourself for that conversation.

Letter to a Young Man Considering a Military Career

I am continually talking to my son about the problems of being in the military. I am constantly letting him know what my views are on such things and that I want him to value his life and his freedom. I want him to know how I feel about such things.

Here is a letter I have prepared for a young man. It is honestly how I feel about the military. I do not believe it is right to ask these young men to join the military out of some sense of sacrifice and duty. I believe that a young man's place is doing what he feels is right for him. It is his duty to live for himself. Feel free to use it if you feel the same way as I do.

To My Young Friend:

I am writing to you today to ask that you reconsider your decision to joining the military.

First of all I want you to know that I admire your courage and your bravery. I have seen your skill and competence in whatever you put your mind to and know that you will do fine in whatever you choose to get involved in. I know you are young, strong, brave and courageous and can handle weapons and shoot straight. I know you are a brave man who wants to do what you think is right. I know that you would be a good soldier.

It's just that you are misguided in your thoughts on serving your country.

If some foreign countries army invades our shores and is right here trying to kill me, you, my family, friends and neighbors I'll be by your side fighting against them.

I will fight to the death defending myself and my family, including you. I will not stand by and be slaughtered.

If I can't shoot straight I'll get your ammo, get your water, get your food, care for your family while you're fighting, carry you out if you're injured and bury

you if you get killed. I'll be by your side and be proud to work with you. I'll do whatever I can to assist you. But I will only help you here and not somewhere else.

The second you get on a boat or plane and leave these shores to go and kill people somewhere else, my support is gone. I am done with you.

I will not buy a yellow ribbon.

I will not send you a care package, a letter or an email.

I will not call you.

I will not help you.

I will not support our troops.

I will not salute you.

I will not weep for you if you die.

I will not care if you get hurt.

I will curse you and your crippled body for stealing from me. You were a productive member of society once. Now you are a hopeless burden on us for the rest of your wretched life.

I will not give one dime more than what they steal from me through taxes.

You are wrong for going.

The people you are killing did nothing to me, they did nothing to you.

I will not be a part of your killing.

I did not ask you to go. You are not defending me. You are not here defending me, my family and neighbors. You are gone on a fool's errand, killing innocents abroad for no reason.

I can see why you commit suicide when you come back here. When you turn from a decent human being filled with compassion and kindness into an evil, killing monster that is the only solution.

I know what I am saying hurts you. I seem cold and unfeeling. No one talks this way.

To me what is cold and unfeeling is killing people for no reason.

I know the siren song of joining is seductive. You think you are a patriot so you join. I know the money is good.

I think you just have never thought about what you are doing. I think you just don't know any better. I think you just don't know what else to do. I think you joined because your father did, or your uncle, or your brother, or your grandfather or your friend.

I think you joined because you see the President and all kinds of other people on TV proudly saying that they support our troops. You hear the applause. You see the support. You crave the attention and praise.

You see the troops on TV and hear the constant adulation. You see men and women with their legs blown off being well cared for in military hospitals. You see the tears shed for the wounded. You see the flags on the coffins and the salutes.

But I will not applaud you.

I will not praise you.

I will not cry for you.

I will not salute you.

You are a killer.

Just because someone else tells you who to kill doesn't mean that you are any less of a killer.

I don't have to be told who to kill.

I will only kill in self defense of me and those closest to me.

I don't need a President or a general telling me what to do and who to kill, no one.

I know you are young. I was young too. But being young does not mean you do not know right from wrong.

What you are doing is wrong.

The politicians and heads of the military are beyond hope. They are so fully into the evil of what they are doing that they cannot be saved.

This President was elected to get out Iraq and Afghanistan. Now he has started a third against Libya, is escalating the war in Afghanistan and it looks like he will start a fourth in Iran or Pakistan by the end of his term.

They are the power mad freaks and psychopaths of the world. The world is wrong because they run it. But you and I do not have to listen to them. They are power mad bean counters and who see nothing wrong with sending you far away to kill who they say. And if you get hurt or killed, so what, there are thousands more like you. That is their attitude. You are just a pawn in their chess game of power. You are just a replaceable bean. They don't even have to pay to play the game. But I do. I am paying.

You can decide to stop the wars by not joining.

If there is any hope for peace, it starts with you.

Don't become a hired killer, just don't.

Working with My Dad

I just realized that the person I liked working for and with the most out of all the bosses, all the workplaces, all of it, was my dad. It dawned on me that what I really wished I had been doing all these years was working with my father.

When I think of all the bad bosses I have had what I fully come to realize is that working with my dad was the best working experience I ever had.

We moved to a small farm when I was in second grade. His parents, my grandparents owned the farm and the land across the road. They built a new house on the other side of the road and they gave the farm side to my parents.

My parents then hired a contractor to add a big addition to the old farmhouse, effectively doubling the size of the house and making it modern,

That is where I lived until I went away to college and where I came back to visit until I was about 34. My parents moved into town that year and then moved to southern Wisconsin about 4 or 5 years later.

When I was in the early years of grade school, he mostly had horses. I would help a little, but not very much. By the time I got almost into high school he sold most of the horses and we kept getting more and more cattle. I loved the beef cattle we raised. I loved being a cattle rancher.

I loved spending most of Saturday and part of Sunday working with my father. Here is a list of some of the chores we did that I remember fondly:

- Taking a pickup truck full of garbage to the dump.
- Cutting up a pickup truck full of firewood and hauling it home.
- Splitting firewood.
- Shoveling manure into the manure spreader and then spreading it on the fields.
- Making and repairing fences.
- Building sheds.

- Feeding the cattle.
- Doing veterinarian type tasks with the cattle.
- Pulling calves from the mothers when they were giving birth.
- Making hay.
- Plowing.
- Disking.
- Harrowing.
- Planting oats.
- Planting corn.
- Making hay.
- Harvesting oats.
- Harvesting corn.
- Watering the cattle.
- Weaning the calves.
- Feeding the cattle in the winter.
- Checking the cattle.
- Maintaining the machinery.
- Repairing the machinery.
- Just looking at the cattle.

The list of chores was long, but we got all this done. Looking at this list makes me wish we would have just kept doing it.

Once I went to college, he scaled back the farming until there were no more cattle. I guess he did it all for me, it was what I loved at the time. College life consumed all my time from then on. I never had time to come back and help. My college was a 3-1/2 hour drive away and I rarely came back on weekends because of the workload and the drive time. When I did come back I mostly rested when I was home and spent time at night in the bars with old friends.

Summers I worked elsewhere to make enough money to continue going to college. Of course, my dad was getting older too and did not have the energy that he once did. But still, it would have been nice to continue to work together on the farm.

Chapter 7. Dealing With Your Ex - Wife

You cannot think of your ex-wife like your enemy and have any hope of having a good relationship with your kids.

I know you do not want to hear that. She may have put you through hell and have gone out of her way to make your life difficult now. She may have cheated on you. She may have dragged you down into the abyss of misery and despair. Mine did.

But I do not hate her. I think of her as a lesson I had to learn.

My lesson is to be a lot more careful in who I get serious with and to care more about whom and what is good for me than what I think is good for other people.

I have also learned that I am probably more interested in short term relationships than long term and that I can be very happy being by myself most of the time.

I have also learned that my own freedom is the most important thing to me and that having a wife who is not good to me is a severe limitation on my freedom.

In fact, I can see that part of the reason that people are not free at all in relationship to government is that they think nothing at all about being a virtual slave to their spouse.

I have learned to avoid making promises and to avoid negative people and negative circumstances.

I have learned to not assume things will turn out for the best. That when dealing with other people, it is more accurate to assume things will turn out for the worst.

I have learned that a short term love affair is better than never having a love affair.

I have learned that when a woman will not have sex with you until you are committed to her, that it is a trap that you want to avoid.

If a woman is attracted to you she will sleep with you without a commitment. The only real reason that she wants to be married is to trap you and for your money. Or she is just hopelessly religious and traditional and not much fun to be with.

I have learned that you thinking that you know everything about someone else is totally wrong.

I have learned that you can have a great life all by yourself.

I have learned that I can take care of children all by myself.

I have learned to get into long term relationships slowly and to get out of bad relationships quickly.

I have learned that I can love myself and treat myself with dignity and respect and walk away from people who are not this way to me.

So, I choose to look at my life with my wife as not a disaster, but as a learning experience and a way to bring 2 wonderful children into the world.

I tell my kids how much their mother and I loved one another and how they are such a gift to us. That they were born into a loving home and that they were wanted.

What else would you be telling your kids, if not this?

When you talk disparagingly about their mother, it is going to hurt them. They will carry those memories with them.

Tell them the good things about their mother. Do not dwell on the bad.

I never want my kids to hate their mother. I want them to love her and to grow up loving her in spite of what happened. I want them to think of their mother as a wonderful, loving mother who has just lost her way and that is why our marriage failed.

I want my kids to know how wonderful their mother was to them when they were babies, toddlers and small. How she took care of them as best as she could.

I do not want them to have hate or mistrust or problems with her.

With my son living with me I sometimes tell him how his mother would never let him cry himself to sleep at night in spite of what others told her to do. I tell him how she would hold him until he went to sleep and then she put him in the crib. I tell him how she loved nothing more than holding him constantly. How she adored him. How she loved him.

I tell him this so he has a frame of reference. I want him to know that his mother loved him and loves him still even though it doesn't seem that way. I want him to know that his mother cared for him when he was small and that there was nothing she would not do for him. Now, she is having all kinds of trouble and cannot seem to function that well. She cannot get along with our son very well.

But nothing will make you, as a father, sadder, than thinking that your kids hate their mother. It is up to you to help them see the good in their mother.

They do not have to live with their mother. She may be incapable of having kids live with her. But that does not mean that she does not love her children.

More Tips to dealing with her

- Don't be afraid to hang up when she is giving you a hard time on the phone.
- Let her go to voicemail most of the time.
- Do not call her back very fast unless it is important to you.
- Be ready to leave if you ever find yourself at her house.
- Do not get into a car with her.
- Do not talk to her very much.
- Realize that she will try to blame you for everything.
- Do not carry much cash when you see her.
- Do not flaunt anything that will make her want more money from you.
- Make her pay her own way.

Part 3. Practical Ideas for Easier Living

If you don't take care of the basics of life your life will be harder. The more you avoid these household hints the more difficult your life will become. You will just accept a messy, dirty, cluttered house. You will go out to eat a lot. You will just wear whatever is clean rather than wearing your best clothes. You will avoid having people over and be upset if someone stops by.

The only thing worse than accepting your life like that is spending all your time picking up your stuff, putting it away, cleaning, doing laundry and making elaborate meals. Another waste is to spend most of a day just to run errands.

Your house may be clean and look uncluttered. You may have everything done. Your clothes may be clean. You may be cooking at home. But you won't have time or energy to do what you really want to do. You won't have time to read, or watch your favorite shows. You won't have time to exercise or enjoy your hobbies. You won't have time to go out and see friends or develop new relationships.

What is missing is free time.

I want a clean, uncluttered house too. I want clean clothes. I want to make good food that is tasty and healthy. I want to have my errands run. But what I want the most is to have lots and lots of free time to do what I want to do.

The way to obtain the free time you need to go after what you want is to get organized first. If you don't have any free time, you won't be able to get anywhere. It is impossible to make any real progress on any of your goals or to spend time on any of your interests if you don't have any large blocks of time available.

Easy Cooking

I will admit that I do not like to cook that much. I would rather someone else prepare my meals. I do miss that part of being married. My ex-wife was a fairly good cook and made plenty of food. I enjoy going out to eat and eating at other people's houses.

Because eating out is expensive and somewhat time consuming, cooking my own meals is something that I do a lot. I find that the best way to make good meals and have lots of time is to mostly eat the food that I like the best that is easiest to make. I balance the food I like the best with the health of the food. I do not always eat healthy, but since my life is very important to me, I do know that eating healthy is extremely important.

Quick Breakfasts

- Cereal. Kids love this. I make sure and have plenty of healthier type cereal and milk. I do not think this is the healthiest way for me to eat so I only plan on cereal 2 days a week.
- Eggs and toast. I have eggs 3 week day mornings a week. I make 2 eggs over easy for each person. I have 2 slices of toast for my son and I just have the eggs.
- Eggs, bacon, toast or potatoes on Saturday mornings when I have more time to cook. The best way to make bacon is to let it warm up to room temperature before you start cooking it. Then you put the now room temperature bacon on an unheated pan. You do not want to put bacon on a hot pan. It is better on a cold pan cooked on medium heat.
- Pancakes on Sunday mornings.

You have to get away from the idea of taking a long time to cook. I can make eggs, toast, eat and clean up the kitchen in 20 minutes or less. I know this may seem long if you normally rush off to work without eating, but if you have kids this is not an option. You will have to get up 20 minutes earlier than normal. You need to go to bed earlier to make up for this.

Easy to make lunch ideas that your kids will love.

- Sandwiches.
- Cold cuts and cheese without bread.
- Canned soups.
- Salads.
- Reheated leftovers.

The easiest way to deal with your kid's lunches is to just pay for the school lunches.

Easy to make dinner ideas that your kids will love.

- Spaghetti and salad.
- Steak and salad.
- Chicken and salad.
- Pizza.
- Barbeque sandwiches.
- Take out.
- Go out to eat.

Kitchen Ideas

The best kitchens are the most uncluttered and set up to be easy to clean. Here are some ideas:

- Keep your countertops clear. If there is stuff on your countertops you need to throw enough stuff away to keep them clear so it is easy to cook.
- Use a laminate covered table for most of your eating. Laminate is great because you can just wipe the table with your dish rag after a meal. This will not work with a glass or wood table.
- Avoid table clothes or place mats. These are just one more thing to clean. I just put the plates right on my laminate table. I do put down a napkin for the silverware.
- Use paper napkins rather than cloth. Then you can just throw them out when done. Paper napkins are very cheap.
- Use a dish cloth to wash dishes and clean up after a meal. Sponges do not work nearly as well as a dish cloth. Then you can just wash the cloths in the wash. You cannot wash a sponge.
- Clean up after every meal. Do not let the dishes pile up.
- Avoid cooking lots of food at once. Dealing with leftovers is much harder than just making smaller, simpler meals.
- Buy smaller packages of food. You will eat less. The best part of smaller packages is that they are so much easier to store, cook with and deal with. Larger quantities have to be repackaged or dealt with in some way. It is not always less expensive to buy larger quantities.
- Buy more food and less sauces and spices. These types of things take up a lot of room and seem to be always in the way of real food. Just have your favorite sauces and spices on hand in small packages rather than endlessly trying new ones.

Easier Housework by Multi-tasking

The chores around the house can very easily overwhelm your life and take all your time. It is bad enough to pick up after yourself. Then when you add a kid or two, the work is exponentially multiplied.

This work has to be done. Your life and living conditions will quickly degenerate into a messy, disorganized disaster if you are not keeping up with these things.

The way to deal with these things is to do this stuff as quickly as possible and with as many routine's, and systems as you can. This is the area where multi-tasking really is handy. Maybe you cannot multi-task when you are writing your novel, or negotiating a business deal, doing carpentry, or performing brain surgery, but you can definitely do it around the house. The chores around the house are custom made to do plenty of multi-tasking.

In fact, if I am not doing multiple things around the house at the same time, I am quickly bored out of my mind. There is nothing quite so boring as to stand in the kitchen and wait for the food to cook.

I find it difficult to work on my writing or business or to read while cooking, but there are so many other ways to get things done.

Here are my favorite multi-tasking ideas;

- I put a load of clothes in the washing machine and then take a walk. I walk for 30 minutes and by the time I get back the clothes are clean and ready for the dryer or to be hung up to air dry.
- I start cooking the eggs for breakfast. When they are cooking I put away the clean dishes from the night before, set the table, make my bed and set out whatever I need to take with me to work that day.
- I eat my breakfast first and finish eating before my son so I can brush my teeth before he goes into the bathroom to get ready for school since I only have one bathroom.

- I run my errands right after work before I pick up my son from his after school workout. I am going home from work anyway, so I just stop on the way, rather than going out separately.
- I make my lunch for the next day while I am preparing the evening meal. Then when I finish cleaning up the kitchen I am done working in the kitchen for the evening.
- In the evening when I am working on my writing and business, when I take a bathroom or snack break, I get my bed ready or get the stuff I need for the next day ready. I need to get up anyway, so I just do a few things that take a few extra seconds.

A Typical Weekday Morning

Perhaps the best way to explain my organization process is to go through a typical weekday morning. Here it is:

- Get up at 5:20 a.m. No lingering in bed for very long. I allow myself no more than 5 minutes when I am very tired. I need enough time in the morning to do what I need to do. It is critically important to go to bed early enough, often enough that getting out of bed when you need to not very difficult.
- Shower, shave, put in contacts and antiperspirant. Then I put all this away so the bathroom is nice and neat.
- Dress for work. My clothes are well organized. I work 5 days a week as a civil engineer. I wear khaki type pants and button down shirts. I have black office shoes and brown office shoes. I rotate the shoes every day and have clothes that go with the shoes and socks that go with the shoes. This way I do not spend any time thinking about what to wear. If today is a brown shoe day I wear brown khaki pants and a shirt that goes with the pants.
- If I am making eggs for breakfast I go to the kitchen and start breakfast. If I am just having cereal, I make my bed and put away any dry clothes I have hanging in my large open second closet.
- Now it is time to make breakfast. It will be about 5:40 a.m.
- Turn on stove, put pan on burner, put butter in the pan and get a big drink of water. Put away clean dishes from the night before and set the table. Start running hot water.
- Put eggs in the pan. I make 4 to 6 eggs over easy. If I am having scrambled eggs, I would have scrambled them in a big mixing bowl first. By now the water is hot and I can put the stopper in the sink and put in the dish soap.
- Salt and pepper the eggs. Put the egg carton back in the refrigerator. Take out my lunch from the night before and set it out for work. Take out jam for the toast.
- Get out the toaster and the bread and put 2 slices of toast in the toaster.

- Go back to my bedroom to make my bed. By this time it is about 5:50 a.m.
- After making my bed and putting away any more clean clothes I take my shoes out to the kitchen.
- Turn on the toaster and the eggs probably need to be flipped or scrambled. Pour milk at the table.
- Put my cell phone in my pocket and put my planner book by my lunch box on the small table I have by the door.
- Butter the toast and put the toast on my son's plate.
- Wake up my son at 5:55 or 6:00 a.m. at the latest.
- Put eggs on our plates. I just have the eggs only rarely having toast. 2 eggs are plenty for me and that is all I need until my noon lunch. I drink one small glass of milk with my eggs. I have 3 cups of black coffee in the morning at work. I do drink quite a bit of water at work.
- My son will be at the table by now and eating.
- I finish my breakfast and put my plate, fork and glass in the soapy dish water.
- I go to the bathroom to brush my teeth. I only have one bathroom and want to be done so my son can use the bathroom to get ready for school.
- I put on my shoes at the table and talk to my son a little about the day's schedule to make sure we are on the same page. I may have a few things for him to think about.
- I wash what dishes I can and then wash his dishes as soon as he is done.
- I hug my son goodbye, tell him I love him and he starts getting ready for school.
- I finish cleaning up the kitchen by finishing the breakfast dishes. I hand wash and set the clean dishes on a towel to dry. I wipe up the stove top and the table. I take the garbage bag out of the can and tie it up and put a fresh garbage bag in the can.
- I straighten up whatever I can in a few seconds on the way to get my coat from the closet.

- I get my coat on, grab my planner book, lunch box, anything else I need like envelopes to mail, things to return and the garbage bag and leave the house by 6:15 a.m or 6:20 a.m. at the latest.
- Put mail in the mailbox; throw garbage in the big garbage can, drive car out of the garage and drive to work.
- Arrive at work by 6:35 a.m. or so, make coffee and start working.
- My son is a sophomore in high school. He gets himself ready and out the door to catch the school bus at 6:42 a.m. for his school that starts at 7:20 a.m. I do make sure he is up, fed and in the shower before I leave.

I do not normally need to use the bathroom for a bowel movement before I have a few cups of coffee. Since I do not have coffee until I get to work, I go to the bathroom there.

A Typical Weekday after Work

Here is a typical weekday after work:

- Leave work a little after 3:00 p.m. I try to work exactly 8 hours. There is a half hour for lunch. Because there is not as much engineering work as 4 or 5 years ago, we do not have much extra work to justify overtime work.
- I try to do whatever errands I need to do right after work.
- There is a bakery outlet close to my office. I stop here for a loaf of bread or two and to get whatever else is deeply on sale. I had done a Price Book a few years earlier and have a really good idea when things I want are at their cheapest price.
- Next I stop at the bank to get some cash or make a deposit.
- The next stop is the gas station for gas. This gas station has food, so I may buy milk, eggs, onions or whatever snack they are offering at a reduced price.
- Go to the UPS Store to check my mail. I get most of my mail here.
- There is a Dollar Store in the Shopping Center where the UPS Store is. I will do some shopping here. Again, I know what costs more than a dollar at Wal-Mart and get the stuff I normally need and want at this low price.
- Head toward home.
- Go to the local grocery store. I have found that this store, in addition to being close to my house, has the best prices. The Village I live in is home to a lot of very wealthy people in addition to normal people. So the local grocery store has very expensive food and very cheap food. It is not huge, so it is easy to shop in.
- Pick up my son at 4:30 p.m. He does not play a winter sport. He lifts weights after school. He will be going out for track this spring so I am sure that the practices will get done later. Once football starts in the fall, those practices get done later also.
- Go home; unload whatever needs unloading from the car. Put all that stuff away.

- I will change my clothes.
- I throw a load of laundry in the washing machine and go for a walk. By the time I get back from my walk, the wash is done. I always hang our clothes to air dry. My bedroom has 2 large closets. One closet is for my clothes and has sliding doors. I took off the doors to the other closet and put them in the apartment building basement. That way the closet is just all open. It just has one 8 foot long hangar where I hang the clothes to air dry. I have one big laundry basket for clothes, one big laundry basket for sheets and one big laundry basket for towels on the floor in this closet. These baskets are about 3 feet tall. They are plastic and have 2 handles. I like them because they are tall and I do not have to bend way down to pick them up.
- Regarding my walk, my son gave me his old IPOD after he got an I-Touch, so I am really enjoying my walks now. Blasting AC-DC when I am tired really helps my motivation.
- Then I start the dinner at about 5:15 p.m. after the laundry and the walk.
- After dinner I clean up the kitchen.
- Then I am at my computer and either working on my websites, my books or reading by 6:30 p.m.
- My son may need the computer for homework or my daughter may call and need to come over for help with her homework so I do not always have the computer all evening.
- Since working on the computer is what I want to do the most, it is very important for me to have as much free time as possible for it.

Meal Planning

Start with meal planning because cooking, cleaning up afterwards, planning menus, making grocery lists and grocery shopping can take up a huge amount of time and be very irritating if you are not organized. That is why a lot of people go out to eat a lot and buy a lot of packaged meals. Obviously, a disorganized kitchen is hard to work in, but I am talking about a whole way of thinking about your meal planning.

I was talking to my mom one day on the phone. It was about noon on a Saturday and I was making spaghetti. I had just gotten back from grocery shopping. She was kind of complaining how they had just had lunch and now she had to start thinking about dinner. My parents are retired. They have a number of interests and stay fairly active but they don't have jobs that are a huge time commitment. My mom is 68, and it occurred to me that everyone would like to simplify their meal planning.

My parents go out to eat a lot. I always thought they liked to do it for the enjoyment of going out but now I realize that it is much simpler for her, for anyone. She is tired of meal planning, preparing meals, grocery shopping, coming up with something good and cleaning up afterwards.

It sounds good to say to prepare most of your meals at home. They say you will save money and have better nutrition, but the hard part is actually doing it. I think that my mom would enjoy herself more if she made some of her meals up beforehand like I do for work. I make my lunch for the next day while I am making dinner. I did call her up and suggested that to her.

One day, I started my dinner at 7:40 p.m. and then started back to work on this website by 8:00 p.m. So it took me 20 minutes to prepare and eat my dinner. I also packed my lunch for the next day and washed the dishes. My dinner consisted of a can of New England clam chowder, a grilled cheese sandwich, a lettuce salad and a glass of milk. My lunch for the next day included a ham and cheese sandwich, yogurt, apple and a couple of cookies. I did the dishes by hand and placed them on a towel to air dry.

As you can see these were not gourmet meals, but they are nourishing, satisfying and tasty. Some days I prepare a more elaborate dinner but sometimes having a quick dinner that is easy to prepare is what is needed. That day I was busy.

I left work at 3:40 p.m., drove to my ex-wife's house to pick up my son for his soccer practice and got him to practice at 4:45 pm. I didn't have to pick him up till 5:45 pm, so I had an hour to kill. I went to the half price bookstore for half an hour then to the coffee shop for another half hour or so.

When I dropped him off my ex wife wanted to go over some papers. So I didn't leave her house until 7:00 pm. I dropped off a DVD at the video store and

checked out some rabbits at the pet store next to the video store. My daughter wants a rabbit and I wanted to learn about them so that I can have some reasons not to get one. When I got home I changed into some leisure clothes and put a load of laundry in and got upstairs at 7:40 p.m. to make dinner.

The reason for the long story is to show you just because you are busy it doesn't mean you can't throw together a quick, satisfying meal and make a lunch for the next day. The way to have those quick dinners is by doing your meal planning up front.

I purposely plan to have the makings for these quick meals. I also eat basically the same lunch each day so buying the makings and preparing my lunches is very quick and easy. These quick meals work into my schedule

One Sunday a month will be a big cooking day. I will put a roast in the slow cooker. I will also make a large chicken meal. I'll get both these meals started in the morning. I'll have the chicken for lunch and freeze some for later meals. I'll have the roast for dinner and freeze the rest for later. I will also set some in the refrigerator to have later that week.

By meal planning this way I get a lot of the work done early. I have frozen meals in the freezer; I have quick type meals always on hand.

I shop the sales when I am at the store. I know the low prices on the food I am always buying so I know what is a good deal. Since I am getting good deals on most of the food I am buying at the store, I don't mind paying more for some things I really want such as a good steak. I still haven't got to the point of buying the best steak. I really want to accomplish my other goals first. Eventually I would like to be at the point where I didn't look at the prices of groceries as much. For now, meal planning partly based on price is what I do.

Eating this way works into my mindset of a totally organized life of simplicity and achieving my goals. I just don't want to spend too much time in preparing meals, eating and cleaning up afterwards. By meal planning, I get the good meals, easy kitchen cleanup, inexpensive food and more free time.

My kitchen is set up just the way I want it. I put all the plates, glasses, utensils, pots and pans away in the same place. I put the food away in the same place. Once you have it organized the way you want it, it is much simpler to keep

it that way. Basically you should set up the kitchen so that it very easy to clean up and put things away. The easy part is the cooking. The hard part is the putting away after you are done. You want to make the cleanup and putting away the easy part.

Your kitchen set up should be natural. You should have it set up so that a guest would naturally know where to look for glasses, plates, utensils and cookware.

Meal planning will make your life so much simpler and easier. You will love the extra time.

Easy cooking is what most people want. Not that many people want to spend enormous amounts of time in the kitchen. There are some. My ex-wife's mother loves to cook. It seems to be one of her main loves. She is a fantastic cook. I miss enjoying her big meals.

But she is the exception to the rule that most people like easy cooking not hard cooking.

You need to approach cooking like any other task that you want to organize. You have to do the following:

- Minimize the clutter in your kitchen.
- Have only the minimum amount of cooking utensils and tools that work for you. Having all kinds of gadgets and excess pots and pans will make your cabinets be too full and your countertops cluttered. You cannot hope to do any easy cooking with excessive clutter.
- Have a core number of meals that you and your family like and can eat often. This is easy cooking at its best because then you don't need to spend the time looking at recipes.
- Some people have schedules of what they eat on what days. That seems like a good idea the more people you have to feed.
- Have a really good sense how much food you should prepare for each meal so that you avoid leftovers.
- Leftovers are ok sometimes, but it is much more organized to eat all you made for that meal and throw out the few leftovers you have. This way you

avoid messing up your storage containers and your refrigerator with leftovers.

- I think most people would rather have a fresh meal than leftovers.
- Leftovers are kind of a pain to reheat. Then you have to clean the containers and the pots, pans and plates you used to reheat the leftovers. So it is a lot more work.
- The only time leftovers make sense to keep is when you are specifically making bigger meals for the reason of cooking two or more meals at one time and after a big gathering and you have a lot of expensive food that wasn't eaten at the party. Then it makes sense financially to store the leftovers.
- Eat simpler easy cooking meals most of the time. Why do you need fancy meals all the time? I don't. Save the elaborate meals for once in a great while. Holidays or once a month at the most.
- Eat out once in awhile during the work week to save yourself some kitchen time. Use coupons, discounts, 2 for ones, just order water and no desert to keep the cost as low as possible.
- Get takeout during the work week for the same reason.
- If you do get takeout, throw out the containers the meal came in. I love getting takeout from my local Chinese place. It is really close and cheap. I get some once or twice a month. They put the meal in a really nice plastic container. I could wash this container and reuse it. I know most people would. I throw it out. I have plenty of containers. I am enjoying takeout to avoid preparing a meal. I want to keep things simple.
- Buy what you need at the store rather than what looks good. Use your grocery list and your budget.
- I have a core group of meals that I like and that I prepare as part of my easy cooking strategy. Whenever I am grocery shopping I look for these things and try to buy them when they are low priced. I stay flexible enough that I do not have to buy something if it is higher priced at that time.
- Purposely plan your meals that work with the time you have. Slow cooker meals work well for me on the weekends. I also cook meals in the oven on weekends. I rarely cook in the oven during the week. I want fast cooking, stove top meals during the week. I also have food that does not need to be cooked liked salads during the week. I would say that most of my meals during the week are some sort of meat I cook on the stove and a lettuce salad. That combination is so easy, so healthy and so good.

- If you carry a lunch, make it the night before while you are making your dinner. It is so much easier to prepare and clean up the kitchen one time. Making lunches in the morning is just so much harder unless you absolutely love getting up super early. I just leave plenty of room in my refrigerator for my lunch box. If you are making lunches for a bunch of people you will love this idea.
- Have healthier snacks available. I try to have nuts on hand for those snacking times. Nuts are hard, get it, hard, because they are so expensive compared to other snacks. You will just have to decide, your budget or your health.
- It seems that instead of having a food item for a snack, what is even more satisfying is something to drink. Doesn't everyone want to be eating or drinking something in front of the TV? Try to just have something lo-cal to drink when you are relaxing in front of the TV or anytime. I know I can eat a tremendous amount of snacks during a show. I try to have decaf coffee, tea, or even a glass of wine or beer in the evening. It is less calories and more satisfying anyway.
- The best way to avoid excessive eating is to have less food in your home. It just is, there is no way to say it isn't.
- Easy cooking is just another organized mindset to have to save yourself a lot of time for other things.

Easier Laundry

Another big housework chore to get organized is laundry. You need clean clothes and even if you are doing laundry for just yourself the task can be very time consuming and overwhelming.

Doing your laundry often is the easiest and least time consuming way to do speed up your housework chores. Some people let their laundry build up into huge piles. That is too demoralizing for me. I stay on top of it by doing a load every few days.

I currently live in an apartment building that has machines in the basement for the tenants. It is a 4 unit building and I kind of know when others normally do

their laundry so I don't try to do mine during times when I know they are doing theirs. I do not want to carry a big load of laundry into the basement only to carry it back upstairs.

I just wash everything together in cold water except for towels and sheets. I wash towels and sheets every 2 – 4 weeks because I have enough to last that long. If I were to buy new towels I would buy nicer, fewer towels and wash them more often.

I want to have all my clothes available all the time for whenever I need them for. That means I need to keep washing them often. I only have the minimum amount of good clothes that I want and that I look good in. In order for my system to work, I need to do laundry every few days.

I have found that my system works best if I wash clothes on Tuesday, Friday night and Sunday night. By doing it this often I can fit in all my and my son's clothes from the laundry basket in one load.

So I only need about 45 minutes for the whole process. This includes, carrying the laundry down to the basement laundry room, loading the machine, going back upstairs and waiting for 30 minutes, going back downstairs to get the laundry, carrying it back upstairs and then hanging all the clothes to dry. I then have 30 minutes to do some other housework or something I want to do. Many times I go for a walk during the 30 minutes.

I hang all my clothes to dry rather than using a dryer. My bedroom has 2 large closets. One closet is full of my clothes and the other I use for hanging the clothes to dry. This way I save money and time on the drying and my clothes stay in better shape. Did you ever notice that the lint you clean out of the dryer is your clothes wearing away?

By doing my laundry this often I always have my favorite clothes available to wear. Obviously, if I miss a day or two it's not a big deal.

There are some clothes that I do wear more than once such as jeans, pajamas, lounge wear, sweatshirts and clothes that I wear around the house to do housework or relax. Clothes that I wear to work, going out in public and working out in only get worn once. You should go by the smell and feel of the clothes. If

you only wear a shirt for an hour to do something that doesn't involve sweating, then it probably could go back in the closet.

Here are the basic laundry items that you need:

- 3 tall laundry baskets. 1 for clothes. 1 for towels. 1 for sheets. I just have my son put his dirty clothes in the basket in my room.
- Large plastic clothes pins. I have 20 of them. You will need more if you have more people.
- Plastic hangars. You need enough to hang all your clothes plus do the laundry because there are a lot of clothes to hang to dry that will be folded and put away. There are some special hangars that work well for laundry. There are kinds that have built in clothes pins. There are kinds with little hooks for holding straps (mostly for girls and women's clothes, I guess). There are kinds with notches on the top that are good for holding boxer shorts or underwear. Wire hangers are worthless and should be thrown away immediately.
- Detergent.
- Spot cleaner.
- Quarters in a container if you don't have your own washing machine and dryer. I keep my quarters in a glass jar right in the closet where I keep my detergent.

You really need to stay on top of this type of housework. Having big piles of laundry is really unsightly and smelly. Plus, it is demoralizing to see big piles or an overflowing basket.

The best part of doing laundry often is having your favorite clothes clean and ready to wear.

Don't forget that getting it washed is only part of the process. You still need to put it away. Big piles of clean clothes are unsightly too, just not smelly.

When I was married, my wife did all the laundry. She didn't want me to do any of it. I would gladly have been involved. It's not that hard, the machine does all the cleaning. All you do is put it in, push the buttons and take it out. It's something anyone can handle.

Anyway, she made a big production on how hard it was. She never wanted to fold the clean clothes and put them away. It wasn't that she was working a 40 hour a week job. She didn't work outside the home at all.

For awhile I was working a lot of overtime. I would get to work by 7 a.m. and be home around 7 p.m. I would get home and want to change into some comfortable clothes, relax, eat and maybe do a few things around the house.

When I'd get into the bedroom the bed would be mounded high with clean clothes.

I would start folding the clothes immediately. I hated having the bed full of clothes and did want to do my part of the housework. I was looking forward to going to bed in a few hours and didn't want to deal with those clothes when I was exhausted and ready for sleep.

She would get really upset with me for folding the clothes. I thought I was helping. If she didn't want me to fold them, why were they on the bed?

Make your housework simpler and easier by doing your laundry often, having a system in place for maximum efficiency and make sure and put the clean clothes away, right away.

Setting Things Out

I am a big believer in setting things out and doing things early. This really helps my personal organization.

I always make my lunch for work the next day while I am making dinner. I fill my lunch box and put it in the refrigerator and just grab it in the morning.

Doing extra stuff early in the morning is not for me. I like to make my lunch while I am preparing dinner so that I when I am done with the dinner dishes I am done in the kitchen for the night. Having most of the evening free of chores is the major benefit of improving your personal organization.

I also set out anything I need to take the next day on the kitchen table or by the door. I just don't want to think too much at 6 in the morning. This would include stuff like letters or bills to mail, DVD's to return, book's to return to the library or any items with receipts that need to be returned to the store.

I also would put in my trunk anything I am planning on taking on my next weekend trip. Like Tupperware from my mom and books from my dad. I don't like to forget those types of things and like to get borrowed items back to their owner as soon as I am done with them and when I see that person next.

I like to set out my toiletries on the bathroom counter while the water is warming up before I take a shower. After I shower, everything is set out and I put away each item as I complete each task.

I set out the food ingredients, mixing bowls, measuring devices and cook pots and pans before I cook. I then put things away or in the soapy dish water as I am done with them. It is just so much easier than waiting to put everything away at the end.

When I am working on an engineering project I will have the file out and any reference material I need to look at for the project set out on my desk.

It is just so much simpler to have what you need out when you need it. Try setting things out. I know it will help your personal organization.

Picking Up as You Go

I like to have my home, car and office be picked up. I don't like a messy look. These areas are where I spend the majority of my time. I want them to look good, be comfortable and function well. They don't if they are messy.

I like to wash the dishes right after a meal as much as possible. It is easier to wash the dishes right away before the food hardens.

I know a lot of people only use a few dishes each meal. So they only do dishes after they have a number of dishes to wash. This works ok with a good dishwasher. It doesn't work that great when you do them by hand.

I would rather just spend a few minutes every day washing a few dishes than spend a lot of time every couple of days on this chore. It is just easier to do a little at a time.

Since I just use a bowl and spoon for cereal most work day morning's for breakfast I just rinse these off before leaving for work and wash them later with my dinner dishes.

If I cook some eggs in the morning I would wash those dishes right away because I would need to get up earlier to cook.

I remember some guys in college who did not do their dishes for about the last 3 weeks of the semester. They used every plate, bowl, utensil, pot and pan they had. All of them were full of hardened on food and filled all their countertops and were scattered all over the kitchen. It was funny then. When I think of it now, it's just disgusting.

I like the beds to me made in the morning. I don't like to go into my bedroom and see a messy bed. When I go to bed I want to get into a comfortable made bed. I don't want to wrestle around with the blankets late at night when I am exhausted. I want to sleep at night, not make a bed or struggle with the blankets.

I keep books in their proper place on a bookshelf. I love books. I have a lot of books. I buy them. I borrow them from the library. I download them from the computer. But I don't like them piled all over the place.

I only keep out what I am reading at the time. I may be reading a bunch from the library. In that case I keep them neatly stacked by my main reading chair. As soon as I finish a library book, it goes into a bag to take back to the library. As soon as I finish a book I own, it goes back on the shelf.

I can only read so much at once. I might have a book by my bed and another by my living room chair. If the book you are reading is interesting or important then you should be able to carry it around with you.

I only keep the papers I am currently working on out. Having all the papers out for multiple projects really makes life difficult. Finding something is a nightmare when all your papers are out.

It's a daily habit to keep putting things away. It doesn't take much time if you do it daily and you don't have much stuff.

I don't like to work on too many things at once. I like to concentrate on only a few things at a time. If I have too much stuff lying around, it's distracting.

It always seems to me that people who have a lot of stuff out are messy and don't get a lot accomplished.

I like to have my home and car always ready for guests. It is nicer for them, but really that is the way I want it. I am not compulsive cleaner but I like my home to be clean and not messy.

Know How Long It Takes to Get Ready

You can always tell an organized person if they are early or on time. The most important part about being on time is how long it takes to get ready or allowing plenty of time if you are not sure. This one tip will save you countless times of being late.

You need to have a sense of how long it takes to do everything you need to do and work backwards from that perspective. This is how an organized person will think.

It takes longer to get ready for other events different than your normal daily routine. You should at least double the time you normally spend to get ready for a special event.

You know how long it takes to get ready for work and how long it takes to get there. If you didn't you would be late every day. Just take that knowledge and apply it to every other thing you do.

It was so frustrating with my ex-wife and her slowness in getting ready and her constantly saying it didn't take her long to get ready. It took her a minimum of 3 hours from the time she started until we left to a weekend party or wedding or event like that.

The funny thing was that each time it was something different that made her take that long. I pointed out that it took her at least 3 hours to get ready so that she would know what time to get up so that we would be on time for the event.

I thought I was helping her but she didn't see it that way. She just stubbornly stayed in bed or wouldn't start getting ready. This was even after we agreed what time she should get up.

She would argue with me that it didn't take her 3 hours to get ready because part of the time was spent doing other things like dishes, preparing food, laundry or something else. I would point out that the affect of doing those things at that time made for the 3 hours and until she chose to not do those things at that time then it took her 3 hours and we would be late.

It is just not possible to have a stress free life if the people you are dealing with are chronically late and disorganized. My ex-wife had a lot of good qualities, it's just that being on time and being an organized person was not one of those.

Have a List of Things to Do that Only Take a Few Minutes

There will be a lot of times when you will have a few spare minutes. Get organized easily by using those minutes. You will be tempted to do nothing but using those forgotten minutes on some task will help you to free up longer blocks

of time that you can use for more enjoyable activities. Here is just a small sampling of how you can get organized in just a few minutes:

- Throw something out. Always be looking for something to throw out.
- Straighten something out like your bookshelf or the couch cushions.
- Put like items together such as your clothes, books, kitchen items, etc.
- Put things in a more logical place.
- Make a call.
- Make your bed.
- Put away the dishes.
- Clean the kitchen counter.
- Clean the bathroom mirror.
- Dust the TV.
- Read a short article.
- Look through your planner book.
- Look through your briefcase.
- Make some lists.
- Check your email.
- Check your messages.
- Read a few pages in a book.
- Surf the web.

The number of things you can do in only a few minutes is endless. You should make your own list based on your needs. I really like to get a lot done in the spare minutes so that I can develop longer blocks of time for the things I really want to do.

I use being more productive in the small time fragments to free up more time. There is nothing like having all your minor chores and errands under control so you have multiple hours of free time.

Conserve your energy for your more valuable activities. Use those spare minutes to get things done and get your routine tasks and chores done as simply, quickly and easily as possible.

Family Organizing Tips

It is very difficult to have everyone in your family as organized as you are.

Organizing is something that is individual. It is a way of thinking and acting to make your own life run better.

So if you are a single dad you may have extreme difficulty in getting your children to be organized in a way that suits you.

My ideas are based on what a person can do to make their own life better. It is not about demanding others do what I want. I am pointing out ways of thinking and actions that work for me and that I know work for others to better their lives.

Since my other love besides being organized is freedom and being left alone to live my life I cannot justify ever demanding others do what I insist they do. Not even my children. I just cannot make that leap.

So even though I know what works for me and what would work for my kids I do not insist that they do exactly what I want. I am no hypocrite.

I do model for them. I show them. I explain what I do and why. They are free to determine for themselves if they want to use my methods or some other method to be more organized.

There is just no way to get your children to change without them wanting and being willing to change.

Insisting that they change to better suit you is not right. It is all wrong.

You can make it worth their while. You can pay your kids to keep their rooms cleaned. You can show them how much more time they will have for fun by being more organized.

The other option is to demand that they do what you want and make their lives miserable. That seems wrong to me.

Your best approach is just to be super organized yourself and get what you want in that manner.

I guess if I knew then what I know now about clutter I would not have got married to my wife because she had a huge amount of stuff before we were married. There were a lot of reasons I wanted to be married to my wife, but the amount of her stuff was not one of them.

I just assumed that she would be happy to get rid of it to make me happy. Wrong. She never got rid of anything. Once I did throw something of hers out and she was just so enraged. It was like I did the worst thing imaginable. It was an awful awakening for me.

A better way to deal with children that are disorganized and to have an organized family is to avoid doing all the extra things that families are supposed to be doing all the time. Things like:

- Going to church every week and extra times during holidays.
- Having your kids in all kinds of extracurricular activities.
- Volunteering for your kid's school.
- Volunteering for groups of any kind. If you want to accomplish something just go ahead and do it yourself. If you are really concerned about having an organized family you will spend the majority of your time on family type things.
- Preparing elaborate meals. Most people, especially kids do not really appreciate fancy meals.
- Keeping your house spotless. A little dirt does not really hurt anyone. Excessive clutter is the real eyesore and causes most of the problems in most homes.
- Having an immaculate yard.
- Having a yard at all. Kids do not really play in yards that much. A little grass is nice but it really is not necessary.
- Being in adult activities that take a lot of time and that are constant. Bowling leagues, volleyball leagues, softball leagues, other things like that take a lot of time.
- Insisting your children continue activities that they have started. Some sports and groups seem to imply that once you start you will be a member for years. Let them quit once they are done with it.

- Thinking how it was for you as a child will be how it is for your child. Times change dramatically. You have to change with them. I am most concerned with providing for my kids, keeping them as safe as I can and letting them have some opportunities for fun.
- Thinking that you will be able to do all the things you want to when you want to do them.
- Putting things on hold or layaway at the store rather than just buying them as you need them and as you have the money available.
- Saving all your child's toys for your future grandchildren.
- Driving all over town, shopping chaotically before Christmas instead of making a list.

Christmas Organizing

Christmas organizing is not impossible. Here are some of my ideas for you to consider:

- Start your Christmas preparations early.
- Make lists of ideas for whoever you buy for. Keep this list in your Planner Book and take it with you when you go shopping. Don't rely on your memory.
- My kids make out pretty elaborate lists of what they want. Plus, whenever I am shopping with them before Christmas I ask them while we are in the store, what they want. Then I just write it down right then. I always have at least a small pencil and index cards with me in my wallet. You cannot hope to do any Christmas organizing without lists.
- I try to get my kids as much as I can afford of what they want. It is so much nicer and satisfying to see their reaction and pure joy when they get some of the things they really want. My Christmas organizing revolves around making it nice for them.
- There have been Christmas's where we didn't get the kids hardly anything they wanted because of a lack of money and it was just so sad. Seeing the disappointment on their little faces as they pretended to like what they received. Don't do that. Try to get them something they want.

- As you buy gifts you create an organized list for each person. The list will include what you bought, the cost of the item and the total spent on each person. This is really the only way to keep track of the number of gifts and how much you are spending. It makes it fair and you know when you are done. Even if you have an unlimited budget for gifts you should do this because you would want to even out your cost for each person. I spend the most on gifts for my kids. I want to spend about the same amount on each child. That is the only fair way. I buy gifts for my parents, my sister, my brother and my niece. I want the cost of those gifts to be within the same range. I wouldn't get my brother a \$500 saw and my sister a \$10 gift certificate. That wouldn't be right.
- As I get the gifts I will wrap them within a few days. I do have to check with my ex on the kids gifts first. It would not be a good use of my time to wrap gifts that I may have to return.
- After the gifts are wrapped I put a label on them right away. My ex never did this and it baffled me. She said she would be able to recognize what the gift was and who it is for by the shape of the package. Maybe she could. But why not save your memory for other things?
- If you are traveling somewhere with a lot of gifts, seriously consider getting things as small and light as possible. I have had too many difficult Christmas's by going along with my wife's ideas of big gifts for all her family. The big stuff doesn't always cost as much as the small stuff but it is so hard to deal with. Sometimes there wouldn't be room in our van to get in all the gifts. Carrying in all those gifts took me a long time. Do yourself a huge favor on your Christmas organizing by keeping to small gifts.
- Small gifts like envelopes with cash or checks are the best. Next are gift certificates to places you know the person loves or uses.
- Jewelry is still a great gift for all the females you buy for. Small and light and they love it.
- Smaller gifts are even better for gifts you don't travel with. Hauling big things into the house, hiding them from the kids until Christmas and then lugging them out at Christmas is really a pain. I hurt my shoulder one year dealing with a ping pong table. I hurt my back the next carrying a basketball hoop with stand out of the basement. I did all the heavy hauling while my wife occupied the kids. We did our Christmas organizing and made it special for the kids but I got hurt in the process.

- I like the outdoor Christmas lights that other people put up. I really enjoy seeing them when I am out in the evening. But I absolutely hate putting out those things. The snow, the cold, the frustration and irritation is too much for me. I just can get by without it. Plus how often do you even look at your own house?
- Indoor decorating is a little more for me. At least I will see it every day. I have a really small artificial tree and some ornaments. It takes less than an hour to set it all up. That's all I really want now. My ex has a huge, tall artificial tree. We bought it about 7 or 8 years ago. It had all the lights in place. The problem is that when one of the lights burns out the whole string stops working. It is a tremendously frustrating and time consuming process to determine which bulb is burned out. You have to go through each bulb one by one. The tree is nine feet tall. It takes hours and you might not be able to find it anyway. The last few years my ex just put in additional lights in the burned out string areas. She does have a flair for decorating a Christmas tree. It is always quite beautiful when she is done. It's just so hard to deal with a big tree and all those lights that don't work. Keep it smaller if you can if you want to improve your Christmas organizing.
- Back to the gifts. If you have kids in school you will need to get all their various teachers and coaches and instructors, and whoever else a small gift. It seems impossible to know what to get all those people you hardly know. I would stick to food and drink type items. Nuts, chocolate, cheese, crackers, coffee, cookies, candy. Even if the person is on a strict diet, allergic, or hates the food you gave, they probably can make use of the food gift. They can bring it to parties they go to. They can re-gift it. They can just enjoy it. To me it is better to give something that will be used up and the wrapper thrown away. Why would you want to give something to someone that they will feel like they have to keep? Not everyone can just throw things away like you and I can. Not everyone is good at Christmas organizing. You would just be adding to their clutter.
- If you want to have more holiday type enjoyment you will have to cut out some of your other activities. I am convinced that this is one of the reasons people get sick and stressed out at Christmas. They don't subtract first. They add the Christmas activities to an already busy schedule. That is the wrong approach to Christmas organizing. All wrong. You need to subtract as much as possible first. People try to do it all. They get up earlier and stay up later. They keep trying to do the same things. They keep going instead of

relaxing and recharging when they need to. They go faster. They think Christmas organizing means doing more. It doesn't. It means doing less of other things so you free up time for holiday type activities.

- You will have to be careful with money at this time of year. All the charities will have their hand out and it will be tough to resist even if you need all the money you have.
- Also, a lot of big bills come due at the end of the year. Property taxes, especially. It seems like I have 2 or 3 other bills that come only once a year and are due on December 31.
- It's winter time so you need to have your care ready for winter. You need new tires and winter wiper blades. You need windshield scrapers and brushes. Taking care of the most important things like your car is the best way to stay safe while getting ready for Christmas.
- You need salt and shovels, gloves and hats and maybe a new coat.
- In short, December is the most expensive month of the year. It would make the most sense to set aside a huge amount of cash for every December. Do this all year long. You have no excuse for not realizing that December is going to cost you a lot now.
- Try to be patient at holiday time with other people. Most people are going to be tired, ill, stressed out, with lots of packages, too much food, driving too fast, going shopping late at night and too little time. They aren't going to know about my Christmas organizing ideas.
- I like to do my Christmas organizing by going into the season rested, feeling great, with my car in good shape, my bills paid up, my gifts bought weeks before and fitting in a very small box.

What I Hate About Christmas

I don't think I'm the only one. See if you can relate to the things I hate about the holiday season:

- There is always too much that I have to do.
- A lot of the things that I have to do I really don't want to do. Things like decorating, shopping and going to events and all the extra church services. It is so hard to have an organized Christmas if you are constantly busy doing extra things you don't want to do.

- The weather goes from fairly nice, somewhat cool fall days into a brutally cold, snow filled winter. I wish I was smart enough to live in a better climate.
- The decorating is enough to drive me insane. I don't even live with my ex-wife but she still ropes me into helping her set up her tree, for the kids. A gigantic artificial tree. If you want to decorate, go ahead, I am just pointing out that I don't like to do that very much. It just doesn't add to my life. Some people are more into the creativeness of decorating their homes at Christmas time. I am not. I enjoy seeing it, just not doing it. I just have so many other things I would rather do. I choose not to do that and save a ton of time.
- Those expensive Christmas gifts. I love to get my kids as many gifts that they want and that I can afford. I just don't like the buying for everyone else. Sometimes I think I am Scrooge. But where does it say that I have to spend every dime I have?
- And the other expenses beside gifts just mount up into a huge burden. Year end bills, holiday dinners out, dinner parties, Christmas cards, charities are begging continuously and you are always being asked to chip in for something or someone.
- The season starts so early. I really am sick of it by December 25.
- Extra food everywhere. I love to eat so it is very hard not to pack on a bunch of pounds at this time of year.
- There is something called St. Nick's in the southern Wisconsin area. It is basically more gifts for kids December 6.

Other than that, it's fine.

One of my favorite country singers is Merle Haggard. A big hit of his was If We Make it Through December. It is really a sad country song. It can be just such a tough month.

You have to approach having an organized Christmas just like any other big project. Avoid doing what you don't want to do. Minimize clutter. Use lists. Plan your trips.

The most important thing to do is have lots of cash on hand. That is really the only way to have an enjoyable holiday season. Money is what makes for an organized Christmas.

I don't want to seem cynical, but there is no way that you can convince me that money is not the most important thing to having an organized Christmas.

What do you need to buy all the gifts? What do you need to go to the holiday parties? What do you need to have people over for dinner and visiting? What do you need to get something to bring whenever you are invited to someone's house? What do you need to give to charities, churches and whoever needs something? What do you need for all the extra expenses that are due at the end of the year? What do you need to prepare for the terrible winter weather that is coming?

You need money and lots of it.

I'll be honest. I am writing this in the first week of December. It is really too late for you to have a totally organized Christmas this year.

But, you can get ready for next year now. That is the best way. Start preparing long range. Set aside cash, pay off as much debt as you can, stay ahead of your bills and get an organized Christmas next year. Make it a goal. It will help you all year around too.

It is always better to do some long range planning for anything. Christmas included.

Here are a few more easy things you can do to make Christmas easier

- Cut out as many other activities as you can. If you want to enjoy your Christmas holiday type activities more, you have to stop doing something. Right? You will have to cut out some of the normal stuff you do.
- Cut way back on TV. Maybe to the point of eliminating it this month. The shows will keep until January.
- Maybe only watch some sports. You might have to miss a few minutes of your favorite team here and there.
- Avoid extra overtime hours at work. You will have to decide, time or money.

- Don't volunteer for anything. This is pretty hard for most people to avoid, but do what you can.
- Try to buy as many gifts as you can in one outing and in one store. Going from store to store is a huge timewaster and a major hassle.
- Don't shop two days in a row. It will just sap all your energy.
- Shop later in the evening as much as you can. Weekday and weekend evenings are much less crowded.
- The easiest time ever to go Christmas shopping is late afternoon on Christmas Eve. Everyone is pretty much done and you will have the stores to yourself. Plus you will not have wasted all of December shopping. You will just use the last day as a deadline. Your motivation to finish will be huge. I have done this before as a game one year and as a necessity a different year because I didn't have any money until then. If you have a list of things that you can get all in one place, if they're small and can be wrapped by the store or put in gift bags, you are golden. You will have had a super organized Christmas because you kept the time frame very short.
- Buy small gifts. They are easier to carry. They are also easier and less expensive to wrap. They are also easier to hide.
- Have your list with you all the time. Refer to it often; it is so easy to forget. My memory is not that great for things other people want only for what I want.
- Keep your car full of gas. Winter, remember.
- Be ready for winter to hit at any moment. Watch the weather. I am not kidding, the last thing you want is to be stuck in a snowstorm when trying to do holiday shopping or getting supplies for a holiday dinner. You have got to be flexible on going to the stores. The stress of having to get to the store in a raging snowstorm or on icy roads or in extremely frigid conditions is just a life sucking experience. Having an organized Christmas will be the last thing on your mind if you are in an accident.
- Try to get some of your yearly bills that come in December to come at a different month. I have my 6 month car insurance bill due in December and my AAA bill due in December. The 3 month water bill also is due. That is too many big bills. These are always an extra burden.
- Have plenty of wrapping paper, clear tape, tissue paper, gift bags and labels. This stuff is cheap at Wal-Mart and stores like that. I never find it necessary to have ribbons and bows, but I am a guy. I never see the need to

have fancy, expensive wrapping paper either. I guess this kind of stuff is cheaper after Christmas too.

- Don't feel like your house has to look like a magazine advertisement. Pick up the clutter and don't worry about a little dirt and germs. You can do a more thorough cleaning after the tree and decorations are taken down and things get back to normal.
- As you are going about your preparations for this year, take some notes for next year and keep them in your Planner Book. Those frustrations that you are working through now could be dealt with easier next year if you remember them in your Planner Book. If you don't write down the problems now you will forget by next year. You will see ideas for gifts that you can't afford now but could be for the next year. Have a section in your Planner Book labeled Organized Christmas.
- Minimize your decorating. I know, I know there are so many nice, cute interesting decorations. They are usually not that expensive either. But if your house is full now and you buy a bunch more decorations, after Christmas you will have a lot more to store. It will be a huge project to put them away after Christmas.
- I am thinking about a new concept for an organized Christmas decorating for the future. I would just buy new stuff every year and then give it all away after Christmas. Doesn't that sound fun? The benefits of this method would be that charities would get my very nice, new decorations, people would enjoy buying them at the Goodwill type stores, I wouldn't have to store anything and I could have the fun of shopping for new stuff next year. I think that is the way old type holidays were like. You threw away the tree. Decorations were not saved from year to year. The candles burned down, candy canes were eaten and popcorn strings and garland were thrown outside for the birds. The only thing that would have been stored would be the star. This method would probably work even if you were not wealthy; just keep your buying of the new stuff to a minimum.

Organized Christmas Shopping

As I mentioned earlier I prefer to give gift cards or cash for gifts. This method greatly simplifies your gift buying. I find shopping for others a real chore although I like shopping for myself. I do think getting gift cards is more thoughtful than cash for friends and relatives because you are at least thinking about what places the person frequents and then they would be able to use the card to get something for themselves that they really want or need.

I did all my Christmas shopping for the 2008 year on the Sunday afternoon before Christmas. The Packers played on Monday so I didn't have to miss the game either. I did all the shopping in about 3 hours including about 20 minutes at Starbucks enjoying a cup of coffee. I only shopped in the retail area closet to my home. There are a lot of stores in the area and I really don't want to drive a long way just to shop. Here is where I went and what I bought:

- Famous Footwear. I bought tennis shoes for my son. My ex had told me he needed shoes and what size and brand he wanted.
- Wal-Mart. I bought MP3 players for both kids. I also bought an Xbox game for my son and a DS game for my daughter. I know what games they wanted because they had told me the day before.
- Starbucks. I bought gift cards for my dad and sister. My sister loves Starbucks. My dad loves coffee. So I knew they would use the cards. I also had a cup of coffee here and went over my list.
- Marshalls. I bought a gift card for my mom. She loves shopping at Marshalls.
- Pet co. I asked if they had any stores in Madison. They did not so I didn't get a gift card for my brother who has a large fish collection. I did think that a gift card might be good for my daughter who has 4 pet birds.
- Home Depot. I got a gift card for my brother who is a carpenter.
- Best Buy. I got another DS game for my daughter and a gift card for my niece.

- Home. I wrapped up the gift cards and called my ex to tell her what I got the kids. She, of course, complained about what I got them so I decided to think about their gifts for awhile before wrapping them up.

So I was done Christmas shopping as far as I was concerned. I did end up exchanging one MP3 player for another brand that my ex told me about and decided not to give my son the Xbox game that his mother objected to. The dollar value of what I bought the kids was the same after that and I wrapped up their gifts and a gift of money also.

So my Christmas shopping season that year was nice and easy. I didn't stress over any of this and felt good about what I gave. I just look at the gift cards as something really nice. I just have received so many gifts over the years that I didn't really need so in my way I am changing that for the people I give to.

Thanksgiving Organizing

Any holiday can add to your stress level. If you are hosting the holiday meal this Thanksgiving here are my top suggestions:

- Know how many people are coming. Get a count, including kids, as close as you can. Sometimes your guests will not know exactly their plans and the number. You will have to build in contingency plans for extra people in that case. These plans would include extra food and places to eat. Get out paper and a pen. Write down all their names and if they eat a lot. I am not kidding, just doing this will help. You do not want to try to remember all this. Using your head instead of paper and pen is where so many people go so wrong and get so stressed. Getting organized for Thanksgiving will be 100% easier with paper and pen.
- Calculate how much food to prepare. Preparing too much food is almost as bad as too little. The problem with too much is that it is hard to store beforehand, hard to prepare properly, hard to distribute to your guests and hard to deal with afterwards with all the leftovers. As you can see, I think it

is hard. Again, use your paper and pen and make plans on the paper. Trying to do all this in your head is a recipe for disaster.

- A better way to think of the main meal is that each person will have one normal size helping, rather than 3 helpings, if you have snacks and a desert. If you are not having snacks then you would probably want to plan on 2 servings for each adult guest and each older child.
- Shop for the items you need now. Why wait until a few days before Thanksgiving for canned goods and easily stored items. The only thing you should need to buy a few days before Thanksgiving is the turkey and refrigerator items. You know by now how much food and the types. Go to the store now. A lot of the holiday food is at a low price. Get it now.
- Bake your pie a day or two before. Do as much preparation as you can as many days ahead as you can. Some types of food do not freeze well, so I know that there is still going to be a ton of cooking the day of the meal. At least doing your planning and other things will help you for an organized for Thanksgiving holiday.
- Clean your house thoroughly now. Dust now. Vacuum now. Clean your bathrooms now. You would only want to do some spot cleaning the last day before your guests arrive.
- After your house is cleaned, put up your Thanksgiving type decorations. I am not much for decorating, but it seems to me that a little decorating goes a long way toward making it special and creating the mood for a great holiday.
- Take care of your normal chores now and faster. Take care of you outdoor chores quickly and be done with it. You may want to let a lot of the things slide that do not matter so much.
- Create a holiday ritual that is fun and interesting for your kids that helps you and brings you together. They will remember it for years and may want to do it themselves as adults. This could be baking the pumpkin pie with them, or setting out the decorations, or shopping for the canned goods. All these things need to be done, and your children can help. Creating a ritual does take time, but it is so worth it and it will make your future holidays even better and more memorable. Getting organized for Thanksgiving also means to make it special for you and your loved ones.
- Limit the other extra things you do at this time of year so you have more time to concentrate on your holiday gathering. You can easily not watch TV until Thanksgiving is over.

If you are going somewhere for Thanksgiving, good for you, that is a lot easier, although traveling at this time of the year is busy, hectic and if you are in a northern climate, potentially a weather hazard.

Fun and Organized at the Beach

Having an organized bag really helps for going to the beach. Going to the beach was always a pain. I never knew what to take. I'd either not bring something that was needed, or have so much that carrying all the stuff was a huge ordeal. Fun things become a drag when you're not ready for them.

I like to go swimming with my kids at the beach or the pool. I also like to go boating with friends. It's a lot of fun but getting ready can be a real hassle if you are not organized.

A real handy item if you go swimming at all is to have is a fairly large organized bag for your stuff that you take to the beach or the pool. I call it the beach bag. Ideally this should be a large washable bag with carrying handles and possibly a shoulder strap.

I'd look for one with at least 3 zippered pouches on the inside. One pocket would hold your important pocket items such as your keys, and cell phone. The second pocket would hold sunscreen. The third pocket would be for hand wipes/sanitizers. The following list is the things I bring to the beach in the organized bag:

- Big Beach towel.
- Collapsible broad brimmed hat.
- Sunscreen.
- Water shoes.
- Frisbee.
- Nerf football.
- Water bottle.
- Hand wipes or hand sanitizer individually packaged.
- Small microfiber cloth.
- Garbage bag.

- Clothes pin for pinning the garbage bag to your beach bag so it doesn't blow away.
- Container with individually wrapped snack bars. Try to have some kind that won't melt.
- Container with snacks such as pretzels or corn chips. I like something that doesn't leave a mess on your fingers.
- Something to read.

When I bring my kids to the beach they would each have their own beach towel and water bottle. I like to have everything in one large bag, so I would have three large beach towels and three water bottles. I just put all their stuff in the one organized bag. Then I just carry it all. I like to let the kids have fun and not carry heavy stuff.

You could go crazy and bring a big umbrella, lawn chairs, cooler with cold drinks and sandwiches, but that goes against my idea of making life easy. How often do you go to the beach to eat? Isn't the point of going to the beach to be in the sun, so why would you bring an umbrella? Maybe if you have very small children or are very sensitive to the sun an umbrella would be handy.

Some beaches have concessions stands where you could buy a cold drink and something to eat. Carrying a little extra money is a lot easier than lugging around a heavy cooler full of food. The things in my organized bag are the necessities for a really enjoyable time at the beach whether I go by myself, with a friend or with my kids. I can just go for a half hour or I can spend the day, I'm ready.

When I go to the beach I have my swimming suit on. I wear a large pair of shorts that fit well over my suit. I'll have my normal pocket stuff in my pockets and have a belt on. I'll wear a larger comfortable t-shirt, comfortable shoes and socks for walking to the beach. Some beaches are a long way from the car.

Once I get to a nice spot I lay out my big beach towel. Put my pocket stuff in the zippered bag in the beach bag, take off my shoes, socks, shorts and t-shirt and put all that stuff in the bottom of the bag.

I take out the water bottles, snack containers and balls and either go swimming or sit down on my towel. When it's time to go I just reverse the

process. I don't mind if my clothes get a little wet from the swimming suit, I wash the clothes when I get home. The small cloth works well for getting the sand off your feet before putting your shoes back on.

I have noticed that the beach bag works great for getting ready to go the beach, for traveling, for getting to the beach and for your time at the beach. When you are ready to go you will still be wet and full of sand and there is nothing your beach bag will do for you.

You'll have the work of cleaning up afterwards. Since the beach bag helps so much before and during your time at the beach you will still thank me for telling you about it.

You can always modify the contents of your organized bag based on the circumstances. For example when I take my kids swimming in the evenings I don't bring snacks because we are only going to be swimming a short time, maybe an hour or so. Then we would get something to eat right after.

If you're going to be swimming for a few hours the snacks will be really appreciated especially if you have kids. That would change if you know there is a concession stand nearby.

If you don't like water shoes, don't include them. I find that I really don't enjoy the swimming at all without them. My feet hurt too much. Everything else on the list is important.

A backpack type bag would work better for walking a long way or riding a bike or motorcycle. I like my bag concept because it works great in the trunk of my car and opens up better. I also use this same bag and packing scheme when I go boating with my friend's on their boats or if I rent a boat.

Boating normally involves swimming if you are boating in warm weather. All these organized bag ideas work for boating as well.

The Grill Box

I love cooking outside on the grill. I think most men do. Most people love the taste of grilled food. Where I am from in Wisconsin, it is especially great because of the short grilling season. Grilling outside in the cold and snow of winter, while not impossible, is not done that much. I would say that 95% of the grilling is done in warm weather.

The hardest part of the grilling outside is the going back and forth into the house because you need something. You need the matches, the food, a plate, paper towels, spices, it goes on and on.

My method is to take the principles that you use when you are at a picnic, camping trip or tailgate party to your home outdoor grilling. After all, why should you only have a good time grilling when you are away from home?

This idea came to me because as I was grilling to relax, I found I was spending all my time running back and forth into the house for all the various items. Once I set up the grill box, grilling became a pleasure and something I could enjoy much more often.

A grill box is a large box, usually plastic and waterproof/bug proof that is used to hold the majority of the things you need to prepare grilled food. I use a large clear plastic container. It is 15 inches wide, 15 inches deep and 24 inches long. I store it on a shelf in the garage. I keep the following items in it:

- Lighter fluid.
- Matches or lighter.
- Hamburger flipper.
- Tongs.
- Hot pads.
- Knives.

- Stir and serving spoons.
- Paper towels.
- Aluminum foil to hold small food items.
- Salt, pepper and any other of your favorite spices.
- Oil.
- Charcoal briquettes. The charcoal may fit depending on the size of box and size of your bag. When the bag is full it does not fit in my grill box. Once I have used some coals the bag will fit in the box.
- Pots/pans for cooking beans, frying onions, etc.
- Plates to hold the raw food and cooked food.
- Small garbage bags and ties for easy cleanup.
- Clips to hold the garbage bag(s) from blowing away.
- Cleaner in a spray bottle for cleaning the picnic table.
- Dish soap in a spray bottle for cleaning your utensils.
- Rinse water in a spray bottle for rinsing your dishes.
- Bottle opener.
- Can opener.
- Can/bottle coolies for your drinks. Have enough for you and a few friends.
- Grill scraper/cleaner.

The best thing about having all your grilling tools in the box is that you just grab the box, your food to grill, any sauces and your favorite beverage from the refrigerator and you start cooking. You can just stay outside, grill and relax.

Your Home

Does your house function the way you want? Being home should be a relaxing experience. You should look forward to being in your home and just enjoying it.

You should be able to do whatever you want most of the time when you are in your own home.

If not, then you need to think of a different way of living and use these home organization ideas.

Every other room from the attic, to the pantry to the basement should be carefully planned for its major use. Your home organization will help you to get the most out of your home, enjoy it more and have more free time.

I love being in my apartment. I have it set up to minimize the amount of time I need to work on it. I would rather watch TV, read, surf the internet, talk to friends or family on the phone or nap rather than pick up stuff, work on home organization or spend lots of time cleaning. When I was married it was very difficult for me to relax when I was at home. My wife was the type of person who always wanted to be doing some project. I don't mind doing some remodeling. But it's just so expensive, time consuming, energy draining and messy.

She also had a huge amount of stuff. So the major ongoing project was the reorganizing of her stuff and working on home organization. She would spend hours and days going through the stuff, trying to organize it properly. She bought every type of container she could find in the attempt to make it all fit properly.

It never did. There was just too much.

She bought cabinets, shelves, boxes and bins. She spent an enormous amount of my money on this. She would browbeat me to work on it with her. I hated it, absolutely hated it.

I just couldn't stand to reorganize the same stuff in different ways. No progress was ever made in this type of home organization.

It was stuff I had no interest in and I could not get her to get rid of any of it. She was a total pack rat. I think she loved the stuff more than me. She would be enraged if I ever threw anything out.

So the house was pretty stuffed with stuff that had to be put away and be dealt with continuously. That is no way to live.

Once you get things thrown away and put away properly you really shouldn't have much to do with it anymore.

The key to home organization is to organize each room based on the major function of each room and possibly a few minor functions. The look or aesthetics of the room will have to be secondary to the function. It does no good at all to have a beautiful kitchen if it is too difficult to prepare a meal.

Put things in the kitchen in the place they belong based on cooking and cleaning up afterward. Make better choices when deciding on your kitchen tools. Minimize the knickknacks and excess clutter that seem to grow in kitchens. One of my favorite tips to keep your kitchen clutter under control is to not buy so much food.

Let's face it. The kitchen is the most important room in the house. You need it to be well organized unless you have enough money to go out to eat all the time or have someone to do all you're cooking for you.

Chances are that if you are either of these things you will probably be nice and organized anyway.

Some of my best memories from childhood are of doing schoolwork or visiting with my mom in her kitchen while she cooked and prepared meals.

I also loved going to my grandmother's house and visiting with her while she was cooking.

Whenever people go to parties and have people over a lot of the time is spent in the kitchen. It's a natural gathering spot. Since this is a natural gathering spot home designers and interior decorators have designed them with a more elegant look.

By thinking this way they have lost sight of the function.

The function is to cook. Socializing there is nice and comfortable but if the cook suffers because the look came before the function, then the layout is not very good.

I like kitchens that are set up for maximum efficiency and ease of cooking and cleanup. I think those types of kitchen look fantastic.

Your kitchen should work for you.

It is possible to have a really good, efficient work area no matter what the layout. Obviously, if you want to spend a bundle of money you can and it could really be great.

In fact my wife and I remodeled the kitchen in our first house completely. The house was built in the 1920's and was remodeled already when we bought it but it was not too great.

We gutted it and started over. It turned out fantastic. We had solid surface counter tops and white laminated European cabinets with slide out drawers, a deep stainless sink, tall faucet and all new appliances. Of course since I spent over \$25,000 on it you would expect that it would be great.

I am talking about using whatever layout you have and making it work for you.

I have lived in lots of different houses and apartments over the years and have been able to cook in all of them. I didn't starve and was able to prepare meals wherever.

I'm sure you can too. It is just your mindset and looking to make the best of whatever you have.

The main idea is to put things in the place where it makes the most sense.

You need to sit down and study the layout and then put things in the proper place.

The easiest way to do this is to not have very much stuff.

My ex-wife is a gadget, utensil, plate, glass, pot and pan collector. She has multiple sets of everything.

You can see why I had to spend so much on the remodeling. There was just too much stuff to deal with.

The best way is to just have one set of what you need. If you just have to buy more, then upgrade by improving the basics and throwing out or giving away what you have replaced.

What fun is it to buy expensive, beautiful cookware and then keep the old stuff? I know the old stuff is still good, but there is just no way to have an efficient kitchen if it is too full.

Another big problem with too much stuff is that people will fill all the cabinets with plates, cups, glasses, pots and pans but then have not room for food.

You need to have half your cabinet space for food. What good is all the stuff without the food?

The best way to save money on food is to buy more of it when it is at its lowest price. You want to keep plenty of open cabinets for this food.

Cabinets without much in them are just nicer to deal with. It is easier to get the cookware out and it is easier to put it back.

Once you have settled on a basic layout then it is better to leave it alone. You will have it memorized and your efficiency will go up. If you are changing it all the time or even a few times a year then you will waste time relearning it.

The countertops need to be kept clear of knickknacks and other stuff so that they are clear and open to prepare meals and to make cleanup easier.

If the counter tops have a lot of stuff on them it is because you have too much stuff.

You have to get rid of it. Moving or remodeling because you have too much stuff is really stupid. I know, I did both.

If your kitchen is in very bad shape and totally disorganized then you will have to redo it, but avoid the temptation to constantly be working on it.

There are so many kitchen tools that claim to help you but only seem to make your life harder. There is a lot of advice out there that really does not make any sense. There are a lot of old habits that people have that really slow them down in the kitchen.

Here is a list of tips and ideas for you to consider that will help make your kitchen run better and that will make your life a lot easier:

1) Always go with white appliances if you are buying new or you have the choice. Appliances that are black or stainless steel are really not that great of a kitchen tool. It is harder to see the spills and mess on those colors so you end up wiping the entire thing, or straining to see the spills or worse, not wiping them up at all. Then since you have left a spill it gets harder and harder to clean. It gets baked on. My ex-wife loved the look of stainless steel and black. All of our appliances were one of those. I could never really see a spill on them. If I got really close I could tell that they were filthy and needed to be cleaned. But from a distance I could not tell. I have white appliances in my apartment now. It is so easy to just wipe up the stove now during and after cooking. It only takes a few seconds. With a black or stainless steel stove you will spend many minutes. It is a total waste of time. If you have the choice; go with white.

2) Avoid buying and obtaining all kinds of specialized knives as kitchen tools. Most people end up with an excessive number of knives. Knives seem to be one of the hardest things to throw out. You only need 4 knives to cook. You need a small knife, a bread knife, a medium knife and a big knife. Don't be afraid to throw out knives.

3) Avoid having excessive kitchen gadgets. People's kitchens are loaded with all these things that look so good on TV and in the store. The claim is that these types of kitchen tools will speed up our cooking. The reality is that they are just one more thing to store that rarely gets used. My ex-wife loved all the gadgets. It was her hobby to collect them. They took up an enormous amount of space in our cabinets and she rarely used them. They are just so difficult to use and a real pain to clean if you ever do use them. I didn't give her a hard time about this though. I could see that she really loved those types of things and I didn't want to be mean

about it. If that is your passion, go ahead. But if you want to live an organized, easy life you will have hardly any gadgets or kitchen tools.

4) A smaller kitchen is a better kitchen tool than a bigger kitchen. Ideally, you want to be able to prepare a full meal without hardly any walking. Your time in the kitchen should be spent cooking, not walking back and forth. Those gigantic kitchens are a huge time waster. They may look great but are totally inefficient. The best kitchens are the U-shaped or at least the L-shaped kitchens in a modern apartment or smaller house.

5) There are two good ways to keep your kitchen clean all the time. The first is to be careful while you are preparing meals. It is easier to avoid spills when you use the correct size of pot or pan for the food you are preparing so the food does not slop out over the pan. The second is that you clean up as you are preparing the meal and cooking. This really helps to minimize the time you are in the kitchen. If you time it right you will only have to wash the actual plates, glasses and silverware on the table after a meal. You will have washed everything you used to cook and prepare the meal while you were cooking and immediately before you eat. This is not that hard to do because normally the hot food off the stove needs to cool slightly before you eat it. I just use this cooling time to wash the pots and pans from the stove.

6) Use a dishrag for washing dishes. This kitchen tool is still the handiest cleaning device ever. It is much better than a sponge or an abrasive pad. My ex-wife insisted on washing dishes with one of those yellow, somewhat abrasive cleaning pads. She thought that this would help to get the dishes cleaner. The problem would be that this tool, while good for washing dishes, does not work at all for wiping up spills on the stove or for wiping up the counter. She would then need to use paper towels for this or not do it at all. It is so much easier to be doing dishes with the dish cloth, wiping up spills as you go and wiping off the counters. The dish cloth will be good for a few days and then you just wash it. You can usually buy 2 or 3 for a dollar. So you could get a lot for cheap. I do have the yellow abrasive pads handy for cleaning stuck on food in pans, but most of the time I just use the dish cloth.

7) Don't go overboard buying different kinds of spices and sauces. These kinds of things really clutter up a kitchen. If you have lots of sauces, your refrigerator will be filled with these and you will have no room for real food. Whenever you buy

something that needs to be refrigerated after opening it should be the smallest size you can find. You may want to just use what you need for preparing that meal and throw the rest away. It might be months before you use that sauce again.

8) Eat up your leftovers within the next day or 2 at the most. If you make a big meal and there are a lot of leftovers, you should plan on having those until they are gone. The other option is to freeze it for a future meal. Having multiple containers of leftovers in your refrigerator is really a pain. It looks bad and will smell bad soon. Plus if you make it a practice to not have too many leftovers you will not need to have very many containers that clutter up your cabinets. You should cook smaller amounts of food at a time anyway. It is less expensive, much easier and faster. I think everyone prefers a freshly cooked meal to leftovers anyway. A fresh simple meal is better than leftovers from even the most elaborate meal.

9) Keep your kitchen tools and small appliances in your cabinets as much as possible. I only keep my coffee pot out. I use it quite often. I keep my toaster in a cabinet since I do not eat toast that much. Having most of your countertops free of clutter will make your kitchen look a lot better. If you don't have room in your cabinets for most of your appliances then you will need to toss out enough other things to make room.

Food

Do you have a stuffed pantry and nothing to eat? Buying smaller amounts of food will help your kitchen, your waistline and your whole life. Here is why:

- It costs less. You can compare the unit price with your price book and see. The bigger quantities are not always less.
- They take up less space in your pantry. Why should you have to buy more cabinet space and have food stacked up everywhere? Isn't that what the store is for?
- You won't get tired of eating the same thing day after day.
- They take up less refrigerator space and since the amount is smaller it will be in your refrigerator for less time. This will keep your refrigerator cleaner and smelling better.
- It is very difficult to get all the food out of the bottom of tall containers. I had a tall jar of strawberry jam. It seemed to take forever to get to the

bottom. Every time I wanted some my spoon wasn't long enough to get to the bottom of the jar and I ended up with jam on my hand. What a mess. The next time I bought a shorter jar of jam. This applies to every item you buy.

- If you buy large packages of meat and you don't cook it all right away you will have to take it out of the package, repackage it into smaller amounts using expensive wrap. I would rather just buy the right size at the store. They already have it wrapped. I just put it into the freezer if I am not going to cook it in the next day or so. That is so much easier than dealing with all the repackaging.
- You will eat less. I tend to want to eat all that is there so I have fewer leftovers. I just don't like the mess. By buying less at the front end I eat less at the back end. My kids convinced me to buy a big gallon of ice cream the other day. They said it was cheaper. The gallon was \$5. The quart was \$3. So I did get more ice cream for the money. The problem is that since I have a lot of ice cream now, I am eating a lot of ice cream. I basically just eat it until it's gone. If I had a smaller amount I would be eating a lot less. My health is more important than the cost savings of food I really should not be eating that much of anyway.
- Smaller quantities are easier to carry. Most people would rather just carry a few small bags of groceries than a lot of heavy bags.
- It is a lot work dealing with a massive amount of food. When I was married my wife always bought most of our food at one of the membership discount stores. I suppose it was somewhat cheaper to do this, but she or I never really did an actual cost analysis to make sure it was cheaper.

I know that it was much harder to do it this way. She would insist that we all go. She wanted me to help with the carrying and the paying. It took hours to go through that gigantic store. She insisted on going down every aisle, just in case.

We had to push those huge carts full of monstrous boxes and cans of food. By the end the cart was so heavy it could barely be pushed.

We would spend \$200 to \$400 at a time all on food that would not be eaten for months or maybe years. To me that was so demoralizing, to go to the store, spend hours there, and hours unloading and putting it all away trying to fit it into the house.

We would have to repackage everything into smaller containers. The refrigerator would be packed. The basement freezer would be packed. The pantry cabinets would be so full the doors wouldn't close. The basement shelves would be full. There would be food stacked on the kitchen floor in all the corners. Our house looked like a warehouse.

Then there wouldn't be anything to eat. We'd have to go out to eat.

Buy the smaller cans, cartons and packages. Buy bottles or cans of soda, not liter bottles. You just end up drinking a lot more soda and everyone knows that is not healthy.

Buying smaller containers of food as much as possible seems counter intuitive at first because everyone says to buy in bulk. But buying in bulk only works in certain circumstances.

If you are preparing food for dozens of people you would want to buy in bulk or if you have a lot of kids for instance or if you have a huge pantry and really enjoy dealing with lots of food.

Most people don't enjoy spending lots of time on food. They are better at dealing with smaller amounts of everything including food for their pantry.

Bathroom Ideas

A sleek, modern bathroom can make getting ready for work take too long if it isn't set up for maximum efficiency.

Set up your bathroom so that you can get ready in the minimum amount of time, so it is easy to clean and it looks good. There will be days where getting ready fast is essential. You can always go about it more leisurely when you have time. Here are my best tips to have an organized bathroom:

- Never use those mats or stick on type things in the bottom of your bathtub. They are supposed to be there so that you do not slip but what they really do is make your bathtub really hard to clean. The stick on things never comes off and the mat gets ground into the tub and makes it impossible to get the tub totally clean.

- If you have the choice, get a one piece tub and shower surround. Even one of the three piece units is better than tiled walls around your shower. The grout is very hard to clean unless you are a cleaning fanatic and the gap between the tub and tile that is filled with caulk will get moldy and disgusting no matter how often you clean it.
- Never get a glass or Plexiglas sliding door on your tub. These things can never be cleaned that well, plus they make your shower area much smaller. The best thing to have is a rod with a waterproof curtain. You can get a decorative type outside curtain. The inside curtain can be washed or replaced because they are not that expensive. The best part is that the curtain gives you more room in the shower. You won't bang your elbows on the glass or risk breaking it.
- Never clean your bathroom, or anything, with a bleach type cleaner. The bleach is hard on your lungs for one thing. The worst is that the bleach will ruin your faucet fixtures. It will also ruin your clothes and anything else that it touches. The right way to clean the bathroom is to just clean it a little more often with a mild cleaner.
- Do not fall for those toothpaste dispensers that look so good on TV. After they are used a few times they will be a gross, disgusting mess.
- Put your toothbrushes and everything else away in a drawer or somewhere hidden from view. I am a little squeamish, but seeing people's toothbrushes is just disgusting to me. Even if you are not as squeamish as I am, you will have to admit that all those personal products being out is a real eyesore and will make even the most beautiful organized bathroom look bad.
- Avoid at all costs the pedestal type sinks. I know they look elegant but where will you put the necessary things in your bathroom without a bathroom vanity. People with the pedestal sinks will always have their personal products just sitting out for everyone to see because they have no place to put them. Even the guest bathroom should just have a vanity to store some things out of sight.
- You need plenty of towel racks in your organized bathroom. I have one for my hand towels and 2 for the towels I use after a shower. Sometimes I shower twice a day and the first towel will not be dry for my second shower. Since I use these towels to dry off multiple times, they need a place to dry. I do not want them hanging over a door or over a chair or in my bedroom. I just want to neatly hang them on a towel rack to dry in the bathroom.

- Give a little thought to where you place your toilet paper dispenser. Most people are right handed so the best is to tend it to the right within easy reach when you are sitting on the toilet. There is nothing as irritating as to twist around on the toilet or reach a long way away or at an extremely odd angle to get some toilet paper. Being able to easily get the toilet paper should be the first consideration in every organized bathroom. That is the most important function, isn't it?
- Use a liquid soap dispenser for washing your hands. It is hard to believe that some people use bar soap for hand washing. That seems so disgusting now.
- Avoid excess clutter on your bathroom vanity sink area. The best would just be the liquid soap dispenser. I know that may be impossible for most people, but keeping the stuff to a minimum means your sink area will always look good and be very easy to clean.
- Do not use the toilet seat covers. This is so unsanitary. I know these things can be washed but the best thing to do is just clean the entire toilet every time you clean your bathroom.
- If you are in an older place with the bigger toilet that holds more water, keep it forever. Those old toilets with more water work so much better than the new ones with little water. The newer toilets are like living in the dark ages with the filth and the mess. You need to flush so many times and the toilet is always getting clogged. Now instead of keeping the plunger hidden in the basement or garage you have to keep the filthy, unsanitary thing right by every toilet in the house.
- If you are replacing the bathroom faucet get the one handle ones that are easy to clean. I hate the 2 handle faucets. The water will either be too hot or too cold.
- Clean your bathroom often. It is easier and faster to do it more often rather than waiting until it is hard to clean.
- Keep your cleaning supplies handy in the bathroom. Keep the supplies away from small children.
- If you share the bathroom with someone, have an honest discussion as to if you want privacy or not. When I was married my wife always wanted to be in the bathroom when I was. I really prefer privacy in the bathroom.

- Set up your personal products and supplies in such a way that you can get ready as fast as you can. Even if you have the time to get ready leisurely, there may be times when you really need to be fast and if you have it set up for speed, it will really help. I get ready at a steady pace with no wasted motions. I do not want to spend a lot of extra time getting ready.

Clean House Tips

Everyone wants a clean house. It's just the hard work of doing it that people would like to avoid. Here are some tips and tricks to make cleaning easier:

- It is easier when there is less stuff to work around. Get rid of clutter first and make getting rid of clutter a priority.
- Concentrate on creating and keeping open spaces in your home.
- Bathroom and kitchen counter tops should have as little as possible on them.
- Keep supplies and tools where you need them.
- Make it as easy as possible for yourself, not as difficult. Get the right supplies.
- Put the supplies right where you need them.
- Do this cleaning work fairly often so things don't get as dirty.
- Move fast, don't dawdle over it.
- Do not be a perfectionist. It is going to start getting dirty right away anyway. Just do it quick and be done with it.
- I think the best way to think about these tasks is that you will be doing it often, so there is no need to be perfect. Work as fast as you can. Hustle and get it done and move on.
- Having a spotless home, car, clothes, whatever, is great, but having time is better. Only spend the time as necessary. Besides, the stuff that is out is what makes things look bad. It is not really dirt and filth that is the problem; it is piles of stuff that is the mess.

Easy Living Furniture

You may have a beautiful living room but if you don't enjoy watching TV there then what good is it? Some people have their couch and chairs so far from the TV that they can hardly see it. They have to have the volume way up in order to hear it.

You may have beautiful home but if the furniture is uncomfortable no one will enjoy being there.

What is easy living furniture?

To me, it is very comfortable, very functional, easy to clean, light enough to be easy to move around and not so expensive that you fuss over it, have to have it or care more about it than people.

Start with comfort. This has mostly to do with the furniture you sit on, recline on, put your feet up on or lie on. Things like living room chairs, recliners, dining room chairs, couches, sofas, loveseats, footstools, ottomans and coffee tables.

This type of furniture is the second most important thing in your house after your bed. Beds are another category. Obviously, you will have an extremely comfortable bed, won't you?

There are few things worse than being uncomfortable in your own home. Everyone kind of expects that you will be uncomfortable when you are outside your home. That seems to be the way everything is made. Small cars are hard to get into. The hard and narrow seats on the bus, train and subway are not comfortable at all. Very narrow seats that you have to squeeze into on the plane. Very hard, narrow seats at the sporting event. Old, rickety chairs with no support at work and everywhere else you go.

Then when you get home you are expecting easy living furniture to sit down in and relax in comfort and ease the pain away from a day spent in discomfort.

That is the way it should be. If it isn't for you, then getting some comfortable furniture should be one of your most important things you do for yourself and soon.

When I was married, my wife was more into the looks of the furniture, not comfort. I cannot even count the times we would be looking at furniture in a store and she would be begging and threatening to buy some foolish, uncomfortable piece of furniture. It was just unbelievable to even have to try to convince her that something like that is a stupid idea. But I had to spend my time convincing her of the basics or end up paying big money for something worthless like:

- Living room furniture with no arms.
- Couches that had very low backs.
- Dining room chairs with no cushioning on the seat.
- Extremely soft and low living room chairs.
- Tables with glass tops that are easily scratched.
- Huge entertainment centers that have to be put together and then are so big they are impossible to move.

It just seems so obvious to me what easy living furniture is.

She would be looking at the soft living room chairs that were really low. I would mention that her elderly father had bad hips and would have a hard time getting into and out of a chair like that. That it would not be good for him. I thought that line of thinking would get through to her because she worshipped her father. She just said, well, when he comes over, you can just bring up a chair from the basement for him.

She would be looking at the low backed couches that were kind of short. I pointed out that when you sit on a low backed couch your head will not be supported when you are leaning back. I also said it is difficult to lie down on a short couch. I am a little over 6 feet tall and need a couch that is longer than that. She did not care about this argument either saying that people should be able to sit up straight and that there was no need to take a nap on a couch. To me, taking a nap on the couch is one of life's greatest pleasures and reclining with my head back is a really good feeling after a long, hard day.

Trying to look at recliners was a lost cause with her. I just gave up on the entire idea. There is no chair as comfortable as a recliner with a built in footrest. It is the ultimate in easy living furniture but comfort didn't matter to her.

What you really need to have a nice home is to have all your sitting type furniture really comfortable.

We did have some really comfortable dining room chairs at one time early in our marriage. The seats had a really good spring cushion and foam seat. The chair was covered in fabric. I could sit at these chairs for hours. Enjoying a long dinner with the extended family was a delight. I also spent hours doing all kinds of office work, reading and planning at the dining room table on these comfortable chairs.

Then, she got the idea that she needed to reupholster these chairs with a different fabric because they had a few minor stains on them. They were dining room chairs after all. We ate from those chairs all the time with small children.

That was a bad idea. Once the original fabric is off, there is no way to make the chair right again. Those beautiful, comfortable chairs were ruined.

She ended up buying some narrow wood chairs with very uncomfortable seats that you can only sit on for about 20 minutes before you need to get up. Forget about a long conversation at the dining room table anymore. People would just hurry up and eat and get up.

That is what happens when you want your furniture to look a certain way instead of feel a certain way. You end all possibility for long, meaningful discussion. I want comfortable dining room chairs that my guests and I can sit on for many hours discussing our hopes and dreams, laughing until we cry or crying until we laugh. This is how people connect. There is no way to have a good relationship with others if you cannot spend the hours together talking around the table.

The perfect Couch

Here is my idea of the perfect couch:

- Long enough and wide enough that I can sleep on it for an afternoon or all night if I have to. It should be large enough to function as a guest bed.
- Long and wide enough that 3 people can watch movies all night or a full day of football in total comfort.
- It has a tall back so you can fall asleep sitting up with your head back and you will not get a sore neck.
- It is made out of material that will not stain if you spill food or drink on.
- It is not so expensive that you are afraid to use it.
- Two people can make out on in without hurting themselves.
- Comfortable for those times you are sick and need to be on the couch in front of the TV until you feel well.

The most important chair in the house

I especially want an extremely comfortable chair for me. The best type of a chair for men is a recliner. There is just no comparison. A chair with a footrest is too awkward. There is nothing as good as just a recliner that you love.

Having your own super comfortable chair, in your own house is the first step in having a good life. I have a chair like this where I read, write on my laptop computer, surf the internet, watch TV, nap and spend most of my sitting time in my house.

Your Bedroom

Your bedroom should be set up for restful sleep instead of trying to look like a magazine advertisement. Having all those extra pillows for show is one of the most ridiculous ideas ever. You just need the amount of pillows that is right for sleeping or for whatever you are doing in bed.

Closets

Your closets should store your things efficiently and be arranged neatly in a manner that makes sense so you can grab what you need in an instant instead of rummaging endlessly through them. Having a well organized closet is one of the best ways to stay organized and to feel good about your home.

You may have your house picked up and neat looking when guests come over, but your closets tell the real story of how organized a person you really are.

Do you grab your guest's coats as they walk in and put them on your bed even if there are only a few people coming over? Then you probably have an overstuffed closet that you don't want people to see.

I can understand if there are many people and many coats not having room. But you should have enough room in one closet near the front door for 3 or 4 coats from your guests.

Closets work best when there is some excess room in them. Closets are really no different than any other room in your house. You don't want so much stuff in them. You don't want your rooms stuffed, do you?

Why would you want your closets stuffed?

One of the best inventions for homes has been the closet systems. The melamine particle board and wire shelving is really nice. If you have the money, California Closets has a fantastic product for any organized closet.

My wife and I put a California Closet system in the master bedroom closet of our first home and it really helped. The salesperson came to our house, measured the closet and drew up a plan right in front of us. It was quite impressive. We ordered the system and a professional installer put it in within about a week after we ordered it. The closet system was not cheap but for our little, old house with small closets it helped us a lot to have an organized closet in our master bedroom.

I have installed a lot of the wire type closet inserts over the years both in our first house and second house. I am fairly handy, but not a carpenter so I would think that a lot of people could install these systems themselves.

These are a huge improvement over the single wood pole with shelf over it. That system only works if you have lots of closets and are continually throwing out. This is the closet system I have now, by the way.

This works because I am in a 2 bedroom apartment. The kids only keep a few clothes here. My bedroom has 2 huge closets, the second bedroom has 2 large closets and there is a front hall closet. I also am continually throwing clothes out.

It should be obvious to keep all the like items together. I have my clothes hanging in the closet in this order starting from the far left:

- Work pants.
- Work shirts. Short sleeves first in summer, long sleeves first in winter.
- Casual shirts next. Again, short sleeves first in summer.
- Sweatshirts and sweaters.
- Nice T-shirts.
- Jeans.

Shoes are on the floor.

I have my white T-shirts and boxer shorts on the shelf above. I also keep my stocked travel kit on this shelf.

Socks are kept in a medium sized dresser.

I keep workout clothes, shorts, casual, T-shirts, and lounge wear in the hall closet. This closet is big enough to also hold all the sheets, pillowcases and also extra toiletries and other things like that.

My front closet holds all my coats, hats, gloves, suitcases, boots, umbrella, workout bag, beach bag, ironing board, iron, some balls, Christmas tree and decorations, a few bins filled with information and cardboard boxes from my latest electronics.

This closet isn't even that big. I also have plenty of room for at least another 8 -10 coats for guests.

I have some nails in the walls to hold my hats. Never be afraid of customizing your closet to hold things in a way that makes sense and make it a well organized closet.

Be Early

What is an easy first step to organizing? Be early.

There is very little wrong with being early. Being early always seems to help. Sure, there may be times when you are too early, but being a lot early is better than being a little late.

We were a little late to my son's first roller hockey game the other day. He is playing in an adult league and was a little nervous. He was the last guy out on the floor and did not have a chance to get to know the other players and even get his water bottle on the bench.

I really like to be early for these types of things to make sure everything goes smoothly. When you are late that's when things fall apart.

You will have a very hard time trying to be early when you are dealing with people who are not.

One morning I was leaving on a 3 day trip. I wanted to pick up my kids at my ex-wife's house at 7:00 a.m., drive 100 miles to my parents house to get there by 9:00 a.m. and then the five of us were going to northern Wisconsin.

Leaving at 7:00 a.m. will make it possible to be up north by late afternoon so that we can see some of the sights.

Leaving later will make that idea not possible.

My ex called a little before 7 to say that the kids were still sleeping and were tired and could I wait until 8:00 a.m. to leave.

Do you see where I'm going? My ex is not an early person and thinks nothing of making me wait. She wakes up the kids early for school, for church, for her family, just not their father.

This is nothing new to me. She made me wait for our entire marriage. That is what I am getting at. I have to make allowances for her behavior. I have to wait whenever I interact with her. You know what I'm talking about, don't you.

This is a very good lesson for me. It shows me that organizing something with my kids that involve picking them up at a certain time will be a disaster. It shows me that organizing a trip that involves catching a plane, train or boat at a certain time will involve a huge amount of stress on my part.

This is stress that I don't need.

I probably will not be able to plan such a trip with them. Since I love to travel and would love to take them sometime, this makes me very sad. I will have to just get over it. She will make life miserable if I push to get the kids up and get going.

This lesson is so important to you. Just because you want to get going early will not mean others do.

Organizing your life and being early is a private matter and you will really have to be tough about it when dealing with others. You have to pick your battles when dealing with people who are chronically late.

If you manage people, there will be people who cannot be early or even be on time getting to work. Under the best of situations those people have to be fired. What happens most of the time is that those people have to have allowances made to them. The organizing will have to be done in spite of them.

Don't be those people who are late.

One of the easiest ways to deal with people who are chronically late is to avoid them. People who make you late add to your stress. If you are an early type of person you will really not enjoy dealing with people who are normally late in everything they do.

There is no way that it won't affect your relationship. You will have to use judgment here. Sometimes you will have friends and family who are not terribly late but more what I call just on time types.

Just on time types like to squeeze time so that they are not early. They don't like to be early so they have to wait around. This is different than late people who just are late to pretty much everything they do.

If the value the just on time people add to your life outweigh the annoyance of just on time slipping into a little late then you will have to be a little flexible.

I have a really good friend who is a just on time type. He likes to get the most out of his time and doesn't like to wait around being early. He adds so much value to my life that I choose to enjoy his way of seeing time while I am with him. Since we don't spend that much time together it doesn't bother me. I choose to slow down my way of being early when I am with him. We just have so much fun. There is nothing wrong with relaxing your standards on being early when it makes sense to do so.

That being said, if you need to relax your standards continually and are always frustrated with someone because of them being late then you will have to make the hard choices.

You could have a discussion with that person and honestly tell them how you feel. If your spouse is a late person and you are an early person then it will really bother you. You need to tell your spouse how you feel about their behavior. If your spouse adds a lot of value to your life then you will have to decide if you can live with the lateness.

I did not leave my wife because she was late and I was always organizing. I left for other much more serious reasons. It's just that the lateness did not help. It was just one more thing that she did that was not compatible with the way I wanted to live my life. I liked to be organizing and planning things.

Of course, people will say that I am selfish. That I should just deal with her lateness and take it like a man. I should just make allowances to her. I should force her to be early. I should trick her into being early.

I tried all that. I worked with her. I encouraged her. I did my organizing around her. I tried to motivate her. I reasoned and explained. I yelled and screamed. Nothing worked. She just could not be early.

Now that I have left she is on time or early for whatever she wants to do. I guess it comes down to the fact that she really didn't want to do things that I liked. She did not care to add value to my life. Being late was just one more way that she would add stress to my life and add to my suffering.

Being chronically late is a way of controlling people. Maybe I am being too sensitive and reading too much into being late, but it is possible, isn't it? After all, she knew that organizing things was important to me.

Keeping Things Short

One of my favorite efficiency ideas is to keep things short. Here is a list of the things that I think are better when they are short:

- The checkout line at the store.
- The wait at the restaurant.
- The church service. Nine times out of ten, when you overhear someone they will be commenting on the length of the service. Most people can stand about an hour service, any more than that is too long.
- A wedding ceremony. The best wedding I ever attended was 10 minutes long. The worst was two hours.
- Commercials. You're enjoying the game or a good show and the commercials always screw up your enjoyment.
- Your kid's events. All the sporting events, practices, musicals, plays are nice as long as they are kept short.
- Any ball game.
- The amount of research you need to do for a project. Is there anything more demoralizing than having to read an enormous, bulky report? Wouldn't you rather just need to read a few pages? Finding ways to get your work done faster will really help your career as well as have you become known as an efficiency expert.
- The amount of work you need to do for a project.
- Songs. There are only a few good long songs, why? Because people prefer short songs.
- Books. Most good books are short and to the point. Long books are ok but aren't read that much.

- Time with people you don't really want to spend time with.
- Time at a job you're only working at for the money. This means most jobs. People who work a lot are usually just doing it for the money.
- Exercise. Exercise is great for you but most people are always looking for ways to minimize the time spent.

I mean, after looking at that list can you honestly say that any of those items are better when they are longer? The most organized things take the shortest amount of time.

When I am searching the web for information I am usually looking for something or some article that I can print out on paper and it fits on 1 to 5 pages. Any longer than that and I will forget about printing it out.

I like to have these short articles to fold up and put in my pocket to read when I have a few minutes like on the toilet. I don't want a big, bulky stack of paper in my pocket. I want something small and easy to carry and easy to read.

I want all aspects of my life to be easier. I want to become even more of an efficiency expert.

Some people think that the longer something is the better it is. Not me. I am always looking for a way to condense.

I keep my letters to one page. I keep my reports for work as brief as possible. I limit the number of pages of my plans in my engineering job. It is a struggle when you are working with others. They will want the report to be longer and the plans to have more sheets. You will have to stick to your guns and get your way as the efficiency expert.

Minimize Have To's

One of the best ways to simplify your life and have more time is to minimize the things you think you have to do. There is very little in life you really have to do. So many people spend so much of their lives on things and activities they think they have to do. Here is a list of things I thought I had to do and what is normally thought of by others as have to do items:

- Go to Church every week.
- Working overtime.
- Getting married.
- Having kids.
- Going to every single one of your kid's activities.
- Volunteering.
- Adult activities like bowling or volleyball leagues.
- Going to every family gathering.
- Watching every second of every sporting event.
- Watching all of the most popular TV shows.
- Staying married to someone who is no good for you.

All these things can be enjoyable for you if you want to do them. If you don't want to do them then they will take all your time and your life will be gone and you will have spent it doing things you didn't want to do. If you are serious about making more time for yourself then one of the best ways is cut out some or all the things you think you have to do.

Never Sacrifice

Another way to simplify your life is to consider getting rid of is the idea of sacrificing for others. You should do things for your own sense of pride and for yourself. Doing anything just for others is just wrong.

I don't take care of my kids because I feel like I should sacrifice for them. I take care of them because I want to.

I didn't play high school football for my teammates or coaches. I played because I wanted to and I had a lot of pride to try to do well.

I don't work overtime as a sacrifice to the company. I do that to get the work done because I have pride in getting it done and mostly for the money.

I would like to strike the word sacrifice from our vocabulary. It's a bad word. When people tell you that you need to sacrifice, run away from them. They are just using guilt to get you to do something for them. Your life will be so much better if you never sacrifice anything.

Occasionally, there will be times when you are inconvenienced, but that is hardly a sacrifice if the things that are inconveniencing you are something that you want to do. For example:

- Doing things for your spouse.
- Doing things for your kids.
- Doing things for your family.
- Doing things for your friends.

You will find that you have really begun to simplify your life once you stop thinking you need to sacrifice and stop doing things you feel like you have to do.

Not

Begin to make your life simpler and organize your life by reading this list of some of the stupidest things you do can that start with the word NOT:

- NOT stopping earlier to use the rest room.
- NOT knowing what time it is.
- NOT bringing any money.
- Not bringing enough money.
- NOT keeping your keys in the same place.
- NOT knowing where the restrooms are.
- NOT having extra toilet paper.
- NOT taking notes at the meeting with your boss.
- NOT getting the work done by the deadline.
- NOT knowing when the work is due.
- NOT paying on time.

- NOT remembering important dates.
- NOT stopping for gas.
- NOT reading the instructions.
- NOT being prepared for the job interview.
- NOT getting to bed on time.
- NOT setting the alarm clock.
- NOT leaving enough time to get there.
- NOT replacing the last one.
- NOT making plans.
- NOT exercising.
- NOT stopping eating when you are full.
- NOT stopping drinking when you've had enough.
- NOT stopping smoking.
- NOT getting directions.
- NOT fully understanding what you are supposed to do.
- NOT asking questions.
- NOT doing what you want to do.
- NOT getting her number.
- NOT having fun.
- NOT talking to her.
- NOT getting out of a bad relationship.

- NOT quitting a bad job.
- NOT telling someone how you feel.
- NOT speaking up.
- NOT trying to find something by not looking for it. You may need to get on your hands and knees and look. You have to look for it where you dropped it. You may have to look everywhere. You may have to move everything. You may need to expand massive energy to find it, especially if you are helping a disorganized person.
- NOT keeping your wallet in your pocket. One day I was at my local Wal-Mart with my daughter. We were in line to get some gum (she loves gum). The guy in front of us had a baby in the shopping cart and another young child. The clerk had scanned a lot of his stuff already, stuff like diapers, food, baby stuff and other house supplies. The clerk was on his last item or so when he told her that he left his wallet in the car! Can you believe that? Here was a grown man, with two kids, probably mid 30's and he doesn't keep his wallet in his pants pocket. To me that was a classic example of a disorganized man. What would he be thinking about when he was going into a store to buy things? Why wouldn't he have his wallet in his pocket when he leaves the house? Why would anyone keep their wallet in the car except in special circumstances?

Get it How You Want It

What I mean by get it how you want it is to be working on your life, your house, your desk, your relationships and your whatever in enough detail and in enough concentration to get it how you want it.

I have my apartment set up how I want it. When it gets changed around for whatever reason it is a simple matter to get it back how I want it. I have it set up for me most of the time. So, get it how you want it and make how you want it simple to maintain.

If how you want it takes hours of time to get then that's too much.

You don't have things set up simply enough. Simplify your house so after you have guests it doesn't take more than a half hour to get your house back how you like it for yourself.

What will happen to your life is that when your guests leave and you need to spend hours getting your house set back up how you want it, you will think twice about having people over.

If the work involved in cleaning up and getting it back how you want it is more painful than the enjoyment of having people over, then you will be reluctant to have people over. And that's a shame.

Life is more than just keeping a neat house. You want a neat house and you want people over. Do both by making the getting it how you want it and it is the best way known on how to stay organized.

Pick Up and Put Away

Life is so much easier and better when you just put in the tiny extra effort needed to pick up or put things back where they belong before you stop doing whatever it is you were doing.

- 1) Roll up your car windows so that rain or moisture does not get inside. I know you want to get a little fresh air in the car so it is not so hot, but the

car will cool down as soon as you start driving. Forgetting to put your windows up in the rain will really make your car a mess.

- 2) Pick up and put away your outdoor equipment like lawn mowers and metal tools when you are finished so that they do not get wet, rusty or stolen. These types of tools and equipment are really expensive. Why would you want to re-buy these things?
- 3) Straighten out your desk so that you can work more productively. I try to straighten out my desk every night before I go home. If I ever find myself not making any progress at work, it is usually because I have too much stuff out.
- 4) Put away the clean dishes so you have room to prepare your next meal or the dishwasher is open for the next set of dirty dishes. It is funny, but even clean dishes make your kitchen look dirty.
- 5) Put away your clean clothes so your bedroom looks nice and neat.
- 6) Keep your house picked up so you are not embarrassed if someone stops by. I like to have it neat for myself, but the side benefit is that someone could stop by anytime and I would not be ashamed.

All types of things like this do not really take that much time or are not that hard. Some people just want to stop doing what they are doing and relax or they think it is so much work to do the extra. But if you think about it, if your car interior gets wet that is really bad. If your shovel gets rusty, now you need a new shovel. If your lawn mower gets stolen, that is expensive. It is so much more relaxing to have things done.

Do It Yourself

Staying organized is so much easier if you can find a way to do as much as you can by yourself. Life is so much more difficult when you rely on others.

A better way is to be mostly concerned with what you can do to improve your own situation rather than having to convince lots of other people to help you.

The key to staying organized is to set up your life in such a manner that you need very little help with anything from anyone.

This is such a simple shift, but so difficult for most people to realize.

Most everything we do is overly complicated and dependent on others.

If you can just start moving away from that mindset to one of what you can do for yourself, your life will become far easier.

Let's look at some times when you are usually counting on others and how by changing things somewhat you do not need others.

- Moving. Normally you will call a bunch of friends and family to help you. What if they cannot make it? What if they are too old, too sick, too frail or too busy to help? A better way is to hire moving men to do this and move as much as possible yourself. Minimize the size of your furniture. Toss out as much as possible. Reduce your possessions.
- Doing any type job where you have to work with a partner or a helper or assistant. Working with someone all day, every day would just drive me insane. I am just not interested at all with putting up with someone else's idiosyncrasies and problems. I am not interested in spilling my guts to someone at work.
- Doing work that involves others. My job depends on CAD operators. This part of the job is frustrating to no end. If I could just do a little CAD work myself my job would be so much easier.
- Depending on your spouse for financial support. Depending on your spouse for anything.
- Operating a business that depends on having very capable people working at peak efficiency all the time. A better business model is one in which almost anyone can do the work without needing to work that hard or be really bright.
- Being in an industry that is highly regulated. You are then dependent on the regulators.
- Being in a business that relies on complex, expensive machines that need really capable operators. A better model is to have machines that are easy to maintain and can be easily run by anyone.
- Insisting that others agree with you.
- Looking outside of you for answers.
- Looking to leaders to tell you what to do. This is huge. It is a far better way to live to count on yourself for staying organized and doing what you want with your life.

- It is better to hire somebody to help with things once in awhile rather have employees permanently.
- The type of major in college would be one that is naturally suited to being an independent contractor.

Let's face it; people will always let you down. Counting on others is a mistake. It will be great if they help you, but set things up so that you can do as much as possible without their help. Staying organized is easier if you just concentrate on what you can do.

What an Organized Man Has and Does

Here are some of the things an organized has and does:

- An organized man wears the right shoes for any occasion.
- An organized man carries cash always. Sure you can have credit cards for convenience. But it is hard to beat the feeling of having a few hundred dollars in your pocket.
- An organized man knows where the restrooms are. He lets the people he is with their location also.
- An organized man is informed about the basics of any situation. Where to park and where the car is after the event is over. What hospital room the patient is in and what to bring. How much cash is available to buy something? How much credit is available? When the bills are due? When are the birthdays and other events?
- An organized man keeps everything in its place, especially your man things like tools, files, bills, books, records, computer files and your clothes.
- An organized man gives gift cards or cash as gifts unless he knows exactly what the person wants. My kids tell me exactly what they want for birthdays and Christmas. They are not shy about telling me what they want. It is very difficult to get a gift for someone unless you know them very well. I have received a lot of nice gifts over the years but have struggled to use things that I really didn't want.

- An organized man has a 4 wheel drive SUV, truck or all wheel drive car if he lives in a climate that gets snow every year or if there is any chance of needing that type of vehicle. I think people buy these types of vehicles for the safety and security rather than the status of having one. Being able to get where you need to go gives a person a powerful feeling of safety and security.
- An organized man is punctual. Can you be considered organized if you are consistently late?
- An organized man is a thrower. Throwing out excess stuff is the best way to be organized.
- An organized man is not a perfectionist. Perfectionists never get anything done.
- An organized man will get right at something. Procrastination never helps.
- An organized man will be a quitter. Being ready to quit something that is not right for you or that is bad for you is a good quality.
- An organized man is not afraid of work. Organizing involves some work.
- An organized man cares about time. Time is your most valuable resource. If you squander it, you are squandering your life

Cleaning Up the Easy Way by Doing Things Outside

I just spent 5 minutes cleaning up the bathroom sink area after I trimmed my mustache and beard. There were small hairs everywhere. I did it inside today because it's really getting cold out. I had been doing that chore once a week outside since last spring. It's really a time saver if you trim your beard outside, there's no mess. I also cut my fingernails and toenails outside too.

I learned this trick as a kid. My mom would cut our hair outside as much as the weather would allow. There is nothing to clean up except sweeping the deck. You could let the wind take care of this.

Another good idea is to eat outside when you have a lot of people over. That way the spills and mess happen outside and you will have less to clean inside.

The Problem of Saving Good Things for Later

I used to be the person who would save good things for later. I'd wear my old clothes while saving my good clothes for later. I'd do what I didn't want now and do what I want later. You know what? Later never comes. Somewhere down the line I made the switch to not waiting for later. I started wearing my favorite clothes now. I started doing things I wanted to do now. My life improved immediately.

I remember my freshmen year of college. It was still warm when school started, so you could still wear shorts. I had 3 or 4 pairs of nice shorts and 1 pair of shorts that were somewhat strange. I mostly wore the strange pair.

I was so intent on saving my good ones that I only wore my strange ones. I was a freshman in college away from home for the first time trying to make a good impression and I was wearing clothes that made me look like a goof ball.

I was saving my good shorts so I would have them to look good and in the meanwhile I was looking stupid. I wish I could go back and throw the strange shorts out. That is what I do now. I get rid of clothes that make me look bad.

I really do not know why I thought that way. I am not sure where that idea comes from, but I have it and have to always work on it. If you are going to have good stuff, why not use it? What are you saving your good things for?

Obviously, if you have an expensive suit that you only wear for weddings, funerals and job interviews, I would say to save it for those occasions. I am talking about normal day to day life. Wear your best jeans when you go out at night. Wear your good clothes to work. The easiest way to ensure you only use

your good stuff is to get rid of the bad and worthless and old things that are not suitable anymore.

This is the something new comes in, something old goes out rule. Now, whenever I get something new and that I really like I will get rid of something in its place. I want to use the best things that I have.

Your life now is the most important thing. Use your good things now. Enjoy your life now. Throw out the bad stuff that is broken, that doesn't work, that is extra and that looks bad on you.

Weekends are for fun

One of the most important things you will do is to organize your week so that you have the majority of the weekend for doing the things you want to do. Even if you have free time during the week because of your work, school or business schedule, most of the most interesting and fun things happen on the weekends, especially Saturday. If you work at all on the weekends you will really need to do more of your everyday chores during the week so that you can make the most of your weekends.

My thoughts on this are to do the majority of your chores and errands during the week, during non-fun times like Monday through Wednesday. Those are the days to spend cleaning, doing chores and errands.

You will end up doing some of those things during the weekend, I do also. But I try to keep it to a minimum and make it more fun. If I need to run an errand, I will stop for a coffee at the coffee shop. If I need to shop, I'll get something I really want. If I go grocery shopping I will get food for a really great meal or some alcohol for a party.

The point is that for part of my life I used the weekends for work, hard work. In college I studied most weekends, only going out for some drinks later on Friday and Saturday nights. I only went to one college football game, one college

basketball game, four movies, no plays, no fishing, a little deer hunting, no skiing, one date and not much of anything else.

I did have a lot of great weekends after college and before I got married. I went out a lot with my friends. They would come to my house in Milwaukee or I'd go to their house in Eau Claire, Madison or Appleton. Sometimes we'd meet in our hometown while visiting our parents. I mostly enjoyed the going out. Looking back I probably could have enjoyed the weekends more. I would always be trying to do some chores, or feel guilty if I wasn't being productive. I never enjoyed Sundays that much either. It was always a blah day, since I had to work the next day. I really should have made Sundays more fun for myself. I guess a lot of the Sundays I was tired from going out. I may have been driving back from a friend's house. Now I will try to do fun on Sunday like:

- Reading.
- Watching a movie.
- Watching something good on TV.
- Going to the bookstore.
- Going to the Mall.
- Going out to eat.
- Visiting my parents.
- Shopping for something I really want.
- Swimming.
- Fishing.
- Hunting.
- Skiing.
- Hiking.
- Napping.
- Drinking.
- Tanning.
- Going on a date with a girl.
- Going to some event.

- Doing something fun with the kids.
- Cooking a fantastic meal.
- Doing some chores so I have more time for fun during the upcoming week.
- Doing some chores because I have a trip soon.
- Doing some chores because I was really busy having fun the last number of days.
- Doing some chores because I was working a lot lately.

When I was married my wife would have me working around the house most of the weekend. My only fun was collapsing for a well deserved nap before getting up to work more.

I guess I try to have more fun now to make up for lost time. I still fall back into that working mode. It's important that I get the majority of the normal things done during the week, so I don't have an excuse to not have fun.

Ideally I would get everything done on Tuesday and Wednesday, making the weekend start on Thursday and saving Monday to catch up on my rest.

Time

I use being organized and living in an uncluttered way as a means of opening up large blocks of time for life, for living. Having things done and done early will enable you to create these large blocks of time. If you have been living in a way where you haven't had large blocks of free time it will seem strange to you. You may not know what to do with your time. Sometimes you won't have anything to do with those large blocks of time. When you get to the point when your life is well-organized and you have those large blocks of time, then what?

That's where your goals come in. That's where having inexpensive fun ideas comes in. That's where having money set aside for fun comes in.

I want to have large blocks of free time during the week and the weekend. The only way to do that is to take care of your normal ordinary day to day chores and activities as quickly and efficiently as possible.

These ideas will work throughout your life. They work for kids in high school, college, young singles, married people, and divorced people and for the seniors. In fact, if you are not good at being organized when you are an elderly person your life will be unbelievably difficult. The elderly struggle with the simple things. If you are organized in your later years you can still accomplish a lot.

There is only so much time in a day. Therefore, in order to enjoy your life and do the things you want to do you will have to make choices to do and not do some things. It is very easy to surf the net and discover all kinds of different pastimes that you would like to try. The internet and library and bookstores all filled with reading material about all kinds of options for you to think about. It can be very easy to be caught up in the excitement of new activities and hobbies to get involved in.

A big activity that you will feel like you need to get involved in is an extensive exercise program. After all, who doesn't want to be in great shape? Well, that is exactly what I mean. The fitness books and health clubs will try to convince you that you just need to commit to an exercise program of only an hour a day, every day and a much stricter diet.

Of course, some people do this and live this way. For some people this just cannot be done. I like to work out too. It's just that I don't feel the need to go at it in the way they describe. I do it in a way that I can handle. To me, that is a better way. If I lift weights once a week or even every other week I still feel good about it. It is more than I used to do. If I only walk on the treadmill for 8 minutes once a week, that is more than I used to do.

I choose to feel good about it. I am exercising some and I feel better. I am doing it my way. I refuse to be coerced into exercising in a manner that is not for me. I am 46 years old. I am not a high school kid in a sport being commanded by

a coach. It's far better to do everything in your life in a way that makes sense to you and that you can do.

If you want to get in great shape, go ahead. You will see that it will take a lot of time and effort, but you can do that if you want to. If you want to follow someone's program or a trainer, go ahead. If you want to only workout on weekends, go ahead. I am all for exercising, but in a way that makes sense for each person at each time in his life.

The information I am going to share with you is guaranteed to make your life better because it will save you time. With extra time you will be free to pursue whatever goals, dreams and desires you want. Without extra time you can have all the goals, dreams and desires, but you won't be able to work toward those things because you won't have the time. Do you read me? Time is what is needed to do the things you want to do:

- Time for the projects.
- Time for the traveling.
- Time for working out.
- Time to meet new people.
- Time to reconnect with others.
- Time to read.
- Time for entertainment.
- Time to entertain.
- Time for your dream business.
- Time for whatever.

Time, it's one of the most beautiful words in the English language. It is a short, elegant word that everyone understands. We all have the same amount in a day. Once you start freeing up time, you can then use that time for whatever it is you want.

Obviously, what you want and need will change throughout your life. I know that what I wanted at 25 wasn't what I wanted at 35. But now that I am 45, I find myself wanting again what I wanted at 25. So who knows?

Self Help Advice

Self-help is full of advice that has to do with all kinds of extra work. I prefer to eliminate as much extra work as possible to make my life easier and more satisfying. I like to live life at a relaxed pace so that I have reserves for when it is needed. I also prefer to do things in a way that makes sense.

Elimination is the best and easiest way to accomplish what you want.

My marriage was taking a toll on me. Once I left my wife, all the time consuming things she put me through were eliminated. No more arguing. No more fighting. No more worrying and wondering what she would say and if she was going to be upset. No more being afraid to talk to her. No more time spent explaining everything I did.

Being married to a woman who criticizes everything you do, nags at you constantly and never has a good thing to say to you will cause you no end of problems. She will find all kinds of ways to waste your time. In fact, a bad wife is the biggest time waster ever! Not only is that time wasted but your life span is shortened.

Since I have left my wife I have had time to:

- Lift weights.
- Start a business.
- Write 5 books.
- Gone out on the town a few times a month.
- Coached my son's hockey team.
- Read dozens of books.
- Watched dozens of movies.
- Made plans for the rest of my life.
- Gotten a good night's sleep every night since I left.
- Lost 10 pounds.
- Hiked in natural areas.

- Gotten back in touch with my sister and brother.
- Have a better relationship with my parents.
- Have a better relationship with my friends.
- Have a better relationship with my kids. In fact, I would say that me leaving has helped my kids even more than I thought it would help me.

It's not easy leaving your wife. There is so much wrapped up in it. If you choose to stay, stay for you. Don't stay because you think you are obligated to stay married. If it is bad, leave. You cannot stay for the kids, for her, for her family, for your family, for your friends, for your church, for money. Only stay for you. If you are miserable, leave.

My goal is to keep improving my efficiency of my normal everyday routines and chores so that I have more time for the things I really want to do such as:

- Taking naps when needed.
- Reading novels
- Reading interesting books, eBooks, magazines, articles, newspapers
- Thinking about and planning my goals
- Making good meals
- Playing with my kids
- Taking my kids to interesting places
- Traveling
- Going out to eat
- Visiting my parents and family
- Spending time with friends
- Going out at night to festivals, bars and nightclubs
- Meeting new people
- Going on dates with girls
- Keeping up on sports
- Watching the Green Bay Packers and other NFL games
- Watching movies
- Watching funny shows on TV

- Fishing
- Hunting
- Golfing
- Skiing
- Surfing the web.

I think that some of the self-help ideas proposed are weird. It seems that once a person starts writing these types of things they think their ideas are the only ones that make sense. I have read a lot of articles and books on the subject. I try to find insights that help me personally, rather than just following exactly what someone says.

Sometimes self-help people are so much into what they are saying that they cannot believe that there are other ways of thinking about things. Like getting enough sleep at night. I get tired of hearing how you need less sleep. If I don't get enough sleep I feel it. If I'm going to stay up late it is for a good reason, not doing chores and everyday things.

For example, if a person becomes a vegetarian and find that they have more energy and feel better, they may start insisting that everyone become a vegetarian. I don't mind hearing about their experiences and how they did it. I may use their ideas and their recipes. I just do not want to be told that it is the only way and that I am wrong. I like vegetable's, I eat them almost every day. I eat meat. I love to eat meat; I have it almost every day. I don't think I'd ever become a vegetarian, but who knows?

A big one in the productivity area is the idea of working really hard all the time, getting very little sleep and avoiding fun. That lifestyle might be right for some people, but it isn't right for others, like me. I can use some of those techniques at times, but those ideas only work for me some of the time. I can work very hard at times. I can get by on very little sleep at times. I can avoid fun at times and just work. I have done all those things and probably will do them as needed. I just don't want to make it my lifestyle.

I just want to lead my own life, in a way that suits me. I present my ideas in a relaxed way. You can take them, leave them, use them, modify them, come up with your own ideas or find ideas from someone else.

This information is not meant as a how to live your life manual. It is meant as a here are some ideas. Try them, they will free up a lot of your time and make your life better. Some of them may not work for you now. Some of the ideas may work for you later in your life. All I know is that they work for me and they work for others. My way is just based on simplifying things first, foremost and always.

All this is just meant as a way to prod you into doing enough work and expending enough energy on the front end to make your life better now and much better later, as you get better at it. After all, if your life doesn't improve after working at something with the idea of improving your life, wouldn't that have been a waste of time? Doing this organizing work is guaranteed to help your life. After you clean out your closet of clothes that make you look bad, at least when you get dressed you will look your best.

All the self-help advice and good ideas you learn about are useless without having the time to work on them. You really need to get organized first. Create the free time and then you will have the time to decide what you want to do. Organizing yourself comes first. Once you start getting organized you will not want to stop. You will develop your own methods to free up your time in ways that work for you. My ideas will be there, they work, they have always worked and they will continue to work. As you develop yourself, you will find different opportunities coming your way. If you keep being organized you will have the time to take those opportunities as they come up. If your life is a chaotic mess, taking advantage of opportunities will be impossible.

I just get turned off reading about how I have to change my entire life in order to get ahead. Obviously, some changes are needed in order to get better results, but does that mean that everything a person does is wrong and has to be changed? I don't think so.

I think massive changes may be needed in certain circumstances. When I left my wife that was a massive change. I completely changed from being a husband to not being a husband, but it didn't change who I was.

The decision to leave was probably made months before I actually left but I was not able to bring myself to leave until the time was right. It turned out that when I left was a disaster but I have survived and now that part is over.

It seems that the advice you are given is always assuming from the author's perspective that you will do exactly as they say and that you have unlimited time, energy, money and desire to do those things? Isn't that totally unrealistic? Doesn't everyone see that? Don't you want to do what you want to do?

I get so frustrated by the experts who demand that you do things their way to see their results. It seems that their ways only work for them. How many times have you seen the diet books who ridicule you for not eating the proper way? Maybe the person writing the article or book eat that way and are not tempted, but how many people can? The amount of great food is staggering. There is so much available and it is getting better and better tasting.

I think most people enjoy eating whatever they like. They just need some guidance in order to remain somewhat under control and maintain basic health and fitness. I don't want to work out every day. I don't want to be watching what I eat at every meal.

Those books have been written by people who do those things and they will try to convince you to just do exactly as they do and you will get their results. It just is wrong. I don't want to do things exactly as someone else would do things; I want to do what I want to do. I do want to obtain information that will help me, but not information that I have to follow to the letter.

That's how I prefer things to be. My ideas for organizing are just my ideas. You can use them a lot or a little and they will help you. They don't involve huge amounts of self-discipline and changing yourself. They are just simple ways to free up your time.

These methods won't make you rich. They will give you extra time to try to get rich.

These methods won't get you in shape. They will give you extra time to work on getting in shape.

These methods won't attract your dream mate. They will give you extra time to work on attracting your dream mate.

These methods will give you the extra time that you need in order to go after what you really want. The most important element of life is time.

Part of the reason I am writing this book is because a lot of the advice you get on getting organized and getting things done I cannot agree with. They will say to work harder, get up earlier, stay up later, work faster and on and on. My methods have nothing to do with that. I work hard as needed. Sometimes I barely work at all. I get up early for work or for something fun. But I go to bed early; I still want the right amount of sleep. I'll take a nap if I'm tired. I will stay up late for fun things like reading an exciting book, watching a good movie, seeing an important event on TV, being out on the town or even working if I really want to. I don't stay up late to get normal stuff done.

If you are a hard driving person, more power to you. I am a laid back type of person. I really want to accomplish a lot but I want my life to be balanced. I think my ideas work for a lot of people because they don't depend on putting out super-human efforts all the time.

Freedom is not struggle

My way of looking at organizing is just a way of getting the freedom that I desire. My whole life has been about obtaining freedom. In carving out slices of freedom every day by getting more free time I have succeeded. All my methods have worked for me. You can use some of my methods to immediately get some free time for yourself. You don't even have to change yourself. In fact trying to change you takes a lot of time. It is less time consuming to accept yourself as you are. Just add some of these ideas to get a lot more free time. You may want to use the free time to improve yourself, or you may not. At that point the choice will be yours. If you can't create any free time for yourself, you won't have any choices to make. Your life will be the way it is.

Life was not meant to be a struggle. Maybe you think struggling is noble. Maybe you think you were meant to struggle. I think that idea is totally wrong. I used to think that way too. I was way off base. After a lifetime spent struggling, I am getting to the point of acceptance of myself and not struggling.

I struggled in grade school, high school, college, and working and in marriage. I struggled with my weight, struggled academically in college, struggled socially with friends, struggled with girls and struggled on the job. It's funny and sad at the same time. I have to learn to accept myself too. I have to remind myself not to struggle. It is so easy to go on-line and see all the opportunities to improve yourself. There are ways to lose weight, gain muscular weight, get whiter teeth, have better breath, dress better, have a better car, make more money, be healthier, be more attractive and on and on. There is no end to it. I actually enjoy reading this type of thing.

There are a number of areas I'd like to improve on. But it always goes back to having the time to do those things. And you will not have the time unless you can get the normal everyday things to not take much time.

Stop Doing Things That Are Hurtful to Yourself

Certain things just jump out at me as people who do not value themselves. Things like:

- Buying very tiny cars. It seems the person doesn't value their own safety at all. How can you honestly think you can survive an accident in a tiny car? How can you really do anything in those tiny cars?
- Doing what others tell them to do. Continually being told what to do is so degrading and dehumanizing.
- Being willing to do whatever. This goes with being told what to do. I am hardly ever willing to do whatever. I only want to do what I want to do.
- Believing in groups. I have no faith whatsoever in groups. Religious groups, political groups, associations or committees. I believe in what I can do. I am never interested in having to do what others tell me to do.

I know because I did all these things. I did them because I did not value myself. I bought small, cheap cars because I wanted to save money on the car and the gas. I did what others told me to do even when I knew it was wrong for me. I was willing to do whatever I was told to do. I believed in groups, especially government.

But now I see it differently. I believe in myself. I believe in watching out for my own safety. And part of that means I want a larger, safer car. I believe in my own health. And that means I guard my time and get my rest and make my own decisions on what I should and shouldn't eat. I believe in doing what I know is right for me and ignoring advice, orders and directions from others.

I believe in myself and do not join groups. Groups are just a way to waste my time. And as much time as I have gained with all my organizing, it is still not enough to waste by joining groups.

This Planet

I have been thinking a lot about the people closest to me lately. This includes my kids, parents and best friends. I keep thinking that they are the best people on the planet. To me, my closest people are the best people on the planet to me. There is no comparison.

The planet has over 6 billion people or so on it so this is saying a lot about them. But I really believe it when I say it.

I think if you consider the people you are close to as the best people on the planet you will be happy in your relationships. If you do not consider these people the best then your relationships with them will be bad. If you are always looking outside your circle for examples of great people this is a sign.

This applies to you also. You have to consider yourself to be the best person on the planet to you.

Conclusion

That's the end of this book. Use these ideas to start being the type of dad you can be proud to be. With all the time you will now have your life will be more free than ever. Now you can have the time to do whatever it is that you want.

My website <http://www.personal-development-for-men.com/index.html> has a lot more information on all types of issues that men have to deal with including getting organized. When you are more organized you will have more time to devote to fathering and improving yourself.

About The Author

Hans D. Hallanger is a Civil Engineer, is divorced, the father of 2 children and lives in Southeastern Wisconsin. He uses his free time to spend time with his kids, reading, surfing the internet, lifting weights, walking, traveling, watching the Green Bay Packers, enjoying life, working on his businesses, writing books and doing what he wants to do.

Check out his website at <http://www.personal-development-for-men.com/index.html> for more articles and information on living a rewarding life and creating more time to do whatever it is that you want.