

The Chronic-ness of Disorganization

By Regina F. Lark, Ph.D., CPO, NGLCC certified

Where are my keys? I don't have time! Why am I always late? Is that due now?! Does this sound like you?

In the land of perfect order (wherever that land may be), keys are always nearby, our to-do lists are completed daily, and we are always ahead of our busy schedules. Now, if this sounds like you, then you have probably 'Marie-Kondoed' your home or office to great effect (and admiration).

Here is a quick list of what we need to keep tidy: time; emotional, financial and management skills; the ability to plan, execute, and complete projects; prioritize easily; and not be susceptible to distractions or procrastination. An impossible dream list?!

In my 11-year journey as a professional organizer, I've come to understand that many people have a hard time getting and staying organized. Most organizing books typically don't 'work' for the people who need them the most. In fact, one of the first things we de-clutter when we start our work with a chronically disorganized (CD) client is her many books on how to get organized.

But if you're the one asking the questions similar to those I posed above, I am going to bet that your workplace and homeplace contain clutter or at least feel disorganized, or both. And I imagine that clutter and chaos have been a part of your life for nearly the whole of your life. Being late or

having clutter, or both, is likely having a negative impact on your life. No matter how hard you try, you can't seem to maintain anything that looks like organized space. Hence, the chronic-ness of chronic disorganization.

My CD clients are particularly intellectual. They are successful, creative, talented, and people-oriented, with a broad range of knowledge and a wide range of interests. Many are fun and funny, compassionate, kind, considerate people. My chronically disorganized clients may have been diagnosed with ADHD, and/or depression, and/or other brain-based or neurological conditions. And they likely have a lousy sense of time.

But I do have some ideas about thinking differently about the mess and

clutter. First, if anything here resonates, become more curious about your brain and how you're wired, starting with understanding your relationship with time.

Google "time management for ADHD" even if you don't have ADHD. The tips and strategies are useful to everyone.

Second, if physical clutter is a

problem, hire a professional organizer who is familiar with chronic disorganization. I'm not kidding. It's a thing. De-clutter your entire house then schedule follow-up maintenance appointments until you start getting the hang of it. Third, look at your entire to-do list through the lens of delegation. What must come off of your plate and who else can do it?

Finally, and this is big, consider delegating the "emotional labor" parts of your life. Professional women are beginning to outsource a chunk of the physical labor required to manage a household (laundry and housecleaning services, grocery/meal delivery, etc.), but part of the territory of being a woman (professional or otherwise) has everything to do with the management of that which is not the physical labor of the household such as: grocery lists, pharmacy pick-ups, family birthdays, cupcakes, sympathy cards. The list is endless. Truly. For fun, ask your spouse or partner to list all the things they do around the house. You do the same. Now compare. What can you two agree on that will help even up the lists somewhat?

With some effort, concentration, and the support of a good professional organizer, habits and behaviors associated with CD actually do change. Best advice: focus on what you're good at and/or what you enjoy, then delegate the rest. Your keys are calling!



A Quick Chat with Regina F. Lark



realized this was the work for which I had been searching and started A Clear Path. I became the networking queen, meeting other professional organizers and community members who helped me grow my business.

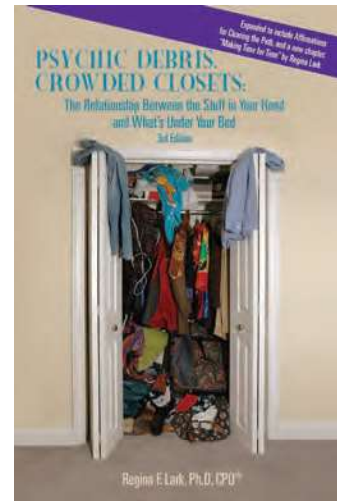
Did you receive any awards? Please list them.

Yes. I became active in NAPO, the National Association of Professional Organizers. I received the 2013 Most Innovative Organizer from NAPO. I also was named by Expertise.com as the Best Home Organizer (top 10 in Los Angeles) for 2017, 2018 and 2019.

What advice would you give a person who wants to open their own business as a professional organizer?

My best advice is this: from the very start, treat your business as a business, not a hobby. You are dealing with people's privacy and lives. Also, take advantage of any/all educational and networking opportunities to help you become a subject-matter expert.

Source: Regina F. Lark, Ph.D., CPO, NGLCC certified



Lark, Ph.D., CPO, and certified professional organizer, is NGLCC (National LGBT Chamber of Commerce) certified and the author of *Psychic Debris, Crowded Closets: The Relationship Between the Stuff in your Head and What's Under Your Bed*.

Why did you want to become a professional organizer?

At the beginning of the 2008 recession, I was laid off from a job that I thought was my "forever profession." During the next couple of months while searching for a job, to pass time, I was de-cluttering the kitchens and garages of friends and family. I even color-coded my roommate's closet! Then I

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