

**3 SURPRISING THINGS
I LEARNED FROM**

**HIRING A
PROFESSIONAL
ORGANIZER**

Do you ever feel like your life has gotten a little too chaotic?

For me, that realization happened a few weeks ago when my kids, rather than wanting to go on vacation for Spring Break, asked if we could instead stay home and get organized.

And the reality is that it has been a crazy season.

But the thing I've learned about life is that sometimes winning in one area means that you have to let a few balls drop in other areas. Balance is not always possible, at least not if you really want to accomplish your biggest goals. We all get the same 24 hours, and none of us can do it all.

All that to say that things at home had gotten a little out-of-control. While my husband Chuck, as the stay-at-home dad, does an amazing job handling all the day-to-day chores—laundry, groceries, shuttling the kids to school and all their activities, keeping up on the yard work, paying the bills, etc.—I'm generally more in charge of keeping things organized and clutter-free.

Suffice to say, I hadn't just dropped that ball, I had pretty much thrown it out the window and lost it completely. In fact, we had gotten to the point where there was not a single area in our 3-bedroom home that was either organized OR clutter free.

There were messes and STUFF everywhere. Every cabinet, every drawer, every closet was a jumbled disaster. And I felt like if I actually slowed down long enough to focus on it, the mess might swallow me whole.

Honestly, getting away for a few days seemed like a much easier solution. But my 12-year old daughter Maggie was pretty persistent. She even put together a short but well-argued presentation to share the pros and cons of why it was a good idea to stay home, as well as all the reasons for why she and her sister should get their own rooms.

How do you say no to that?

I certainly couldn't.

(For the record, this is the same daughter who last year, for her 12th birthday activity, asked to organize her craft supplies!)

Of course, I knew if we were actually going to be able to accomplish this task, I was going to need some help. And so I did something I have never, ever done before—I hired a professional organizer to come in and help us take back control while Chuck went to Arizona to hang out with a buddy for a few days.

To be honest, I was pretty skeptical about how much she'd be able to help us, but Barbara was completely wonderful and practically perfect in every way--the Mary Poppins of organizing. She just dove right in, and within minutes had all three of us busy sorting through our stuff in the most efficient way imaginable.

It was The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up, right in our very own home!

We started with the girls' shared bedroom and the guest room, which had been doubling as their playroom/craft room.

This was not an ideal system, because it meant that they were both jointly responsible for keeping 2 different rooms clean, and that usually just meant a whole lot of blame-shifting and avoiding responsibility. Even so, the prospect of actually separating all of their stuff, which felt like one giant jumbled mess, was daunting.

But with Barbara's help, we had both rooms done by the end of Day One, and we also had collected a VERY impressive pile of stuff to donate or throw away.

From there, we moved on to the living room, where our biggest mess was the library nook. I don't know about you, but I have the hardest time getting rid of books! I tend to hoard them. Even so, Barbara gently reminded me that there were probably quite a few titles I would never read again, and in the end.

While the library took most of the day, we did have time for a few smaller projects, like our "Barmoire"—and old armoire that we've converted into a wet bar—and the master bathroom.

After Barbara left for the day, I was also able to tackle my master bedroom and closet on my own.

Day 3 was devoted to the kitchen and, because I needed to work most of the day (which thankfully I was able to do from home), Barbara handled this space mostly on her own.

I definitely don't think that would have worked on the first day, but after two days of working side by side, both she and I felt comfortable enough with each other to let her have free reign.

And let me just tell you—the end result was nothing short of incredible! After three straight days of sorting, purging, and tidying, it no longer feels like all our stuff might bury us alive. Every space in my house is neat and organized and clutter-free.

But, even more importantly, in the midst of all of this Marie Kondo-ing, I had a few big epiphanies that I wanted to share:

LESSON 1: IT'S OKAY TO ASK FOR HELP.

Whatever issue you might be struggling with, whether it is clutter or finances or business, here is something very powerful about getting an outside perspective—someone who is not too close to the problem and can help you take a step back and look at the bigger picture.

LESSON 2: NOT EVERYTHING CAN BE IMPORTANT ALL AT ONCE.

We all go through seasons, and it is always important to remember that no season lasts forever. Don't beat yourself up if not every area of your life is perfectly balanced right now. Sometimes things have to get a little out of whack, and that's okay.

LESSON 3: SOMETIMES YOU JUST HAVE TO FACE YOUR PROBLEMS HEAD ON.

I wasn't really ready to deal with the mess, and I would have much rather ran away. But in the grand scheme of things, three days of hustle and hard work was definitely worth the end result.

Alain de Botton once noted that "there is no such thing as work-life balance. Everything worth fighting for unbalances your life." Along those same lines, Theresa Lewis said "every new season of your life will be an opportunity for you to learn and grow. Don't celebrate the good without celebrating the bad because they both work together to prepare you for the next season of your life." In other words? Balance is overrated.

Don't get me wrong--I'm so glad I was able to carve out a few days this week to channel my inner Marie Kondo. I'm so grateful my daughter had the impetus to make it happen, and I am completely happy that I decided to hire someone to come in and help make it easier.

Even so, I know that in this particular season, having an organized and clutter-free home is not my top priority. I'm happy it worked out, but if hadn't, I would have been okay with that too.

And so, through all of this, my biggest piece of advice is to stop wasting time beating yourself up for the things you haven't been able to get to while you're busy focusing on the things that matter most. Seasons come and seasons go, and no season lasts forever.

Would I recommend hiring a professional organizer to help you take back control of a space that feels cluttered and chaotic? Yes, yes, a thousand times YES! It was worth every single penny.

But if that's not where you're at right now, in this current season, that's okay too.

In the end, the most important question you can ask yourself is NOT "am I getting it all done?" but "are the things I'm doing getting me closer to my biggest goals and dreams?"

And I hope for your sake, the answer is YES!