

M.O.M.—

MASTER ORGANIZER *of* MAYHEM

Simple Solutions to Organize Chaos
and Bring More Joy into Your Home



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To my incredible husband, Steve.
There is no one I'd rather have by my side
on this journey of life. I love you
immeasurably.

To our amazing kids,
Grant, Blake, Wade, Ashlyn, and Caitlyn,
without whom I wouldn't carry the title
of mom (or M.O.M.). You and your dad
are the greatest blessings in my life.
I love you so much!

To my lifelong encourager, Mom.
It's because of your love and belief in me
that I dared to dream big.
What a blessing you are to me!

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The Struggle Is Real!

Motherhood Changes Everything

There is no end to the great advice about organizing you can find online or in print. Inspiration is just a Google search away. Pinterest alone is full of beautiful quotes and motivational sayings. One of my favorites is the common saying, “A place for everything, everything in its place.” But I’ve found that it doesn’t matter if we have a place for everything if “everything” is thrown all around the house.

Motherhood adds a new dimension to the difficulty of staying organized. Getting organized is a challenge in and of itself, and keeping your house tidy just gets harder when there are several people living under one roof, whether the mess is due to our own bad habits, an untidy spouse, or our kids. We are a family of seven, and I like to say that our home has seven “moving parts,” all of which increase the challenge of trying to keep a tidy house. Please note that I included my husband and myself in that number. Each person contributes in one way or another to both the order and disorder in our home—just to varying degrees.

Someone once said, “Cleaning with kids in the house is like trying to brush your teeth while eating Oreos.” Maybe it’s because I like

Oreos so much, but I love that quote. Something about it resonates with me and makes me want to shout, “Amen!” It’s a perfect depiction of how I’ve felt about housekeeping since becoming a mom. It feels counterproductive to work hard to clean up when I know I’m going to have to start from scratch again the next day. Some days I feel like I’ll never get on top of it all, despite my systems for keeping things organized and the job assignments I’ve given all my “helpers.” When I don’t stay on top of the daily clutter, it’s easy to feel overwhelmed and inundated with the growing number of to-dos.

Motherhood Changes Everything

Feeling exhausted and overwhelmed is sometimes just par for the course when you have kids. Motherhood brings a lot of demands at all the various stages of parenting, yet there is no instruction manual on how to manage it all.

Many of us add to the weariness we’re already feeling by creating unrealistic expectations for ourselves. We want a picture-perfect Joanna Gaines–style home and home-cooked meals that are worthy of Pioneer Woman Ree Drummond. We forget that these two TV sensations are not only gifted but also have teams of helpers on set with them. However, no matter who we compare ourselves to, when we allow ourselves to make other people our gold standard for how things should be done, we set ourselves up for disappointment.

When I first became a mom, I had Martha Stewart breathing down my neck. This homemaking, party-planning maven graced the pages of most popular magazines and TV shows with her perfectly set tables and five-course meals all created from scratch with food from her two-acre garden. Okay, so I have no idea how large her garden really was at that time. However, it didn’t change the fact that I felt this need to live up to some “picture” of what homemaking was supposed to look like. Try as I might, I just couldn’t—and I was exhausted trying.

Today we have Pinterest, Instagram, Facebook, blogs, magazines, television shows, books, and more telling us how we are supposed to manage our homes. Much of the advice on home management and organization isn't written with moms in mind. It tends to be too broad-reaching. There's also an underlying misconception that if we just declutter here and there, then we will have order in our house. The problem is, we all literally have "moving parts" in our homes. Little hands and little feet that find ways to undo all our hard work. Sometimes, even the big hands of older kids or our spouses move things around. As most families have come to find out, we can declutter our house from top to bottom and still feel completely unorganized a few days later. There is just a different dynamic at play when there is more than one person living in a home.

Hitting the Reset Button

My heart with this book is to help you adjust your expectations for yourself, your family, and your home. As a mom of five, I understand how it feels to have your household feel out of control at times. I also know it's tempting to continue to put off getting organized and save it for another day. Unfortunately, the longer we delay getting started, the more chaotic things become and the greater our stress.

I crave the simplicity that organization brings, as I'm sure you do. But even more than the simplicity, I long for the joy and peace that wait on the other side of crazy.

I want my home to breathe life into all who enter and live here. I want to create an atmosphere that radiates love and a place where my family wants to be. Knowing these goals helps

motivate me to do the work necessary to bring about that simplicity, joy, and peace.

Believe it or not, our mindset is one of the key ingredients to getting our house in order. I had to hit rock bottom before I was ready to figure out how to better manage my home. I'll talk more about that defining moment in the next chapter, but for now let's just say that I hope you don't have to hit an all-time low too before you make some changes. If you're reading this and thinking, *I'm there! I can't take this anymore!* then you're in the right place.

Regardless of what made you pick up this book—utter frustration with the daily mayhem or an insatiable desire to learn all you can about organization—you are in for a treat. I tend to approach things differently than most people do. I love dissecting things and simplifying them. I'm also keenly aware that not every person or family is the same. We all have different family dynamics and priorities. All of that plays into how we organize our lives and our homes—and how we make these new organizational habits stick.

Some people are just naturally organized or have been brought up with amazing habits. However, that is not me. I had some bad habits to break. It's taken me a lot of trial and error—and *effort*—to dig myself out of the disorder I created.

I'm a bit of an oxymoron. I'm the messiest neat-freak you'll ever meet and a lazy perfectionist. Plus, I'm highly analytical and creative. It's as though my right and left brain are constantly at war. Yet I've learned it's okay to be a little of both. Consequently, when it comes to my approach to getting things done, I am both creative and practical. That means I am not just going to throw theories at you for how to get organized without giving you several specific ways to apply what I'm talking about.

Because there really isn't a one-size-fits-all approach to home organization, I'm also going to give you lots of useful methods to try in your home. That way you can see what options work best for you and your family.

Building Order—and Efficiency—into Your Home

When building a house, a critical first step is laying a solid foundation. Organizing a home is no different. In phase I, “The Foundation,” we’ll be discussing my “top ten” rules for building order in your home. These rules comprise the foundation for getting organized. In phase II, “The Framework,” we’ll get into the nitty-gritty techniques and systems that act as the framework for getting things done efficiently. In phase III, “The Finishing Touches,” we’ll be talking about how to make your home both *functional* and *fabulous* with intentional decorating.

I first presented my “top ten” list thirteen years ago during a home organization workshop that I gave to a large moms’ group in my area. What’s interesting is that all these years later, only the order of the list has changed. I laugh now when I think about those early M.O.M. workshops. My boys were four and three at the time, and I didn’t have a clue what was in store for me in a few short years—three more kids who would become three more “moving parts” in our household and substantially increase our potential for messes. Since then, I’ve had plenty of time to apply these ten rules and try out different methods and systems.

One thing to keep in mind is that all of these sections—or building phases—were designed to fit together. None stand alone. We can declutter all we want, but if our priorities are out of whack then we will end up right back where we started—frustrated and overwhelmed. We can even implement some of the systems for getting organized, but if we aren’t tweaking them for our own personality and family, we may want to just give up.

The foundation, framework, and finishing touches work together in your home regardless of how many people you have in the mix. Whether you live alone or have tons of kids, the tips and techniques in this book can help you bring some order to your chaos—as long as you apply them!

This book is designed to be an ongoing resource for you to use in your journey of organizing your home. Think of it as a set of blueprints that you'll refer to as you build order and efficiency into your home. One of the key elements you'll find at the end of chapters 2 through 17 is a section called **Unlocking Joy**. These segments are meant to encourage you to make decisions and start taking action on what you are learning. You don't have to do everything all at once. Just have fun with it: the goal is to transform your home and "unlock" more joy.

I've also included numerous **Toolbox Tips**, which are additional ideas to tuck away in your "organizational toolbox."

YOU'VE GOT THIS!

It's never too late to hit the reset button. You can climb out of the mayhem and conquer the clutter. It may seem like a daunting task, but it's so worth the effort. Beyond that, it's very doable. Staying organized is a never-ending task, just like doing the laundry and dishes, but you can find more efficient ways of doing tasks within your home. That's what we're going to focus on: simple solutions to our homemaking challenges that bring order to our home and open the door to joy—and fun! We'll talk about that too. Fun always makes things easier.

We're in this together. My season of having our kids living in our home is far from over. I'm in the trenches with you. I get it. I know the struggle is real. So let's get started! I can't wait for you to jump in and join me on this quest to become M.O.M.s: Master Organizers of Mayhem!

CHAPTER

1

Embracing Your Inner Organizer

Discovering Your Hidden Potential

My tears were falling so fast I had to pull over to the side of the road. Heaven forbid my sobbing cause an accident, especially with my babies in the car. I'd only made it about two blocks from my house before the dam broke loose.

I had never felt this overwhelmed in my life. I wasn't prepared for it. I had called my dear friend Renee as I was backing my car out of the driveway of our new house, but her name was all I could manage to say before the onslaught of heavy sobs began. I had no words. Only tears.

"Oh, Kristi, how can I help? I don't know what to do! I don't know what to do!" Renee had never heard me this upset before. She was at a loss for how to calm me down enough to find out why I was so upset.

So much was happening on every front of my life. We had recently moved to a new city, away from my family, our best friends, and the home that we thought we'd grow old in. My

husband's travel schedule had been doubled with our move, so Steve was not home much. Most of the time, I was home alone with our two babies, trying to get us settled. Grant was twenty-one months old and Blake was four months old. In the span of those few months since Blake had been born, I had two unexpected surgeries, Steve had an emergency surgery, our car was hit in a parking garage, Grant got the stomach flu, the construction of our new house was behind schedule, we were having problems at the apartment we were renting, we had stress in our marriage, our seventy-pound dog seemed to forget how to go to the bathroom outside—and more. It was the perfect storm for my complete breakdown. I felt unsettled, exhausted, and out of control.

When we were told we could finally move into our new home, I thought that things would get better. However, they only got more complicated. On move-in day, we discovered that our newly constructed house was not fully inhabitable. Most of our big “final walk-through” items had not been taken care of. It was winter and the house had no heat, no interior doors, and no hot water, for starters. The house still needed weeks, which turned into months, of work. As the builders tried to fix one problem they either created or discovered a whole new problem. Plus, most of the other stresses and issues were still present. Since there was no way to stop escrow from closing or the moving vans from arriving, we just tried to make the best of it.

That set the stage for why I was crying, but it leaves out the best part of the story. Right before I backed out of the garage, called Renee, and sat curbside bawling . . . well, I made another phone call. I called the project manager for our house. Poor man.

“Hello, Kristi. How are you doing?” he answered cheerfully.

“Not good! I have tried to be a good Christian and be patient and kind as I've waited for you to address the needs of our home. Well, that's not working. So if you don't get a team of guys over here in the next hour, I'm going to lose it.

“Do you hear that? That is the sound of my baby screaming! He’s crying because he’s hungry—and I’m so stressed out that my milk won’t let down.” (Yes, I really said that!)

“I’m leaving the house,” I continued. “I expect to see your men here when I return.”

Click.

When I returned home, there was a team of workers running around my house getting things done. When the project manager walked over to me, I wanted to crawl under a rock. I had spoken to him in such an unkind way . . . and, well, there was that comment about my milk.

“Uhh . . . so . . . we’re here. Sorry we made you feel like you weren’t important to our team,” he said. “And . . . well . . . uhh . . . is your milk okay?”

We both started laughing.

I was so embarrassed, but by that night, when I tried to explain my day to Steve, we couldn’t stop laughing about that conversation. My husband has my favorite laugh in the whole world: a knee-slapping, from-the-gut kind of laugh. And my story got him going, which in turn got me going.

While that was one of my darkest days, it was also the day I realized something had to change. That was my moment. The moment I admitted I wasn’t a “super mom” and couldn’t get everything done. The moment I acknowledged that while I couldn’t control or change all the circumstances in my life, I could change some things. I could bring some order to our home—and I could change my attitude. Yep, *attitude*. It has everything to do with finding the motivation to get organized. It also has everything to do with experiencing more joy.

I learned how to better organize our lives and our home out of sheer necessity. I had to hit rock bottom before I found the determination to figure out some ways to bring about order in my chaos. So my research started . . . and my passion for organization was ignited.

Redefining Organization

When I first started speaking on home organization, I felt a bit like a hypocrite because my house wasn't perfectly organized all the time. I only saw what needed to be done and felt like we constantly had toys thrown around everywhere. Yet this was always the topic people wanted me to talk about. Friends consistently told me how organized I was and asked me for advice on home management. And the truth was, I loved organizing. It was a passion that had grown through that hard season. As I found relief from one area of frustration in my house, I then set to work on conquering another area. I researched how different people did things and tweaked them to work in my home.

As I prepared to speak at that first moms' group, I sat down with all of the notes I had taken through the years and asked myself, *What key principles have I implemented that helped create this perception that I'm so organized?*

Do you like how I put that? I'm absolutely serious. I didn't feel like I had come to a point of mastery in my homemaking. Somehow, others saw me differently than I saw myself. After that first workshop, I was blown away by the number of moms who thanked me for my advice . . . many in tears. Here I thought I was exposing myself as a fraud by being honest about how I'd had to learn to let things go. Yes, I shared lots of practical tips on meal planning, housecleaning, and home management, but I tried hard to be very real at the same time.

Here's the truth I learned that day: *most moms feel like failures in their homes.* Maybe not in every area but usually in at least one aspect of home life. We all struggle, because mess happens. And it keeps happening. Over and over again. To top it off, we are tired. Sometimes we just don't have the energy or the willpower to tidy up at the end of a long day.

I also began to understand that we tend to equate being organized with perfection. Yet that's not what organization is at all. Please get rid of this notion! Being organized *does not* mean we have to have a perfect home, sterile and clean, at all times. Clean is good, but dust bunnies, crumbs, and spilled milk happen—sometimes even spilled organic milk. (Okay, so it does hurt a bit more when it's the expensive, organic brand that is splashed across the floor, but you get my point!)

Here's how I view organization:

Organization is about increasing the efficiency in our home so that we can maximize our time with our family and for other priorities.

Notice that nothing in this definition implies perfection. Maybe I should have called this chapter “Embracing Your Inner Elsa,” because we need to learn to “let go” of this idea of “perfect”—and give ourselves some grace. Every mother knows that staying on top of the daily mess is hard work. Exhausting work! Whether you have one child or twenty! Just when you think you have the house organized, cleaned, and looking good, the kids wake up. And there are some seasons when it's just harder to stay on top of the mess. In those times, we need to realize that something has to give, and we may need to lower our expectations for what our home looks like and how smoothly our days should go. These are also the exact seasons when some of the systems we'll be talking about in phase II can help us to stay as organized as we can.

The more we learn how to streamline and simplify things in our home, the less stress we will feel. Less stress equals a happier mom. A happier mom equals a happier home. (Note: it may not mean fewer toddler tantrums, just fewer mommy tantrums!)

YOU'VE GOT THIS!

Don't let your past feelings of failure or your current situation of frustration hold you back from experiencing the freedom and joy that can come from getting your home to run more smoothly. You can learn to be organized, whether you have natural tendencies for it or not. I know because that is what happened to me. In fact, my life *now* looks nothing like what I experienced in my childhood. (More about that in the next chapter!)

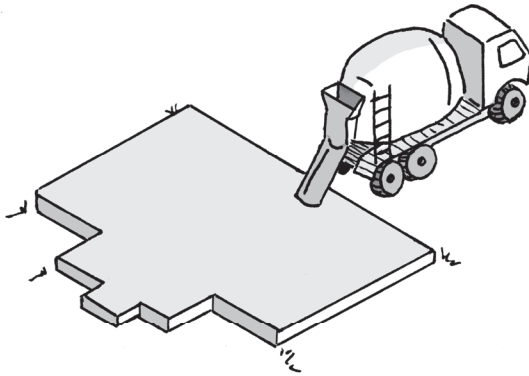
I believe that we all have the potential to be amazing organizers. We all have this inner organizer who just needs to be awakened. She doesn't always want to be bothered, though, which is why once she's been stirred from her sleep we need to embrace her. I used the word *embrace* deliberately. To embrace something is to clasp it, hold on to it, and wrap our arms around it. There is an intentional element to organizing. Order doesn't just happen. We need to strip away old habits and replace them with routines and systems that we can tweak to work in our own homes.

Together we are going to find our inner organizer and get her to stick around without worrying that she's going to run for the hills at the first sign of imperfection. So let's jump in and start learning ten simple rules that can revolutionize how we organize our home.

Phase I

THE FOUNDATION

Ten Simple Rules That Will
Change Your Home Life



Rule #1: Use the “Glean and Tweak” Technique

Don't Start from Scratch

I should probably admit right up front that I have a snarky side. Most of the time I try to contain it. Usually I just make myself giggle as great comebacks come to mind. I'll only say them out loud if I know I'm not going to offend anyone . . . and if it will get a good laugh.

My family is not your standard California family. Number one, we have five kids. Number two, we homeschool. Mentioning either of these two fun facts about my family often brings out strange reactions from people. One of the funniest moments was when I was pregnant with our fifth child. Apparently, I missed the memo that you are not supposed to have any more children if you already have at least one boy and one girl.

When I was pregnant with Ashlyn, our first girl, people would look at my three boys and say, “Oh, you must be trying for a girl,”

or “Did you finally get your girl?” These comments didn’t bother me too much. My pregnancy seemed to be “acceptable” to those around me. Four was still a lot, but apparently if you are trying for a different gender, it is okay to keep having babies. However, that was not the case when I was pregnant with number five. As I ran errands with all my kids, people would see my very large belly, count my kids, notice that I already had boys *and* one girl, and exclaim, “Why are you pregnant? You already have your girl!” It got a little tiring. I started thinking of great comebacks to their comments, though I rarely shared them.

However, one day a complete stranger laughed at me and said, “That’s a lot of kids! You do know what causes that, right?” Yes, I know he was being funny, but on that particular day, in my hormonal, pregnant state, I opened my mouth and dropped a little sample of my snarkiness. (That’s not a word, but I guess it is now, since it’s in this book! Look at me transforming the written language.)

I looked at my beautiful children and said, “Well, *you* know what they say—‘practice makes perfect.’” The man was speechless. I think I made the woman behind him blush. I just smiled and walked away. Of course, then I was left with children asking me what that meant.

Nowadays, I usually don’t take all my kids to the store with me. So instead of having to contend with people counting my kids, I contend with them counting the gallons of milk in my cart. Yep! I cause quite a stir when I go grocery shopping. My cart is usually overflowing. I often hear things like, “Are you feeding a football team?” or, “Man, you must be having a party!” Yes, I am! A 24/7 party is always happening at the Clover house. And although we aren’t feeding a football team, we are feeding a lot of mouths. I know most people mean nothing by their comments and are just being playful. Yet sometimes I want to be playful too.

So, one time, just one time, I decided to say something I’d been storing up. “How in the world do you manage a home with *that*

many children?” a sweet woman once asked, gasping, after I told her the size of our family.

“Easy,” I replied with a slight smile. “Martha Stewart is my mom.”

The look on her face. . . . I burst out laughing. When I fessed up to the fact that I was kidding, her laughter joined mine. I had picked the perfect person for my playful antics.

Overcoming Childhood Habits

Now that we’ve established I was not brought up in a homemaking dynasty, I should tell you that my life now looks *nothing* like it did when I was young. I was an only child raised by a single, working mom, and I was anything but organized.

When I was growing up, my mom worked long hours to provide for the two of us. She was (and still is) one of my heroes. Late work nights meant that I usually walked to a friend’s house after school to hang out until my mom got off work. Many nights I fixed myself macaroni and cheese or canned beef ravioli for dinner.

For the record, my mom was a master at making the most of our time together. I have many incredible memories of all the fun we had when I was growing up. She could make everyday moments special, and I learned so much from her about how to do the same. My mom also taught me how to clean the house. I could make a bathroom sink shine. However, as much as she tried to get me to pick up after myself, *decluttering* was not in my vocabulary. My room was a natural disaster. I had so many bad habits. I never made my bed, despite my mom’s wise advice that “The bed is the largest thing in the room, and when it’s made the whole room looks cleaner.” Somehow my clothes never seemed to make it into the hamper. I had one clear spot on the floor that I used to leap from the doorway to my bed. When there was time to clean up, it was the last thing I wanted to do, so I continued

to ignore the mess. I had the rest of the house to hang out in, so my room could wait.

It wasn't until I was in college that I learned I had a knack for organizing. I had always loved packing our car for trips and making everything magically fit but had never thought much of it. However, when I was forced to live in a small room with another person, my inner organizer suddenly emerged. When my high school friends came to visit me, they were shocked by how clean my room was. Even so, I still didn't know the first thing about creating habits to help me stay on top of the mess.

The Game Changer

One thing to know about me—well, yet another thing to know about me—is the fact that I love researching things. I'm crazy that way. I love to learn all I can about new things I jump into. When Steve and I were first married, I read tons of books on marriage. When we started having babies, I learned all I could about pregnancy, newborn care, and parenting. Oh, and I was that crazy woman who actually did prepare for a roadside birth when I was pregnant with our first. I not only kept my hospital bag in the back of the car but a “just in case I give birth in my car” bag as well.

When I realized I needed to get more organized in order to survive, I started researching. I scoured the internet, bought a few books, and borrowed more books from the library. I started asking questions too. I tried to figure out who in my life seemed to manage their home well.

I tried several of the suggested tips and techniques, but things kept going back to crazy. How was it that these tried-and-true methods weren't working for me? I was getting frustrated.

Then my game-changing moment came. Instead of giving up, I started tweaking the ideas and information I'd gathered from books and from conversations with friends and family. I started

TOOLBOX TIP

When you’re reading this book (or any other book on home organization), star, underline, and highlight things that stand out to you. When you find techniques you want to implement or have your own ideas come to you as you read, write them down in the back of the book. This will save you time when you are ready to try out some of the tips you learned. No more flipping through the book to find your inspired thoughts. They’re all in one spot. For this book, I’ve included a special Take Note! section for you on page 227.

It’s also helpful to keep all your favorite books on home management in one spot on a bookshelf.

synthesizing what I’d learned and began coming up with ways to make all the advice work efficiently for *my* family.

The “Glean and Tweak” Technique

Home organization isn’t a one-size-fits-all thing. I believe this misconception is one of the primary reasons most organizational habits don’t work for some of us. Fancy planners, decluttering, and set routines only work if they sync with your individual bent and your unique family circumstances. Some systems just don’t offer long-term results if you can’t personalize or “tweak” them to fit with your natural tendencies.

We are all unique in how we approach things, so it’s critical to learn the skill of gleaning from what works well for some families and then tweaking it to make it fit your own family’s dynamics.

The most important thing to know is that you may have to try a few different techniques before you find the right match.

You may even have to tweak things a few more times as your family changes and grows. However, that’s the beauty of learning

to “glean and tweak.” You stop feeling like a failure and instead look at what’s not working as an indicator that it’s time to change things up again.

We’ve probably all been told, “Don’t reinvent the wheel,” or “Don’t start from scratch.” Let’s face it: we are moms. Time is not always on our side. Since we don’t have an abundance of time to get things done, it never hurts to ask other people for tips on how they do things or what works for them. I refer to the people who I go to for advice as my “homemaking mentors.”

Of course, nowadays ideas and inspiration are everywhere online. Pinterest is jam-packed with great, albeit sometimes over-the-top, ideas. This book is also the perfect place to start doing some gleaning. I’ve come up with a lot of systems on my own, but I’ve also learned how other people do things and have figured out ways to adapt their organizational approaches to work better in my home.

Think of gleaning as your inspiration springboard. **The purpose of gleaning is to gather information and ideas from friends, family, books, Pinterest, or wherever you can about how to better organize your home life.** The goal is to learn methods that work for other people. Don’t be surprised if you get very different advice or even conflicting advice.

- › “Only do laundry once a week.”
- › “Do one load of laundry each day.”
- › “Don’t start a new load of laundry until the last load is completely done: washed, dried, folded, and put away.”
- › “Assign each person in the house their own day to get laundry done.” (This one’s mine, by the way!)

Each of these tips is great for helping some families get the laundry done—but not every family. For example, there is no possible way my family could get all of our laundry done in one

day. And it would drive me crazy to have to do one load of laundry every single day. I need a break from laundry. And that’s why I am sold on the technique of gleaning and tweaking. Gleaning allows you to gather up a host of ideas to consider and then decide which ones to try out. Once you have a few ideas of which systems or techniques you’d like to try, then it’s time to tweak.

To better understand what I mean by tweaking, think about how you approach cooking or baking. If a recipe calls for ingredients you know your family doesn’t enjoy, you wouldn’t hesitate to change it. You’d add things, leave things out, or change it up completely to create your own variation of the recipe. What you may end up with is a culinary masterpiece that your whole family loves. **This is what tweaking is all about: figuring out what works best for you and your family.**

There is no cookie-cutter answer when it comes to how to organize your home. My brain may be wired differently from yours. What has worked for me may not work for you. In addition, what works for your family when your kids are babies may be very different from what will work when they are teens. And what works in a small house will be different from what works in a large house. Homes with little storage space require creativity and a bit more minimalistic thinking than homes with plenty of storage. It’s also true that an overabundance of storage space can thwart our ability to truly be organized. People who have extra drawers, cupboards, closets, or even extra space in their garage tend to fill up that space with things they don’t need or have forgotten about. I call this “organized clutter.” Organized clutter is the “out of sight and out of mind” assortment of odds and ends that we have tucked away somewhere. But here’s the thing: organized clutter is still clutter.

The most important thing about learning how to best organize *your* home is not to give up. If something isn’t working, then tweak what you’re doing or try something else. You don’t have to stay stuck. You can get more organized. There may just be a little trial and error involved in the process.

Beware: Don't Compare!

As you are perusing Pinterest, checking out blog posts, or even visiting a friend who has a clutter-free home, fight the urge to compare other people's successes with your frustrations. You may just be in a different season of life. Also, please trust me when I say that the internet lies. Bloggers are known for clearing a messy spot to get a good shot with great lighting, then just piling things right back where they were. (Or maybe that's just me. Ha! With seven people in our house, there are days when our home looks like it has been hit by a hurricane.)

Remember, perfection is not the goal. The goal is to create more efficiency and order in your home. Give yourself some grace. Allow the success of others to inspire rather than deflate you. You might consider going on a social media fast to get all the "perfection" out of sight for a little bit.

Organizing Your Gleaning and Tweaking

As you gather information, I encourage you to create a file for all your home organization notes—whether digitally or in a file folder. When I first started gleaning information, I clipped magazine articles and pictures and stuck them all in a file folder. Now,

TOOLBOX TIP

Another great place to glean and store ideas is Pinterest. I have a board for all the fun, creative "home organization" blog posts I find—and another board for recipes that look tasty. Create as many boards as you'd like to categorize all the good storage tips, cleaning tips, or organizational solutions you find online. You can use Pinterest as a search engine as well. Just type in whatever you are looking for into the search bar and you'll see a ton of articles pop up.

this method still works, but technology has opened up other ways of doing things. I’ve started using an app called OneNote as my digital notebook. I have the app on my computer and my phone. It makes it easy to jot down ideas, drop in photos, and add links to great articles I find. I can even scan magazine articles to a file on the app. I created one tab in OneNote for all my home organization ideas and another tab for interior decorating ideas. Evernote is another popular digital notebook app that is similar. Using a digital notebook is convenient once you get the hang of it.

Practice Makes Progress

As you glean and tweak ideas for how you can bring more efficiency into your home, don’t focus on how to do things perfectly. Instead, focus on forward momentum and the progress you are making.

*} Forget about all the things on your to-do list
} that aren’t done yet. Focus on the things you
} are accomplishing.*

If you have tried one thing and it didn’t work well, chalk it up to a bad week. Maybe you need to try a different system or technique to see if it fits better for you and your family in the phase of life you are in. The key is to just keep practicing what you are learning.

YOU’VE GOT THIS!

Don’t give up or get stuck thinking you’ll never be good at organizing. Regardless of your background or the bad habits you may have, you can learn new techniques that will work for your home. Just remember that you and your family are unique. I like

to remind myself that one of my ultimate goals in getting organized is to create an environment of peace and joy in my home. When my house is organized, I am more likely to relax and enjoy my family—and to open my home to others. Home organization doesn't have to be daunting, and it doesn't have to be boring. You just have to get started—and keep making progress.

So start gleaning from this and other books, the internet, and friends, then look for ways to tweak aspects of those systems to work best for your home.

Unlocking Joy

Welcome to the first Unlocking Joy section. As you begin to “master the mayhem” by implementing what you are learning, you'll be unlocking joy in your home. To help you start taking action, I've created some great printables that go hand in hand with the Unlocking Joy sections. Why start from scratch when I've already done all the work for you? Plus, the printables are really pretty. Just head over to **KristiClover.com/MOMPrintables** to access them.

Now it's time to roll up your sleeves and get started!

1. Decide if you will keep your organizational ideas digitally or in a physical file (or both).

Digital File

File Folder

2. Create a list of what you need to learn and what you want to learn. Maybe your problem area, like mine, is paper piles, or maybe it's cleaning techniques or kitchen organization. You might even have baking or gardening on your wish-I-knew-how-to-do list. Just write it down below. This will help you narrow your focus to what you need to be researching.

Rule #1: Use the “Glean and Tweak” Technique

I need to learn:

I want to learn:

3. Who in your life would make a great homemaking mentor?
