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Save time and stress by keeping up instead of catching up

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Professional Organizer, Jennifer Raftis, CPOr founded Efficiency Matters, LLC to help you with all of your organizing needs for your home and business. She is a Certified Professional Organizer and an active board member with NAPO, National Association of Productivity and Organizing Professionals. She is also an independent representative for The Container Store and has expertise in designing closets, garages, pantries, playrooms and more. In addition, she is a Corporate Organizing and Productivity Consultant and has worked with Fortune 500 companies across the U.S. Another large part of her business is move management especially working with seniors who are downsizing. She and her husband have lived in Moraga for 30 years, raising 3 kids and working countless volunteer hours with many local non-profit organizations and schools. Jennifer@efficiencymattersllc.com, 925-698-3756 www.efficiencymattersllc.com

Getting ready to welcome the colder weather and the upcoming holiday season can be exciting and refreshing. I don't know about you, but I hate being overwhelmed - it can cause so much stress - so I practice keeping up and try to prepare in advance. My first step is to look ahead to see what kind of work can be done now that will make the season run smoothly. Here are some ideas for keeping up that can save you time and stress:

Fire Season and Rolling Blackouts

I wrote an article last October (It's Wildfire Season: Be Prepared Beyond a 'Go Bag') about being prepared for fire season and you can find it on my website (efficiencymattersllc.com). Now, is a great time to check all of your flashlights and battery supplies, refresh your emergency kit with updated food and water, and gather your "go bag."

There is a big difference between keeping up versus catching up when managing your life. Keeping up is consistently staying on top of things you need to do. When you have the mindset of keeping up you probably have some good habits and systems already in place. If you find yourself often in catching up mode - running behind or overwhelmed - you are probably adding unnecessary stress to your life and could benefit from some new "keeping up" habits.

The Advantages of Keeping Up

There are many things in our lives that are important to keep up with, including exercise, personal or professional goals, laundry, organizing our homes, etc. For example, if you exercise regularly, you reap the benefits of feeling energized and less stressed. If you stop for a few weeks (or months), you might start feeling tired, out of shape, and unmotivated. As many of us have experienced, it's a lot harder to get back into an exercise routine (catch up) than it is to keep up with an established one.

Here are some more examples of the advantages of keeping up. Many of us hate managing paperwork. The picture I have in my head is piles and piles of paperwork (but it can be piles of anything). Looking at a huge pile is overwhelming and it's so much harder to catch up than if you were managing it on a regular basis. Your garage might be another good example. If you have spent 20 years adding items to your garage (because you couldn't decide what to do with them), then you probably have a huge collection of stuff. Organizing your garage (catching up) becomes a daunting task that you are likely to avoid as long as possible.

How do you start keeping up?

So, you're ready to take the first step toward learning some new habits but you are wondering "where do I start?" Great question! It reminds me of one of my favorite quotes, "How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time." Challenge yourself to start biting at whatever pile or project you have. Start with small bites so you don't get frustrated - continue to take small regular bites until it becomes a new habit that can help keep you in control.

There are many strategies for keeping up. Planning ahead is one of them. I love the beginning of each season as it can be a great time to reset and start new habits. Getting ready to welcome the colder weather and the upcoming holiday season can be exciting and refreshing. I don't know about you, but I hate being overwhelmed - it can cause so much stress - so I practice keeping up and try to prepare in advance. My first step is to look ahead to see what kind of work can be done now that will make the season run smoothly. Here are some ideas for keeping up that can save you time and stress:

Cold Weather

Before the cold weather arrives, I suggest you go through your cold weather clothes - hats, scarves, gloves, sweaters, and coats. Eliminate gloves that don't have a match, and check everything to see if they need to be washed or replaced. A good place to store these items is the inside of the door in the coat closet. Note: The Container Store has a great door rack - with adjustable components to fit your needs - called the Elfa Utility Door and Wall Rack Solution.

Note: As you are going through your winter coats, remember that many charities, such as "One Warm Coat," will be asking for warm clothing donations as the weather gets colder.

Flu Season

Take everything out of your medicine cabinet (as well as other areas where you keep medicine). Toss any expired medication and make a list of all items you need to purchase. Check to see if your thermometer still works. Note: If you have kids under 18, it can be helpful to separate the adult medicine from the children's medicine within the same cabinet.

Holidays

Time for a pantry and kitchen refresh! Take all your spices out and check for expiration dates (this process takes less time than you think it will). Make sure you have any seasonal spices you might need (nutmeg, pumpkin pie spice, etc.) Next, pull out all of your canned goods and condiments. If you have canned goods that have not expired but you haven't used them (and likely won't) donate them to a holiday canned food drive.

Check table linens to see if you need to clean or replace any of them. Look through your food storage containers. Get rid of any containers that are missing lids. Trust me, the lids are not coming back. They are with the single socks that never returned either (get over it and move on).

If you are anticipating guests - yes, your adult children are considered guests - now is the time to make sure the pillows, blankets, and sheets are in good condition and clean. Check your guest towels too!

Some simple switches from catching up to keeping up habits can be a game changer and bring some calm and peace to your life. Tackle one project at a time and remember that consistent habits are key to keeping up.

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