

BRUNCH



Get organised!

Is your life all topsy-turvy like your handbag, your closet, your desktop? Don't worry, there's help at hand
by VEENU SINGH

STRANDED AT the airport just because you couldn't find that needle of a ticket in the haystack of your handbag? Lost a friend because you forgot his birthday? Or missed that promotion because you missed the car pool 250 times in all those 365 days? Yes, we're talking about you and you and you. How many times have you promised yourself: "This shall never happen again. From tomorrow I will get organised", only to find yourself back to square one the very next minute?

As management consultant Harpreet Ahluwalia points out, "In today's ever-demanding and fast-moving world, good organisation can make all the difference. The more organised we are, the more time we will have to do the things we want to do, rather than the things we have to do."

But how does one go about getting organised? (One wouldn't think people get themselves into such a spot out of choice.) We try and find a method to muddle through the madness. To begin with, let's make a rather simplistic division of the different aspects of our life - personal, social and professional. Next, let's think of some of the worst instances of 'disorganisation' in each.

PROFESSIONAL

Let's start with workplace woes. Why? Because we spend the maximum time in office, because any kind of indiscipline here has, er... the most immediate and pinching repercussions, because... Well, the list is endless.

The degree of 'office mess' can vary. At its simplest, it can be the clutter on your desk/drawer/cabinet. It hampers functionality (you cannot dig out that file in time, or those papers with the crucial calculations). You could be the 'promptest' and most brilliant employee your office ever had, but half a dozen (possibly more) slow and organised tortoises will beat you at the game. That apart, it also makes a poor impression, be it to the visiting client, a colleague or an immediate superior. And if none of this is good enough for

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- Set yourself different deadlines for different tasks.
- Try and tackle more creative tasks in the morning when you're at your freshest, and save the early afternoon for filing and phoning.
- Check that To-Do list on your computer/software/stick-on first thing.
- Go through your post every day. And make good use of the waste bin.
- Clear your desk every day.
- Before you leave for home, tick off the list of tasks completed and add the fresh set of things to do.

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you, guess what? Clutter also attracts bad *chi* (energy)!

At another level, mismanagement might result in ill-maintained appointments (late arrivals or forgotten dates). And finally, there is the 'work' itself. Any project/assignment has to be well orchestrated from start to finish. After all, this is not school homework where all the variables are in your control.

So what does one do? "Prioritise," says corporate trainer Santosh Babu. "Figure out the connection between what you are doing and what your short and long-term goals are." And what could some of these goals be? Before we launch into specifics,

•Use the reminder on your cell phone to remind you of all those birthdays and anniversaries.
 •At the beginning of the year, stock up on all kinds of greetings cards and gifts possible. That way you won't have to make a last minute dash twice a month.
 •No matter how tired, don't skip all those social dos. Just drop in for 15 minutes if you will but do go. Or you'll end up spending the rest of the year making up for that one.
 •Invest in a swanky wristwatch. The kind you will want to look at from time to time!

plaine. Take, for instance, keeping in touch with close friends, or writing out a thank-you note, or sending over that bouquet for your best mate's engagement. Agreed, it's much simpler to just turn a blind eye to these. But chances are that you just might get black listed even if you are not actually 'black eyed' for such unpardonable social etiquette.

You might think it's a cakewalk for someone like Santosh Babu who works flexi-hours but you'd be wrong. Babu has to work twice as hard just to fashion a structure out of his seemingly unstructured time. He says, "In the afternoon, I might be watching my kids play or be out with my wife. On Saturday, or at 10 o'clock on a weeknight, I might be working. I do things when the spirit moves me, and when they're appropriate."

Samir Kapur, head of corporate communications, ESPN STAR Sports, suggests, "It's all about how important these people are for you or how important the occasion. I try and keep in touch with my set of close friends by calling them up regularly. And since it's not possible to do so during work hours, I try and utilise the long drive home for such stuff only. So while I am being driven back home, I finish with my list of calls."

PERSONAL

Wondering why we reserved this one for the last? Because this is the one area which demands most of your attention and has the least of your time. From leaky faucets to the curdling milk, that must-buy AC to the must-throw junk, the kids' PTA and your partner's laundry, the family dinner and the missing pair of socks... You're right, it's one hair-raising experience. And while one can't blame anyone (least of all oneself) for sweeping it all under the carpet, the truth is that at some point or the other, it is bound to raise its ugly head.

Says Ka-

• Maintain a diary of all those emergency contacts - electrician, plumber, carpenter. Better still, put them up on a soft board.
 • Keep a notebook atop the fridge or use memotags with a list of to-dos. Encourage other members of the household to use it.
 • Clean one cupboard a week. That way nothing ever gets monumentally out of hand.
 • Always keep your keys in the same place.
 • Make a birthday chart. Keep it next to the landline. Edit your wardrobe regularly. Get rid of anything that is permanently stained, irrevocably torn, or too small.



THERE IS ALL THAT 'NON-WORK' NETWORKING TO BE DONE WHICH REQUIRES A FAIR AMOUNT OF TIME MANAGEMENT AND PERSONAL DISCIPLINE

let's keep in mind that there are two types of goals - open-ended ones and those that are closed. Says Santosh, "In case of the former, one sets certain parameters of success in a certain time frame. Whereas in the case of the latter, one lays down a definite level of achievement in a definite period of time."

Agreeing with this, Ravindra Zutshi, deputy managing director, Samsung India, says, "The successful way to organise both work and personal time is to sift through all that needs to be done. You must then make a mental checklist of all the things that have to be taken care of and from

that list, select in order of importance. I have been following this principle, both for my official work and my personal work at home. It works wonderfully for me. And I see no reason why it shouldn't work well for others too."

SOCIAL

Today a lot of our professional life spills over to our social life. And then of course there is that 'non-work' networking to be done. All this requires a fair amount of time management and personal disci-



OFFICE MESS HAMPERS FUNCTIONALITY, MAKES A BAD IMPRESSION AND ALSO ATTRACTS BAD CHI

mayani Kanwar, owner Asian Roots Spa. "Over the years, I have realised that keeping a cool head and not panicking about things makes a lot of difference. And this I have learnt from my husband who, despite handling five companies, never looks stressed."

"Secondly, having help around or delegating work is another good way to keep yourself in control. Since I need to manage both office and home, I try and strike a balance."

"I have discovered the joy of being connected online with my office even when I am at home. I also get to spend some time with my kids either by going over to the school to pick them up or by reaching home in time to have lunch with them."

Samir says, "Over the years, I have learnt to divide my week into various quadrants. The first quadrant is for work which is really urgent or important. This needs to be cleared first."

"Then the second quadrant is for work that may not be that urgent and would need time. The third quadrant revolves around relaxing during my lunch hour which I usually do by playing a game of table tennis."

"The last quadrant involves the time I give my family and that's the time I spend with my wife and four-year-old daughter at night after a heavy day at work."