



The  
JOY  
of  
Being Disor<sup>g</sup>g  
patiences

Reformed Slob Reveals  
80 Secrets to a Clean, Cozy,  
Peaceful Home!

By Pam Young

The Joy of Being Disorganized  
Reformed Slob Reveals 80 Secrets to a Clean, Cozy, Peaceful Home

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## Introduction

There is an invisible golden thread of brilliance that connects each and every disorganized person to one another. It's a strong thread strengthened by creativity, imagination, humor, enthusiasm, and love. It's genius, and when properly woven into the fabric of our lives, we can sparkle. In the past, perhaps you've gotten tangled up in that thread, tripped over it, or felt as though you lost it altogether as the circumstances of life pulled you away from the joy you are.

Now it's time to see yourself with new eyes. It's time to embrace the power you have, see your beauty, your goodness, your genius, and your talent. Rediscover your inner sparkle. It never left! Now, before you make another resolution to get organized, take up that magnificent golden thread and own it. There is holiness in that thread. You are a child of God and all is well. Your disorganization is a gift!

## Chapter One

### So What's the Big Deal About Being Organized?

In 2006, the furniture company IKEA released the results of a survey I found very interesting.

Two of the findings were that 1.) Couples who had closet organizers argued three times more per month than couples who didn't have them, and 2.) Men who owned a Palm Pilot were four times as likely to forget their wives' birthdays, compared to men who didn't have the organizer. (It's not surprising absolutely nobody owns a Palm Pilot anymore.)

Being organized isn't always what it's cracked up to be. Even organized people have issues. In fact, most serial killers are highly organized people. They make meticulous plans—probably have a to-do list all written up for each step. They tend to the details and don't leave messes behind. The point in all this is that being better at organization doesn't make you a *better person*. So give yourself a break and stop putting organized people up on a pedestal and subsequently putting yourself down.

#### A Natural Desire to be Organized

Growing up, my childhood home was perpetually neat and tidy. My mother made sure meals were always on time, seasonal celebrations were planned way in advance, and the house was festively decorated for each season long before Mother Nature executed her handiwork outside our home.

At Christmastime our house twinkled and glittered like a department store window display. Mom had her Christmas cards ready to mail by Halloween. (She even wrote a personal note in each one.) She called me her little piddle dinker and she said it with such affection I never really knew I had a domestic problem until I grew up and got married and she didn't come with me.

As a result of my upbringing, I spent my first 34 years “trying” to be organized. I wanted to feel that peace and ease I felt in my childhood home. My mother made running a household look effortless and I wanted that too. But with every

baby (I had three); I sank deeper and deeper into domestic quicksand. My very critical husband and I lived in a pig pen. To make matters worse, in my immaturity as a young wife and mother, I hadn't realized the power I had as a creative, spontaneous child of God, and I often used my bed as a guilty recluse from the mess and cranky spouse. Avoidance does *not* help tidy the house.

I was a deficiency expert, a master at finding substitutions to “make do.” We drank out of jelly jars when all the glasses were dirty. When my husband needed a clean white shirt for work every day, I usually ironed just the front, apologizing, “Sorry, just keep your jacket on and no one will know,” as he'd scowl and fuss out the door. I'd take the kids to school because they'd miss the bus and I often rolled my pajama bottoms up above my knees and wore a long coat to cover up the fact I hadn't gotten dressed. We were always eating over the sink, sleeping in our clothes, and regularly using candlelight when the electric company turned off the juice. Anything that could get backed-up did: dishes, laundry, bills, garbage, toilets, and gutters and such. We were always working with deficits.

I didn't want to live that way, but I clearly wasn't prepared for the real world of home management even though I took Home Economics in high school. Today, there is no such class in high schools. They don't teach the real-world issues involved in home management. If they did, nobody would ever get married. After twelve years of struggling, crying, making excuses and apologizing, I lost my spark and fell into a deep depression. My critical husband called me useless, lazy, and dirty and I agreed. I was a slob. I was very unhappy in my marriage as we fought every day over the mess. There I was a full-time homemaker and I felt like a miserable failure. I wanted to be like Mom. Why wasn't I more like her? How did she do it?

### **Mom Was a BOP (Born Organized Person)**

My mom was born on her due date. She came into this world exactly when the doctor said she would and lived the rest of her life on time for everything. Every morning, she made her bed before she even went to the bathroom—said it started her day off with sort of an eminent momentum she kept up all day.

I remember when my sister was born; that threw Mom over the edge. Not because my sister was a challenging child, but because she was *another* child. (It was good Mom only had two children.) I was five-years-old when my sister

arrived, and I remember Mom tried to keep us, herself, and the house spotless. She was a perfectionist. When I look back at any of my childhood photos, my sister and I always look ready for a wedding.

My mom *wanted* to ease up and “go with the flow,” so much so that she went to her doctor for advice. I was about ten and I remember her conversation with Dad when she came home.

“Dr. Butler said I have to get up tomorrow morning and purposely NOT make the bed! He said that I need to find out the world will continue turning if the bed doesn’t get made.”

Dad, being the easy-going one, said, “That sounds simple enough.”

“I don’t think I can do it. I know it’ll bother me all day, but I’ll try.”

Mom never was able to go with the flow very well. I know she really wanted to be more easy-going because she was sick a lot and she knew it was due to the stress she put upon herself over not being able to make things perfect. I really believe it’s way more of a feat for a BOP to ease-up than it is for a SLOB (Spontaneous Lighthearted Optimistic Beloved) to get organized just enough to have peace and ease. The former often takes professional counseling.

As you can see I’ve painted two extremes; the BOP and the SLOB. Living at either end of that organization-stick is not very much fun! The answer for me was to discover the magnificent middle of that stick, and it starts with recognizing the benefits of being *dis*organized. (We’ve all had the benefits of being organized shoved down our throats.) The middle of that stick is where the fun begins!

## **Recognizing the Benefits of Being Disorganized**

Most disorganized people are easy-going. We can stop what we’re doing and play with the puppy, spend time with friends, play with our children, or just sit and watch the breeze blowing through the trees. We’re never too busy that we miss the changes in seasons and the delights in nature. We’re not workaholics. Novelist George MacDonald, who inspired many of his contemporary writers like Lewis Carol, Tolkien, and C.S. Lewis, said, “Work is not always required . . . there is such a thing as sacred idleness, the cultivation of which is now

fearfully neglected.” I love any writer who encourages me to embrace sacred idleness. Not all the time, of course, but enough to enjoy life. Give thanks for the way you are and that you can partake of sacred idleness too. It’s an amazing gift!

By recognizing the gift of sacred idleness, my sister (who was also a SLOB) and I managed to get organized just enough to get by. We were the first SLOBS to tell the world about our escape from chaos in our best-selling book *Sidetracked Home Executives: from pigpen to paradise*. The book has sold more than a million and a half copies and is still in bookstores after 35 years. (Actually, since most of our readers are disorganized, I’m guessing most purchased it, lost it, and had to go buy it again.) Because of that bestselling book, my sister and I got to crisscross the country appearing on television and radio. We even had our own television show on Christian Broadcasting called *Cleaning Up Your Act*. During that time, I was privileged to meet many stars, including Oprah Winfrey and Katie Couric. These two successful women shocked me when they both confessed to me how extremely disorganized they were. Katie pulled me aside before we were going on *The Today Show* and told me about borrowing a coat from a friend and returning it with a chicken bone in the pocket. (More on that ditty later.) Oprah also had slobbish tendencies which shocked me. By looking at these successful women and the empires they built, I never would have guessed they were SLOBS like me.

Besides Oprah and Katie, other examples of famous people who are known to be disorganized are: Olympic swimmer, Michael Phelps, Jim Carey, Steven Spielberg, Robin Williams, Stevie Wonder, Anthony Hopkins, Will Smith, Ted Turner, Beethoven, Pablo Picasso, Babe Ruth, Thomas Edison, Albert Einstein, Abraham Lincoln, Walt Disney, and Bill Gates. Knowing these people are like you should make you feel very good! You are in really good company.

So if it’s such a big deal to be organized, how did these disorganized folks become so successful in spite of their disorder? This is important! THEY SURROUNDED THEMSELVES WITH ORGANIZED PEOPLE. You’ve probably done that subconsciously to some extent. Do you have parents who are organized? A husband? Coworkers? Children? You admire organized people and that admiration attracts them to you, but until now you probably haven’t utilized their strengths the way you could. What’s worse is you may even have let them put you down while allowing yourself to do it also. Then you put them up on organization-pedestals. When you do that, you cause yourself friction and stress. Remember that being better at organizing doesn’t make someone a



better person. BOPS aren't better than we are. If you think they are, knock it off!

Use your creativity and think of ways to start utilizing the talents of organized people to your advantage. If you're married to a BOP, re-think your situation for a minute. Does he love to make lists? Is he willing to help, but he doesn't know what you will allow him to do? Is he afraid to help on his own for fear you'll criticize his work?

One thing that gets us into trouble is the idea that we have to do everything for everyone all the time, all by *ourselves*. That's simply not true. Our families can pull their weight. Our husbands can take care of things too. Our children can pick up their messes, and we can work as a team with co-workers to get the job done. The key is to delegate, but first you have to know what needs to be done. In Chapter Nine you'll see "The List."

Why do we try to do it all? I watched a funny movie called *Date Night* with Steve Carell and Tina Fey. They played a married couple with three young children. In the middle of their crazy escapades, they had a get-down-and-dirty-heart-to-heart talk about their marriage. Tina's side of the story was, she was exhausted and he didn't do a thing to help around the house. According to her, he just came home, ate, watched TV, got in bed, and expected sex.

His side of that story was that he *tried* to help, offered to help, but he could never do it right, to her standards. He said, "If you'd give up control of doing it all, I would help a lot." As you think about your spouse, think about how controlling you are. If you have high standards, are they worth being a martyr? Also, remember your husband was probably raised by a woman. I think there must be a saturation point when the female voice loses its influence on the male, unless of course it's used to seduce. Therefore, on my Make it Fun website, [www.makeitfunanditwillgetdone.com](http://www.makeitfunanditwillgetdone.com) I have a free audio download of a man listing the jobs in each room. You can also listen to me listing jobs in a sexy, throaty voice (not for you to use on your spouse, but for you to use to practice giving orders in the most effective voice). Finding that auditory sweet-spot can go a long way towards getting others to do what you've kindly, sweetly asked. You'll learn more about delegating in the next section.

Remember the old fable about the grasshopper and the ants? As it's been told in English, Greek, Latin and German, the grasshopper goofed off singing, dancing and playing his fiddle while the ants worked gathering food for the

winter. While the grasshopper was socializing, the ants were organizing. The organized ants warned the procrastinating grasshopper that he'd be sorry when winter came. According to the fable, when the snows fell, the grasshopper got cold and hungry and had to beg for food from the ants. We come away from the fable thinking the grasshopper was wrong, that he should have pulled his weight in the summer so he could make it through the winter. The way the tale is spun, it's about the hazards of playing and enjoying life and the attributes of working hard and being organized. That spin has been around for centuries. It's obvious the ant colonies of the world have a great lobby.

The lessons that failed to come out of that fable were about imbalance, lack of appreciation, and low self-esteem. It's about the inability of the ants to find joy and appreciate the music and entertainment given by the grasshopper and the grasshopper's failure to assert himself and show the ants his importance as a musician and happy companion. The ants should have been the ones to be warned that if they didn't find balance between work and play they might have food, but they could easily end up on a shrink's couch in search of meaning. All work and no play makes for very dull ants. The ants missed their opportunity to be entertained and be joyful. With a better self-image, the grasshopper would have been able to suggest helping the ants relax and enjoy life in exchange for food. Then everyone would have been happy.

Leave the organizing to the ants, pick up your fiddle and dance! It's nonsense to feel guilty because you aren't doing the work someone says you should be doing. Do you think Steven Spielberg feels guilty because he's not out on the farm hauling hay, slopping hogs, and milking cows? It's time to enjoy your disorder and learn to delegate.

### **A Brief Lesson on the Art of Delegating**

Handling a household is really like managing a small business. There is a lot to do to keep a home running smoothly. I found a job description for a homemaker in the Wall Street Journal in the early 1980s, which listed the necessary qualities for the position. As you'll see by the list, managing such a business is a highly creative job.

“Home management involves taste, fashion, decorating, recreation, education, transportation, psychology, romance, cuisine, designing, literature, medicine, animal care, handicrafts, art, horticulture,

economics, government, community relations, pediatrics, geriatrics, entertainment, maintenance, purchasing, direct mail, law, accounting, religion, energy management.” (Computers were not in every home in the early 80s so email, Facebook, and computer literacy would be on the list today.)

With a list like that, homes are like an amusement park for creative people and we can feel like a kid at Disneyland with a thick book of E-tickets. I like to call it acquisition vs. maintenance syndrome. Acquisition is like getting on that fair ride that promises to take us to thrilling heights. It’s fun settling in the seat, getting strapped in, and then reality hits. We realize we’re in over our heads, beyond our body’s ability to maintain its equilibrium, and we barf up our corn dog lunch in public. Maintenance is the cleanup part of life and it’s not very creative. It’s fun to get a puppy, a car, a boat, a plant, a baby, but then there’s the care and feeding of those things that doesn’t carry the same vibration as the acquiring.

Which is why you need to practice the delicate art of delegating: so you don’t get in over your head. Later I outline a simple plan for what needs to be done to keep your home peaceful. If you are going to use your voice to delegate, pick a nice, sweet, soft, sexy voice with your husband. You don’t have to have a southern accent, but it does have a way with the opposite sex. When requesting something from your child, use a kind, motherly tone. You’ll find if you smile as the words come out, your voice will carry that smile to the child. If you put your delegation in writing, it takes on authority, especially if it’s typed. When delegating it helps to preface your words with, “While I make dinner, please \_\_\_\_\_,” and you fill in the blank. Don’t ask *if* the person will do it, ask them *to* do it. Chances are your children aren’t familiar with the concept of a rhetorical question and therefore subconsciously think they have an option to say NO. It may take you awhile to get used to *telling* not *asking* your family what to do, but tell you must.

BOPs are master delegators and you can learn to be one too. As you practice delegating, you’ll get better and better at it. At first you’ll be uncomfortable telling others what to do, because you want them to like you, but when you see how simple my plan is, you’ll see how easy delegating can be. Just remember, you can’t tell your kids to make their beds if you’re still in yours. Before you panic (especially if you’re reading this book in bed right now), know that your ability to delegate will get stronger as you become stronger in realizing your personal power. Stop playing victim to your disorder which does

not serve you, your family, or your world. Whenever you are tempted to put a BOP on a pedestal, remember the fine company you are in, and turn that admiration back onto you.

### **It's Time to Celebrate!**

In my 35-year career helping homemakers get organized, I have volumes of “woe is me” letters and emails. After lectures and seminars, I’ve talked with thousands of women who get weepy when telling me of their failures as homemakers. “Help me, I’m so disorganized and I’m going under for the tenth time.” “I’ve been trying to get organized for twenty years, and I just can’t seem to do it.” “What’s the matter with me? Everyone else seems to be organized. How do they do it?” “I’m organized at work, but at home it’s a disaster.”

### *Stop Running Yourself Down!*

So you had six kids and only planned two. When you sit at the table (that probably wasn’t set before dinner) and you see those four happy extra faces, it’s time to celebrate! Work every day on enlightened selfishness and practice being kind to yourself. Re-read this chapter every time you start to lose your resolve to enjoy life. Remember the grasshopper. He wasn’t wrong, he just had bad PR. You are not wrong to put yourself first.

### **Secrets from this chapter:**

- Give yourself a break and stop putting organized people up on a pedestal and subsequently putting yourself down.
- Avoidance does *not* help tidy the house.
- Living at either end of the organization-stick is not very much fun! The middle of that stick is where the fun begins!
- C.S. Lewis, said, “Work is not always required . . . there is such a thing as sacred idleness, the cultivation of which is now fearfully neglected.”
- BOPs SURROUNDED THEMSELVES WITH ORGANIZED PEOPLE.

- Being better at organizing doesn't make someone a better person. BOPS aren't better than we are. If you think they are, knock it off!
- One thing that gets us into trouble is the idea that we have to do everything for everyone all the time, all by *ourselves*.
- The key is to delegate, but first you have to know what needs to be done. All work and no play makes for very dull ants.
- Recognize the gift of sacred idleness.
- When delegating, tell—don't ask.
- It's nonsense to feel guilty because you aren't doing the work someone says you should be doing.
- Stop Running Yourself Down!

## Chapter Two

### If You Are Disorganized You Are Gifted!

Have you ever stopped to think how blessed you are to be disorganized? Sure, your disorganized nature may have caused you to have a few extra kids, miss a bus or two, search for important papers, keys, or your purse, but behind the CHAOS (Can't Have Anyone Over Syndrome) you embody a spirit of joy, love, compassion, flexibility, imagination, creativity, and curiosity. And that's just naming a few of your amazing attributes!

Why is this trait such a gift? Well, you are blessed because you don't feel bothered when things are out of place. You focus on what's important and not trivialities. When the leaves fall in autumn, you appreciate that stunning spectacle from God instead of viewing it as *just more work to do*. You can fall asleep at night even if your bedroom is a mess or you left dishes in the sink. Do you know someone who wouldn't be able to sit and carry on a pleasant conversation if she saw a crumb on the carpet? While you're trying to share about your life, she's focused on that crumb. Until she plucks it from the rug, she can't have a conscious conversation with you. Can you imagine living with that pressure? Instead, you're happy to leave the crumb alone and let the dog take care of it while you enjoy your muffin on the couch, happily adding a few more crumbs to the floor. (After all, the dog needs to eat too.) You know how to go with the flow and that is priceless! Disorganization has served you well and is a blessing you were born with—so start being grateful for it. You are wonderful just the way you are right now!

### The Original SHE

SHE stands for Sidetracked Home Executives. Since I am the original SHE—I even came up with what the “S” stands for—I have been playing with that sidetracked aspect of my nature for a long, long time. What I have learned over the years is how valuable we are in our sidetrackedness! Because of our disorganization, we tend to get ourselves in jams that require our creativity to come to the rescue and bail us out.

For instance, during my childrearing years, almost every Halloween brought out the best in my ability to come up with last-minute costumes from what I could find around the house. The organized homemakers of the world purchase their children's costumes as soon as the Halloween displays are set up in August (they generally don't have the patience to sew). For us SHEs, there is often much joy in letting something go until the last minute because then we are forced to tap into our creative reservoir and come up with solutions using what we have on hand.

It's amazing what kind of costumes you can create using toilet paper tubes, ping pong balls, fabric, and duct tape. Who knew a child's black tights, a wire coat hanger and two CDs make great Mickey Mouse ears, or by using white tights and a coat hanger make great bunny ears. Who would ever think to smear Karo Syrup on her face and press it into fresh coffee grounds to make the best beard ever. Just think about it!

A few years ago, my husband Terry and I were invited to a Halloween costume party. I refuse to rent outfits from a costume store (on principal of course), but not until the evening of the party did my creative mind come up with the perfect costumes for us. Because the economy was in the toilet at the time, I decided we'd go to the party as Dow and Jones. If the stock market were a couple, this is surely what they would look like. We won first prize.

The holidays can take a toll on us SHEs if we allow it. Years ago, I refused to be sucked into the Christmas rat race of shopping for the perfect gifts. Instead, the Clark Kent in me would go into the phone booth and call upon my creative inner Super SHE, and I'd come up with fun and crazy ways to give cash. Like sticking a fortune cookie in the microwave for 20 seconds on high (enough time to have it open) and replacing the little fortune paper with a dollar bill. A box of fortune cookies filled with dollar bills makes a very nice gift. Or taking a dill pickle out of a jar of pickles and replacing it with a green balloon with a twenty-dollar bill in it. A simple label that reads: Bill Pickles finishes off the presentation. I love to give a basket of "doughnuts," which is walnuts cracked open on their seams and nuts replaced with bills of choice and glued back together. When doughnuts are given with a nutcracker, it invites the recipient to open a nut and see the surprise inside. Over the years I have come up with over 100 funny and clever ways to give plain 'ol cash just by going in that phone booth.

If I hadn't been disorganized and let Christmas sort of get away from me, I would never have created such fun and fantastic ways to give cash. That big festive problem of gift shopping turned out to generate thousands of dollars for me by sharing those money-giving ideas on Everybody Loves Money DVDs and downloads for my readers.

The word *sidetracked* is the perfect word to describe what happens to us in life. We get joyfully sidetracked by our kids, animals, brilliant ideas, the slant of the sun, the sound of the wind, and the time of year. The fabulous thing about us is that we almost always come through life's difficult situations with flying colors—like my experience with costumes and gifts. And when we don't, we aren't devastated the way a BOP might be when her precious plans get foiled. We've all witnessed a BOP or two gone berserk at the airport when travel plans were thwarted by a cancelled flight or even a gate change. Or when locked in line behind a coupon queen or new clerk in the grocery store. BOPs have trouble waiting. BOPs have trouble sitting still. BOPs have trouble in traffic. BOPs need to be in control. We don't.

Most people who are disorganized only focus on the negative aspects of it. Swayed by the perfection portrayed in the media, we start to think our homes and bodies should look like what is actually impossible to create without set designers and airbrush technicians. Magazines, television, movies, and advertising all want you to believe that perfection is possible. You could stop reading and watching them, but that doesn't sound like much fun! What we need to do is enjoy the *fantasy* of it all, suspend our disbelief for the fun of it, but at the same time remember that it's FAKE! Whenever we see a gorgeous woman on the cover of a magazine, a living room that makes us want to head to Pottery Barn, or the desire to recreate the exact recipes on the cover of *Food and Wine*, remember that a team of full-time professionals created it, staged it, photo shopped it, and manipulated those images. In fact, years ago while on a talk radio show, I had a discussion with the editor-in-chief of a famous women's magazine. She confessed that the gorgeous turkey on the November cover was plastic. Plastic! They haul it out every year! She told me they could never get a real turkey to look that good. It's just a guess, but I'm betting that the magazine's "perfect turkey" would taste pretty awful.

The lesson here is to celebrate what is real. Perfection is an illusion. If we can't meet the standards we see on television, in the movies, and in magazines, we can often give up and feel like failures. Refuse to allow anything FAKE the power to make you miserable. Are you going to let a plastic turkey make you



feel like a terrible cook? Those fake images we see every day are meant to inspire—but they really diminish us if we don't remember the truth. Don't give them power!

Right now, lift up your spirit by seeing your flaws with acceptance and remembering you are far more than the messes you live in. For one thing, you are the Queen of Plan B. You exercise your creative muscles more than those who make plans and follow them all the way to the finish line. Being friends with Plan B opens you up to synchronicity. That's what happens when you let the whims and hunches of life sidetrack you off your original plan. Those whims (you probably have many you can recall), can reveal roads and blessings you would never have known about if you weren't willing to deviate from the path of "ought-to and should."

My favorite synchronicity story happened one morning after my young kids were off to school. I decided to go into the Sidetracked Home Executive office instead of go grocery shopping. My secretary was surprised to see me because I rarely went in the office, preferring to be at home in my cozy office. She was in the middle of getting out our monthly newsletter, *SHEs on Track*, so I told her I'd answer the phones.

Among the calls I answered that morning, was a pleasant sounding woman from the south. She had read my sister's and my books and she called to ask if she could help people who were in the chat room of our website. She explained that there were many desperately disorganized women who had read our books and were still in need of help. She wanted to help them. In the conversation she shared that one of our books had really changed her life and given her the strength to get out of a very unhappy marriage. I could tell by her sincerity that her heart was filled with love and compassion for those who needed one-on-one encouragement. I gave her the green light to step in and help.

Today that woman is known as the Flylady, and her connection to helping disorganized women is phenomenal. Had I not gone into that office that day and answered the phone, who knows if there would even be a Flylady as we know her. One thing is for sure, both of our lives would be drastically different today if we had never met. And all because I went into the office on a whim. A.A. Milne said, "One of the amazing advantages of being disorganized is that one is always having surprising discoveries." Organized people rarely tap into whims and hunches, because they stay on the path of their to-do lists and

don't deviate. Goal driven, they miss some of the most fantastic opportunities. I might have gotten groceries that day, but instead launched an angel like Marla Cilley the Flylady. I'm pretty sure I wouldn't have remembered what I would have bought at the store that day, but I will always remember that phone call.

## **ADD: Attention Deficit Disorder**

I've been in disorganized remission since 1977. In that time, I've been writing and teaching about how to be organized from a reformed slob's point of view. My theory is that in most cases, being disorganized is a genetic disorder. Today doctors call it ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) which they claim is genetic too, but back when I began my reformation people like me were just called slobs, ding bats, scatterbrained, or lazybones.

I intended to get checked for ADD, but I forgot my appointment and got a pedicure instead. My toes looked great, and truthfully, I really didn't need a diagnosis. I'm already fully aware that I have ADD-like symptoms. I can't count the times I've set out for the mailbox with every intention of getting the mail, only to be distracted by something before I get there. I once stood outside and watched the cable guy drilling a hole in the neighbor's yard, only to end up at the mall getting my ears pierced. If that's not bad enough, I often find items in my hands that just don't go together. One time I ended up in the garage with an athletic supporter in one hand and my copy of *The Power of Now* in the other. I never did remember why I was in the garage to begin with—or why I was holding an athletic supporter.

In my scattered past, I learned a few tricks for avoiding my proclivity to get sidetracked. For one thing, it's important to always check your hands to see what's in them when you leave a room. That'll save unconscious clutter migration. (And of course, less to clean up and put away later.)

Another tip I learned by observing a goat that I saw tethered to a post on a nearby farm. Her rope was about six feet long, and she had munched a lovely, smooth, putting green-like circle out of a thick, weed-ridden patch. So I decided to try this trick at home on myself.

I tethered my leg to the kitchen table, giving myself access to about five feet of mess in every direction. My quest was to clean up the space without being

distracted by other areas in the house. I was armed with Pledge, a dust rag, a garbage bag, and a basket for stuff to put away.

The tether worked! Until the phone rang. That's a distraction I just can't ignore. I sprinted for the phone to pick it up before the answering machine, forgetting I was ankle-bound to the table. The force of my forward motion, coupled with the non-elastic jump ropes I'd lashed together, sent my foot backwards in one perfectly executed Michael Jackson moonwalk step, before I belly flopped (uninjured) several feet from the phone. The machine clicked on as I lay on the floor, and I listened to my mother say, "Hi Sweetie, I'm on my way over, do you want me to bring lunch?" Well, the tether was a good idea. But it's best to put your phone on mute and use yarn.

Today, doctors dispense drugs for ADD or symptoms associated with ADD-like behavior, but you don't need drugs if you'll stop putting yourself down and start accepting yourself for who you are. Psychologists agree that when we view disorganized traits in a positive light and when such traits are nurtured as a special gift, children often grow into high-achieving adults. It's never too late to turn *adults* around with the same techniques that work for kids. Whether you are a Winfrey or a Couric, a Smith or Jones, your time has come to delight in the mess you're in. And here's why. When you change your mind about your disorganization being a problem and instead see it as a divine gift, you change the chemistry of your brain. I don't know how—just like I don't know how the remote makes the garage door go up and down with a simple click—but we don't have to know *how* something works to use it. What I do know is that a refreshing new perspective free of self-criticism and negativity will give you a positive change of attitude. That attitude gives you a better shot at getting organized just enough to bring peace out of chaos.

Decide right now to start recognizing the benefits of this disorder and decide not to fight or struggle with it. Instead, utilize the creative genius that goes with it to make getting organized fun. You are a precious child of God created to enjoy the life He gave you, not merely struggle through it. Changing your thinking starts with your imagination, and you have a marvelous one! Read the paragraph below and let your imagination soar. It is powerful beyond measure! Get into the *feeling* of being organized, even though the picture I paint might not match the reality of your home *right now*. You're going to love this!

Take a deep breath, and continue slow deep breaths as you read this.

*I love my life. I am thankful I live in this home filled with love, beauty, joy, and order. There is freshness in the air and lightness in my spirit because my home is clean and free of clutter. My windows sparkle. I am at ease and content because I have help and cooperation from my family and friends. I am free to play with my talents. I am strong. I am a good delegator. I am willing to pay for help with cleaning and gardening. I love being able to share my wealth with those who love the work I don't like to do. I am gifted and I use it to lift up a world that needs my gift. All is well and I am filled with Divine Energy.*

Before you read the next chapter, spend a few days loving yourself just the way you are. It might feel uncomfortable at first, but you can do it! If you catch yourself putting yourself down, don't get all upset, just notice it and replace those negative words with soothing, positive ones. Consider apologizing to yourself and remind yourself you are just learning this new way of thinking. All is well! Start recognizing the gift you are. Be easy with yourself before you go any further. For the next week, read the meditation five minutes before you go to sleep each night. There is holy power in that time just before you fall asleep. Start seeing what God sees when He looks at you. You do know that He is thrilled with you, don't you?

He is!

### **Secrets from this chapter:**

- You know how to go with the flow and that is priceless! Disorganization has served you well and is a blessing you were born with—so start being grateful for it. You are wonderful just the way you are right now!
- What we need to do is enjoy the *fantasy* of magazines, television and movies, suspend our disbelief for the fun of it, but at the same time remember that it's FAKE!
- The gorgeous turkey on the November cover of a popular magazine is plastic! Those fake images are meant to inspire, but they really diminish us if we don't remember the truth. Do not give them power.
- It's important to always check your hands to see what's in them when you leave a room. Doorway checkpoints stop clutter migration.

- Today, doctors dispense drugs for ADD or symptoms associated with ADD-like behavior, but you don't need drugs if you'll stop putting yourself down and start accepting yourself for who you are.
- A refreshing new perspective free of self-criticism and negativity will give you a positive change of attitude. That attitude will give you a better shot at getting organized just enough to bring peace out of chaos.
- Start recognizing the gift you are. Be easy with yourself before you go any further.

## Chapter Three

### You Are Not Alone

Now that you realize what a heavenly piece of work you are, it's time to talk about getting organized for the right reasons. If your primary reason is to have a home that is peace on earth, see you are way more than just a homemaker, you are a *peacemaker*. Peace is really what we want to feel in our homes and making and keeping it peaceful is all about establishing routines as you'll see in my plan later in the book. Like the song lyrics, *Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me*, when our goal is to establish peace, not perfection, it's easier to stop trying to get organized and start living as peacemakers. Then order will become a natural byproduct.

There are two steps that will take you out of the mess and into peace. Step one is commitment for the right reasons and step two is my peace plan.

#### **Step One: Commitment For the Right Reasons**

“Commitment” feels like such a heavy word, doesn't it? When we commit to things for the wrong reasons, that word can be a smelly, dead fish around our neck. Wanting to be like the BOPs of the world is a BIG mistake. Trying to get out of the mess you're in to please your husband, appease your judgmental mother-in-law, or keep your children happy, will never work. When you take YOU out of the reasons to change, you've neglected your biggest supporter and advocate. But when you make a commitment for the right reasons, the word lightens right up. The smelly fish disappears. So what are some good reasons to commit to making your home a peaceful oasis from the world?

When I got organized back in 1977, my reason was so that I'd have more free time to play. I also wanted to make enough money doing what I loved to do, to pay someone to clean my house and keep my yard looking beautiful. At the time I loved to sew, cook, sing, write funny poems and songs, talk on the phone with friends, make them laugh, and uplift them with my humorous take on life. I never felt in order to be a “good woman” I had to do all the work that was required to make a home neat, clean, and run smoothly. That attitude

came from a generation of women whose worth was predicated on their housekeeping skills. I knew I just wanted to be a happy homemaker and have a home that was peaceful and clean.

I remember when my mother hired a cleaning person. She didn't want her mother-in-law or sisters-in-law to know. I was an adult and I remember she asked me not to tell Grandma Dot, Aunt Toddy, or Aunt Viv if the subject ever came up when I was with them. By that time, my mom had a business in her home and worked long, hard hours teaching ceramics, but somehow she couldn't justify having cleaning help to her in-laws. I think she wanted them to think she was an amazing woman who could do it all. It was also at that time when magazines and books were touting the Super Woman. We were told we could do it all, and of course we can't.

Today, housework is generally free of gender discrimination. Instead of household chores being referred to as "women's" work, they are now commonly thought about as "people-who-live-in-the-house" work.

In *Sidetracked Home Executives* I wrote about my goal to have a cleaning person come in once a week and I wasn't ashamed in the least when I paid someone to do that work. I respect the people who do this work for me and I pay them well. They allow me to play with what I love to do, which is still sew, cook, sing, write and talk, among a thousand other activities.

When I took that first step out of the pigpen, I look back and remember feeling such passion for this new project. My enthusiasm was boundless and so was my energy. Back then I didn't question my zeal because I was in the middle of it. But now I know why. The reason I had such energy was because I was committed to getting organized for the right reasons. I knew I'd be happier when the laundry was done and the dishes were clean and put away so I could play. I knew getting groceries regularly would make fixing meals a joy for me, and I could have fun in my kitchen. I knew if I wore a watch and used a calendar I'd quit missing appointments and fun events. I knew having a home that was always ten minutes away from being able to invite unexpected guests in, would make me happy since I'm such a social animal. I knew I'd feel better with a routine that got me dressed and fixed up first thing in the morning and would prepare me to go anywhere a whim might propel me. I knew I wanted to capture the freedom and liberation that comes with being organized so I could play guilt-free. I didn't know those reasons came from a nine-year-old I would name Nelly!

I didn't meet Nelly (my inner child) until July 4, 2002 when I was at a very low time in my life. I was buried in almost \$27,000 of credit card debt and was given the opportunity to write a humorous "how to" book about household financial organization. That book would have put me back in the black, but it also would've been the phoniest book ever written! I'd have to say to my readers, "Here's how to organize your finances and get out of debt—write a clever book about how to do that." What a ridiculous notion!

One night, in the middle of my financial nightmare, I woke up with a start! It was 2:00 am. I went into my home office and sat at my computer and cried. I started to pray and I asked God, "What is wrong with me?" I'd read a bunch of books on financial organization, how to get out of debt, and how to budget. I knew I'd have to fix things, but I didn't *want* to do it. After a bit of silence the answer came in the form of a question: "How old have you been acting when it comes to your finances?" I wasn't prepared to be questioned! This questioning voice had some nerve! I was shocked, but it did make me think.

My financial behavior was that of about a nine-year-old. That's when I realized if I were going to write a helpful book about being financially solvent, I'd have to fix my financial situation by addressing this immature part of me. My Questioner told me to get to know this little nine-year-old, name her, and write the book from *that part of me* to *that part of others* who were in a similar situation. How brilliant is that?

I named her Nelly after Nelly Olson on the television show, "Little House on the Prairie," because, when I first met her, she was a brat. Slowly, over time, she has become such a good little girl and today she is hardly ever a brat.

Even though I didn't meet Nelly until 2002, that probing, inner question could have just as easily been asked in 1977. "How old have you been acting when it comes to keeping house?" When I think about it, Nelly was there in 1977, I just didn't know it. (Your inner child is always with you.) Who wanted more free time to play back then? Nelly did! Now that you know you need a good reason to create a peaceful home, ask your inner child, "What are some reasons to keep reading this book? Why should we find out what the Peace Plan is?" You may need to get quiet and breathe some nice deep breaths in order to make contact with this little girl part of you. It's also good to have a notebook and



pen ready to take notes. It shows respectful concern that you are listening to your precious child within.

Once you get a couple of good reasons to start being committed to change, you'll start to feel your energy surface, but there's still a little work to do before you're ready for the plan. If you haven't been in contact with your inner child up to this point and this is the first blush of your relationship, you'll find you have some fence mending to do. You know what happens when a child gets ignored. The child can become a real brat! Not incorrigible, but nevertheless a brat. Shining the light of your attention on this ignored part of you will definitely stir things up.

One woman told me when she told her inner child they were going to finish cleaning the kitchen before they read a book, her inner child balked and said, "NO! We're going to read the book now. Who are YOU to tell me what to do? You're not the boss of me!" The woman said the response struck her funny! Here was an all-out battle over KP! Since this woman had read about my rules for disputes such as this, she said to her little bratty voice in a very sweet way, "Don't talk that way to me little girl or we won't read at all tonight. I am the boss now and we are going to finish up the kitchen and when we're through, you'll see how much better you'll feel and we'll read our book. Remember the reasons we promised to stay committed to our goal? You said you'd go along with me so we can move to that neighborhood you want to live in, but we can't do that until we sell this house and it needs to be pretty at all times."

Self-discipline is remembering what you really want! When we practice being in touch with our inner child, we have power as the adult to remind the child in us what we really want. If you're a mother, you know full-well it's the nature of a child to forget. Part of a successful parent's role is reminding children in a loving, guiding, way what is really desired.

Before I tell you about the Peace Plan, I want you to spend some time with your new acquaintance. If you've never worked or played with your inner child before, you really need some time to get to know her. She REALLY knows you! She's been right there with you all along. You are the one who's been ignoring *her*. You grew up and got breasts and the rest is history. Growing into an adult took all your attention and then you had kids of your own and a house, and a husband and a mother-in-law and income taxes and cell phones and Facebook and a mortgage. You got busy.

If the concept of an inner child isn't easy for you to get your head around, think about this: Who is the "I" and who is "myself" in the following statements?

~ I felt sorry for myself

~ I was beside myself

~ I asked myself

~ I beat myself up

~ I promised myself

~ I'm too hard on myself

~ I amazed myself

~ I let myself go (if you let yourself go, you can get yourself back)

~ I need to take time to find myself

~ I fought with myself

I've written two other books starring Nelly and if you've read either one of them, you'll recognize this excerpt that really helps people grasp the concept of having an inner child.

I want you to pretend you're a forty-something guy and you hear the phone ring.

"Ring, ring, ring?"

"Carl, here, what's up?"

"Hi Carl, guess who?"

"Uhhh, I don't know, say somethin' else."

"Well, does Aspen ring a bell?"

"Aspen? Who is this?"

"It's Michelle."

“Michelle? Michelle Aspen?”

“No, silly, Michelle Rockford, Aspen *Square*.”

“Michelle Rockford, Aspen Square? Oh yeah! Hey you’re the great skier!”

“Yeah, we did a little more than ski together.”

“Yeah, we did! What can I do ya for?”

Clears throat, “Well, it was nine years ago today that we were, you know, together?”

“Wow, it doesn’t seem like that long ago!”

“I know, but guess what?”

“What?”

“You’ve got a kid and I can’t take care of him anymore.”

“A kid?”

“Yeah, a kid! And he’s yours now. Oh, and one thing you should know, he’s a real slob. He’s so disorganized that if you don’t figure out what to do with him; he’ll tear up your house in a week!”

If you haven’t had a relationship with your inner child before, suddenly finding out you have one can be quite a shock, like poor Carl experienced. I hope the conversation between Carl and Michelle helps you to see the position you’re in right now.

Getting to know and love your inner child is kind of a sneaky backdoor way to get to know and love yourself. It’s so much easier to love and understand a child. Seeing the child within you really gives you compassion—then you’re able to give yourself some slack. When you find out how important it is to love yourself, and especially when you’ve never thought much about it before, it’s not uncommon to get stopped by all the programming that’s been done to you. You hear voices from your mother, “That’s selfish! Think of others first.” Don’t let those thoughts play in your mind anymore. Keep remembering to love who you are.

When you misjudge yourself by putting yourself down (we SHEs are notorious for this) you are not loving yourself. How many times have you torn yourself apart (as well as the house) simply because you lost something? You can't love yourself if you don't know yourself. You would never tell a stranger "I love you," but when it comes to you loving that person you see in the mirror, unless you know her you can't really love her. It takes effort and focus to get to know who you are and your home is the perfect teacher to join you and your inner child in a most delicious romance.

Envision your *inner child* as having the organizational problem, and think about how the adult you would handle a "real" messy child if she were put in your care. We, as women, are nurturers. I think it's because we can give all our focus and caring to others, while neglecting our own well-being. Have you ever noticed how willing you are to help someone else clean up their mess while your own home is a wreck? If you're a nurturing, caring person and you are overwhelmed with the disorder, all you have to do is start to focus on your inner child. Would you let that child play before chores were done? Would you let her watch television or play video games if her homework wasn't finished? Would you let her stay up all hours of the night playing computer games? When you become a kind, loving, and nurturing parent to your inner child, the chaos will disappear. Use each situation or problem as an opportunity to get to know, love, and take care of YOU. Your little one is waiting for you.

The Peace Plan in this book is for the adult part of you, but unless you've got the support and buy-in from your inner child, you may as well close this book and put it in the Goodwill box. Over the next few days, get to know your inner child and uncover some juicy reasons to go for peace not perfection in your home. If your inner child tends to be a brat about this, don't despair! With some tender, loving care she will blossom into an angel. Give her a chance!

### **Secrets from this chapter:**

- If your primary reason is to have a home that is peace on earth, see you are way more than just a homemaker, you are a peacemaker.

- Wanting to be like the BOPs of the world is a BIG mistake.
- Your inner child is always with you.
- Self-discipline is remembering what you really want!
- Use each situation or problem as an opportunity to get to know, love, and take care of YOU. Your little one is waiting for you.

## Chapter Four

### Enjoy Your Life and Love What You Do

Remember in school when your teacher would spring a pop quiz on the class just to make sure everyone was really dedicated to studying each night? Your palms got sweaty as you listened to those dreaded words: “Class, put your books away, and clear your desks. We’re going to have a pop quiz. The score will be 98% of your grade.”

Well, that’s what I’m going to do now. Don’t start sweating; this quiz won’t be 98% of your grade. Don’t skip this pop quiz because it will help you know what you really want. Before you take the quiz, make three columns on a blank piece of paper and label them Yes, No, and Sometimes. Place a tally mark under the correct column as you answer the questions. After you take the quiz, I’ll tell you what it all means.

- Do you really want to be more organized?
- Do you use a calendar daily?
- Do you wear a watch?
- Are you addicted to adrenaline?
- Are you afraid to open storage containers in the refrigerator?
- Are you continually locked out, left behind, overwhelmed and overdrawn?
- Would you like your bank to have a no charge policy for overdrafts ?
- Would you like to know what costumes your kids are going to wear on Halloween before it’s time to actually trick-or-treat?
- Do you buy greeting cards and never mail them?
- Do you feel guilty because you love your home and your family, but it doesn’t show?
- Considering your age, do you think it is too late to get organized?

- Do you think being more organized would give you more free time to do what you love to do?
- What do you love to do? (Do not skip this question. Write your answer on the page you are keeping score on. It's really important.)
- Could being more organized bring you more money?
- If you were more organized, would you have a better self-image than you do now?
- Would there be more peace in your life if you were more organized?
- Would you look better than you do now, if you were more organized?
- Would you be healthier if you were more organized?
- Do you have too much stuff?
- Why? (Don't skip this one either.)
- Would you like to have all your belongings pre-shipped to your next vacation destination?
- Would you like to feel as if you are on vacation when you are at home?
- Are you afraid to let go of anything even if you haven't used it in a year?
- What would give you the courage to do that? (Don't skip this.)
- If I told you there is no need to fear letting go of 60% of your stuff because Goodwill can store it for you and you can go visit it or buy it back, would that make you laugh because you hadn't thought of that and it's a good idea?
- Could there be a part of you that hasn't grown up?
- How old have you been acting when it comes to homemaking?
- Can you think of some ways you could motivate a child of that age so he/she would help you out and ultimately love your advice and love you?
- If you got in touch with that part of you, do you think it might make a difference?
- Have you met your inner child yet?

- How about right now?

I tricked you! Your answers to the questions were to get you to think about being more organized, but more importantly, they were to get you to recognize what you love to do, why you have too much stuff, how old you've been acting when it comes to doing housework, and what you can do to get your inner child to cooperate with you. As your relationship with your inner child grows, you will find it easier and easier to become more organized. A natural consequence of joy and happiness is peace, and that's what my plan will help you achieve.

Knowing what you love to do and choosing to do those activities is really important. In the early eighties, I remember meeting a woman who loved to watch soap operas. She watched every one each day and if two were on at the same time, she'd record one and watch it at night. I don't remember her name, but she had a successful television show and made a lot of money discussing the shows with her audience. What could look like a total waste of time to a BOP made this woman a fortune. There are many books on the market about doing what you love to do and the money will follow. The ones I've read say to dream your little heart away and let your head be in the clouds, but surround yourself with organized people so you can pull your dreams down to earth. Then other people can see them when they eventually become a physical reality. I wrote a poem about it.

### Success 101

I wanted to go into business, but I didn't have a dime  
And *they* said I couldn't do it, that I wouldn't have the time  
To keep my house in order and run the business too  
My home was the most important, I sure knew that was true

But if I hadn't gotten married, I could have finished college  
How dare *they* say I didn't have the necessary knowledge  
True, I didn't use the words that go with business education  
Like P & L's and balance sheets and effort duplication



But I had a store of knowledge, gleaned from raising my family  
Can't commerce be successfully built on a mother's qualities?  
I could appreciate a flower when it's given without a stem  
Marvel at an ugly rock as if it were a gem

I had expertise in finance and a flair for decorating  
Knowledge of psychiatry and Band Aid applicating  
Willing to accommodate pet relationships  
Detective skills in cases like the missing chocolate chips

Qualified and competent in diplomatic circles  
Adolescent counseling (in short) performing miracles  
A magician in the kitchen with a pound of hamburger  
An ability to touch a cheek and know its temperature

So what if I thought the Wall Street Journal was written just for men?  
Who fly around in pinstriped suits and write with Gold Cross pens  
And the gross national product, it's never been explained  
Who picks the grossest item and gives it national acclaim?

The bottom line is simple, success is not a dream  
It's not some pie in heaven or some shyster's jerky scheme  
Success is being happy and loving what you do  
And business is just sharing what you love with someone new

Sure, this book isn't about going into business, but it *is* about getting your priorities straight about what you love to do which can ultimately create income for you if you need it. When you get in touch with what it is you love, it will only be natural to want to do more and more of it. Unless your joy is doing housework, you are going to need some help with it. Whether you get that help from your family (which my plan will help you with) or you pay someone, what you love to do is worth money and it can help pay for what you *don't* love to do.

Over the years, I've talked to hundreds of women who've forgotten what it is they love to do and the question they ask is almost always the same: "How do I find out?" The best way to do that is to remember what you loved to do as a child. Did you love to be outdoors? Did you love to play house? Did you love

to color? What did you love doing? Your inner child will definitely help you with this. Also think about what you were complimented for by your parents, teachers and friends. Start becoming aware of what you are doing when you lose track of time. When you look through magazines or play with Pinterest be aware of the photos that catch your fancy, for they are also a key to what makes you happy and gives you passion.

Until you decide to do what you love to do, and do what pleases *you*, you'll continue to try to please others, and you'll fight and struggle to be organized. When you don't honor your magnificence, then there's a good chance you are on someone else's path. Be on your own path, dear one. It's time to get back to what you love. Here's a challenge for you. When it's time to make a New Year's resolution, don't make it be, "to get organized." Make it be, "to love yourself and do what you love to do." We've all been told for too long that it's wrong to love yourself, that it's selfish. Well, my dear reader, it's time to blow your nose on that! Self-love should be your first priority.

I was reading about Clare Booth Luce. The world saw her as one of the most successful women in the twentieth century. She was a playwright, author, a Congresswoman for two terms, and an Ambassador to Italy. She was also a mother and the wife of publishing tycoon Henry Luce, cofounder of *Life* and *Time* magazines. But this amazing woman confessed that she often thought, "If I were to write my autobiography, the title would be *The Autobiography of a Failure.*"

She was quoted as saying, "I would say my worst failure, paradoxically, was a rather long-drawn-out-series of relative successes, none of which were in theater."

Clare Booth's theatrical career was thriving (she had written five plays) when she married Luce in 1935, and her play *The Women* became a smash hit on Broadway the following year. But her husband believed that theater was an avocation, nothing more than "night work." So when Clare married Henry, she did what many women do, she put her passions on the back burner. We undermine our precious dreams to please those who wield more power. It's been told that Clare never wanted to run for Congress. It was entirely her husband Henry's idea. After two terms in Congress, Clare tried to resign from

political life to start writing again. But she experienced a series of staggering losses that came in rapid succession: the deaths of her mother, brother, and her only child—a daughter—in an accident. For Clare Booth Luce, life came to a halt, and it was a long time before she felt like living again. After a while, she began to tell herself, “Maybe you’re not a writer. Maybe you’ll never be a writer again.” And although she did eventually write articles and books, she never went back to her first love, the theater. She mourned the path she had abandoned for the rest of her life.

Don’t do that! Live your path. Your path is all about you. Go for it. Seek happiness over getting organized. You came here to enjoy life, not to struggle through it. In your pursuit of happiness, be kind to yourself when you get sidetracked. Don’t be afraid to be yourself, sidetracked and all. When you are true to yourself and adore who you are, your love-of-self will spill over onto others and lead you in the direction of your purpose. You are connected to everything. You touch the lives of everyone around you, who then affect others. (Facebook shows us that!) Your obligation, and mine, is to be the *love* we are. That’s why we’re here. Allow yourself to get your answers from within in the way that’s most appropriate for you. Enjoy the process and enjoy yourself. Don’t take yourself or life too seriously.

## Enlightened Selfishness

You were made by God. You didn’t make you. The more you can get to know this *thing* God made, the happier you’ll be. You’ll learn that when you do what makes you happy the world around you is a better place. It’s called “Enlightened Selfishness”—a term I coined in *Sidetracked Home Executives*. The basic precept is that we need to take care of ourselves first and *then* help others. I likened it to the airlines when they say, “If we lose cabin pressure an oxygen mask will drop from the ceiling. Put your mask on first and then assist your child.” You can’t help anyone else if you are flailing around for oxygen and suffocating. Similarly, you need to take control and fill yourself up before you can fill up others. An empty cup is just an empty cup. It’s not going to quench anybody’s thirst.

You are destined to be with you forever, and the sooner you figure out who you are and what you love, the sooner you will be happy. When you are happy, you'll be a joy to be around and a light to almost everyone you meet. It may take practice—for we have been taught to take care of everyone else first. That's over. It's time to think about YOU. Deciding to be happy is a decision to make God happy whether you know it or not. You've all heard that saying, "If Mama ain't happy, nobody's happy." Another way to look at it is, "When Mama is happy, *everybody* is happy." The happier and more joyful you are, the closer you are to being in harmony with all life. There's no greater purpose in life than to live for the love and fulfillment of your happiness. The only way to do that is by doing what brings you happiness, regardless of what anyone else thinks. There are only two discriminating eyes you should ever care about: your left one and your right one. What somebody else thinks about you is none of your concern. In fact, don't ask others what they think; it's only important what *you* think.

## Happiness is Joy

I love this quote from John Lennon: "When I was 5 years old my mother always told me that happiness was the key to life. When I went to school, they asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up. I wrote down 'happy.' They told me I didn't understand the assignment, and I told them they didn't understand life."

What is joy? Children know what joy is even though most wouldn't be able to put it into words. If you've spent any time watching kids play, you have seen joy. When I was growing up, we lived next to an elementary school. I loved to not only watch the kids chase each other, jump, roll, or play ball, but I also loved the sound of that play. The laughter and the screams of delight all blended into a symphony of joy. Joy is freedom. It is freedom of movement, freedom of expression without judgment, and freedom of living without fear or guilt.

One winter, I watched several dogs in the neighborhood demonstrate joy over the first snowfall. At the time, Mojo (a five-year-old chocolate lab), saw me from about one hundred yards away and ran to me at full speed unable to

stop. He shot past me, leaped and turned in the air, and stopped about a foot from me as if to say, “Common, Pam, let’s play, look at this snow!” Lucky, my son’s yellow lab, was deaf and arthritic, but still turned puppy with the beautiful white stuff. I’ve even heard horses get silly in the snow. I love that God didn’t just give humans the ability to express joy.

I believe to be happy and joyous is God’s only desire for us. It’s probably the greatest accomplishment in life. To understand how to have joy in everyday life is our destiny. For when we are in a state of joy and happiness, we have become like God, for one of the attributes of God *is* joy. When you are happy with your life, you can’t feel regretful, timid, frightened, annoyed, or wanting. In a state of joy, you are fulfilled and complete, and life, wisdom, and creativity flow from you like a powerful river. When you are happy, life isn’t drudgery, but a wondrous adventure that you want to experience even more. So how do you become joyful? First, by practicing expressing joy in as many moments of your life as you can, and by knowing nothing is ever worth separating yourself from happiness. When you understand these two things, you are loving God!

## **Happiness Sappers**

There are some obstacles to being happy and finding joy, however. One of the biggest obstacles that holds us back is our infatuation with reality shows and horrible, sensationalized news. I know we’re human and most of us are naturally curious about bad news. We slow traffic by rubber-necking our way past an accident on the freeway. We perk at the prospect of some juicy gossip about a co-worker or neighbor. We swoon to discover the nasty truth about some celebrity.

In today’s age of information technology, we’re bombarded with news at the speed of light. Back in 1929 when the stock market crashed for instance, we didn’t have CNN or FOX or the Internet. Our great grandparents didn’t get satiated with news 24/7. They got a newspaper once a day (maybe) and they listened to the radio (maybe).

Because of our easy access to information, we can be barraged with bad news, because the gory details are as close as our finger on the clicker or the mouse

on our computer. It's one thing to be aware of what is going on in the world, our country, and our community, but it's quite another to watch the reruns and regurgitated opinions of "the experts" as they re-hash the latest travesties while we surf from channel to channel to watch the stories covered from a different angles.

There is a price to pay when we obsessively watch the bad press we "love." We suffer needlessly. We suffer when we allow our focus to be on horrific events happening in the news. We suffer when we indulge in phone conversations that carry news of someone's layoff, divorce, or cancer. We suffer when we allow people outside our immediate family to affect our attitude at the dinner table. We suffer when we let the fears of others scare us. We suffer when we believe the media's images of how awful things are in the world.

When we get caught up in the negative daily news, it can sap our happiness and we can forget to enjoy ourselves. We have such power to stop much of our own suffering, and we can stop it right now, right in our home, and with our family. Just turn off the TV. Turn off the computer. Choose to watch, listen, and pay attention to something different. Something positive that will bring happiness and joy.

### **Happiness *is* a habit.**

It takes practice to establish the habit of being happy and joyful especially if we've gotten into the habit of reacting negatively to what happens to us. Sure, life has its ups and downs. But our happiness isn't dependent on what happens to us, but on our attitude about what happens—that's where practice comes in. When you take each yesterday, boil it down to the best and the worst events, even the worst event can bring good. And of course good perpetuates good. We *choose* how we react or respond to what happens.

The happy memories you leave behind when you die will be your gift to your loved ones. You owe it to yourself and to everyone around you to be happy and to spread that joy around. Begin every new day with that feeling you have on January first, that full-of-hope excitement. Envision yesterday and last year

as an old man. Say, “Goodbye. It’s been nice knowing you, learning from you, and living with you,” and then let him go. When you awake each morning, envision that new day as a newborn baby, bursting with potential. Say, “I can’t wait to see what today is going to bring. I’m going to watch, learn, listen, and love every minute I can today so I don’t miss a thing.” When you go to sleep each night, think back on your day and how it went. It’s okay if you didn’t get everything done. Tomorrow you can try again. It feels good to start right where we are, free from guilt, yet full of hope. Every day can be January first. Carry that feeling over each day until it becomes a habit.

You were put on this earth to enjoy the ride, not to get things done. You are a human being, not a human doing. Enjoy being alive and you will be pleasantly surprised at how much you will accomplish.

#### **Secrets from this chapter:**

- A natural consequence of joy and happiness is peace.
- Knowing what you love to do and choosing to do those activities is really important.
- Until you decide to do what you love to do, and do what pleases *you*, you’ll continue to try to please others, and you’ll fight and struggle to be organized.
- When it’s time to make a New Year’s resolution, don’t make it be, “to get organized.” Make it be, “to love yourself and do what you love to do.”
- Live your path. Your path is all about you. Go for it. Seek happiness over getting organized.
- You were made by God. You didn’t make you. The more you can get to know this *thing* God made, the happier you’ll be.

- When you are happy, you'll be a joy to be around and a light to almost everyone you meet.
- Don't ask others what they think; it's only important what *you* think.
- So how do you become joyful? First, by practicing expressing joy in as many moments of your life as you can, and by knowing nothing is ever worth separating yourself from happiness.
- We have such power to stop much of our own suffering, and we can stop it right now, right in our home, and with our family. Just turn off the TV.
- You were put on this earth to enjoy the ride, not to get things done.

## Chapter Five

### *Your Highness*

In the early 80s, my sister and I were frequently on a show called "People Are Talking" in Baltimore, Maryland. The hosts of the live morning talk show were Richard Sher and Oprah Winfrey. We were on the show many times and got to know and love Oprah. She was a great interviewer and so enthusiastic about life and our books on getting organized, especially *Sidetracked Home Executives* (SHE). When Oprah likes a book, she highlights, dog ears, and sticky-notes it, and her copy of our book was bulging with marks. She had confessed many times to being a SHE, and she'd always clutch our book during our interviews with such a sense of hope that it would help her. She was one of our best salespersons because she understood what it was like to be a SHE.

After one of our appearances on the show, I accidentally left my purse in the make-up room at the studio and didn't realize it until we got back to our hotel. I called the station and told the producer what had happened and she said, "Not a problem, we found it and Oprah is on her way over to your hotel with



it.” Not long after that call, our phone rang and it was Oprah in the lobby. I invited her to come up to our room.

We felt maternal as we chatted with her! We were ten years older than she was and we’d been on many national television shows and several book tours with our story in numerous newspapers and magazines. She was young, so talented and smart, and eager to learn. I loved that she especially valued the spiritual aspect of our books. We felt she was one of our prize students. At that time, Oprah was only known in Baltimore and her hometown in Tennessee. We were experts in a field she needed help with, and Peggy and I knew she was a SHE through and through. We talked about how easy it was to lose track of time and that we hired people who were born organized to help us in business. Our rule has always been: surround yourself with BOPs.

As I recall, Oprah stayed about an hour, and I can still see her propped up on our bed telling us how much she wanted to be more organized. She told us how much she loved to shop and that her finances were a mess. She shared with us her authorization prayer, “Please God, let this credit card work one more time without an authorization call, and I promise I’ll get my finances fixed!” We howled with joy over her prayer and told her we understood it too. I love how ironic her statement was. Today, she is one of the wealthiest females in the world!

Another example of an extremely successful SHE is Katie Couric. Remember that coat story I mentioned at the beginning of the book? It’s a good one. Katie once shared with me, “I borrowed my friend’s coat to wear home because it got cold. Then, on another day, I was wearing the coat, walking the dog, and eating a chicken drumstick. When I was finished with it, I didn’t want to throw the bone in the park, because I didn’t want the dog to get it, so I put it in the coat pocket. The coat hung in my closet for a full year and one day my friend called and asked me if I still had her coat. I took it to her never thinking to check the pockets. She called me after discovering the dried up leg bone, and I remembered the episode.”

It’s so easy to understand how the bone ended up in that coat pocket! Katie’s courage to admit that story to me just showed how comfortable she is with the

way she is. In her confession, she admitted she also surrounded herself with organized people.

What can we learn from Oprah and Katie? I think it's that in spite of being disorganized, we each have within us the seeds of success and greatness. When we focus on being *who we are* rather than being organized, we clear the path to success and pave it with joy. You are a child of a creator who not only made you, but gave you wonderful attributes that when cultivated, serve you and the world. The most gorgeous attribute Oprah possesses is her Oprah-ness. The yummiest attribute Katie possesses is her Katie-ness. The gifts and talents they bring to the world with their "ness" are far more important than their disorganized nature.

### ***Your Highness!***

Take your first name and add *ness* on the end of it like I did to Oprah's and Katie's name. THAT's what you have to share with your family, your community, the world, and yourself. If you focus on fearlessly expressing your uniqueness (your highness) you'll get the confidence of a bird perched on a branch, if the branch breaks that bird can fly, and you can too. Don't be afraid to be yourself. Anita Moorjani wrote in *Dying to Be Me*, her stunning book about her four-year battle with cancer, near death experience, and subsequent healing, "The only thing you have to learn is that you already are what you are seeking to attain." Most of our struggle to be organized comes from the feeling, "I'm not enough." When you accept and love every aspect of yourself, your ego, your intellect, your body, your spirit, and your life, you will realize you *are* enough. But heck...*enough?* You are more than enough! For heaven's sake, you are magnificent! There's nothing to do but be who you are.

But don't forget, the other aspect to Oprah's and Katie's success was they both surrounded themselves with BOPs, and I'm going to keep reminding you to do the same.

If you took the quiz in the previous chapter and you now know what it is you love to do, that is the "ness" after your name. When I took the quiz (I'd written it years ago so it was relatively fresh when I read it again) and came to that

question, “What do you love to do?” I stopped and thought, *I love to entertain and uplift and be entertained and uplifted*. My answer made me very happy because that’s really what I’ve based my career upon. It’s my Pamness. If your highness got buried in dishes, laundry, little runny noses, appointments, and a million other life distractions, it’s time to uncover it. Find your ness, dust it off, introduce yourself to it again, and make room for it in your life. You shouldn’t have to choose between *you* and *everything else*—you need to include you *back into* everything else. Get back on track with what you love to do. For now, it might be just an idea, but if it comes from the depth of your soul, it’s time to start bringing it back into the world.

### **Sidetracked Home Executives**

Once you start to embrace your highness—your you-ness—amazing things start to happen. The circumstances around the writing of *Sidetracked Home Executives* have never been written. You will see it is a saga of disorderly conduct, but one that began only because Peggy and I started to embrace our own “ness.”

It became very clear to us after one of our speaking engagements that it was time to write a book. Peggy and I were hired to speak to the Washington State Home Economics teachers in Tri-Cities, Washington, and after our talk, we went back to our hotel room and proceeded to piddle dink around. Because we have no concept of time, we lost track of it and were supposed to have moved our clocks forward an hour because it was spring. We missed our flight home. At that time, there were only three flights a week out of the Tri-Cities. We called our parents and arranged babysitting for our six kids, stayed in the hotel, and started writing our book.

Before we began writing, I said to Peggy, “Do you think we should go to Clark (a local community college) and take a creative writing class?” After all, I’d gotten a C- in creative writing at Clark College when I was younger.

Peggy said, “No, let’s just write the book the way we talk and the way we teach our class.”

We'd been teaching a six-week class all over the Pacific Northwest so we knew exactly what to put in a book; we just doubted we could write it well. Excited to help people, we just began writing in spite of my C-.

Being true to our acronym SHE, we weren't disciplined in writing every day and we didn't have a deadline—we just wrote as if it were a hobby. After all, we had kids to raise and husbands and houses that needed our full-time attention if we were going to stay true to what we were teaching in our seminars—and now what we were writing in our book. We finished writing the book in nine months, the same amount of time as a typical pregnancy. After each having three babies of our own, it was nice to bring this “baby” into the world without morning sickness and fat ankles.

When we finished writing the manuscript, we went to the local B. Dalton bookstore in the Vancouver Mall and looked at covers of books to find the colors and lettering we wanted for ours. We hired Jim Shinn, the cartoonist at our local newspaper *The Columbian*, to design the cover as well as illustrate cartoons for the book.

Our next step was to find someone to print the book. We ended up choosing Tom Binford, owner of Binford and Mort Publishing in Portland, Oregon. The building was quaint and cottage-like. Ivy grew gracefully on the red brick façade. When we walked through the heavy oak front door, a thin, elderly woman, prim and proper in a simple black wool dress, greeted us. Her long grey hair was smoothed into a perfect bun the size of a croissant and her too-red lipstick had run into the vertical lines in her upper lip making it look smudged. We introduced ourselves, and as soon as she got our names, she slammed her palm down on one of those silver bells used to get someone's attention at a counter. Seconds later, Mr. Binford appeared out from the adjacent office. He was in his seventies, roly-poly, and reminded us of a cross between our grandfather and Santa Claus. He was very formal—like a symphony orchestra leader. He invited us into his neat and organized office. It smelled like an old library of musty, leather-bound books.

We told Mr. Binford we wanted to print 10,000 hardback books and we needed to know how much he'd charge. We told him how many words were in our book, and his ball parked estimate turned out to be exactly what we ended

up paying; two dollars a book. Now you might be wondering where two homemakers with six children (and a policeman and a real estate salesman for husbands) would get \$20,000. But by the time our manuscript was written, we were speaking at churches and women's groups all over the Pacific Northwest and we'd saved every bit of money to put towards paying for the books. We were able to give Mr. Binford \$10,000 down, and he agreed to wait on the other \$10,000 until after we started selling the books.

Again, true to the SHE name, we had no marketing plan to sell the books other than to take them to all the bookstores in the phone books of Portland and Vancouver and collect the money.

The day Mr. Binford called to say our books were ready to be picked up, we took the whole family, including our Mom and Dad, over to Binford and Morts with a bottle of champagne to celebrate the birth of our baby.

"Do you have a truck?" Mr. Binford asked.

"Uh, no, we weren't sure what 10,000 books fits in, so we thought we'd see that first," one of us said.

We weren't quite prepared for the warehouse scene. Pallets and pallets and pallets of our baby sat wrapped and waiting to be loaded. Mr. Binford offered to store most of them and we took a few boxes back with us after we toasted to the big event.

It wasn't until the next morning when it hit me—the amount of work we had in front of us to get our book to every homemaker in the northwest who needed it. I envisioned it under every Christmas tree. Hung in every stocking. Mrs. Claus herself reading our book with a mug of warm, spiced cider. It was mid-October.

We decided to load up the station wagon with as many books as would fit, and we'd start calling on all the bookstores within a 20-mile radius. The first store we hit was the B. Dalton store where we'd picked out books with the kind of cover we wanted. Roger Sullivan, the manager at the time, was our first call.

"We have written a book about how to get organized from a reformed slob's point of view. We were slobs and now we're not," I bragged.

He held the book and seemed to genuinely like the look and feel of it. We held our breath for the number of books he would buy. “Oh, ladies, I’m so sorry, I’d love to be able to take some, but I just can’t. All our books have to go through our distributor, and you are unknown writers with no backing from a publisher and I just can’t take any,” he apologized.

I teared up at the news. I was looking forward to a fabulous Christmas with so much money I could buy the kids everything they wanted. (I was single by then, because Mr. Cranky wasn’t happy even with an organized home.) “Roger, we have 10,000 hardback books to sell! Christmas is coming, I’m single now, and I’m their sole provider,” I cry-babied.

Roger shook his head and thought for a minute, “Tell you what I’ll do, I’ll take ten books on consignment.” (He probably planned to handle this business under the B Dalton table.)

With ten books down and 9,990 left to sell, Peggy and I went out to lunch to talk about what to do next. At the restaurant, we talked about Roger’s response. We knew we would get the same response from all the big bookstores. The thought of going to every independent bookstore was daunting and out of the question. We had families to focus on. Then I said, “Hey, what do real authors do to sell books?”

“Uh, they probably don’t go around to bookstores to see if they’ll buy ‘em,” Peggy snorted.

“Right, but they *do* go on television. I see ‘em all the time. They go on, tell about the book they’ve written, the guy on the show holds the book up, and the books get sold! So let’s call *AM Northwest* (the Portland morning talk show on ABC).”

We drew straws to see who would have to make the call. I got the short end.

Ring, ring, ring?

“KATU Channel Two, how may I direct your call?”

“Uh, I need to talk to Jim Bosley (the host on the popular show),” I said with my heart beating in my throat.

“One moment please while I connect your call.”

Jim didn't answer, but a young voice said, “May I help you?”

“Yes, I need to ask Jim Bosley a question. May I speak with him?”

“I'm sorry Jim isn't available, maybe I can answer your question.”

“Uh, I was wondering...how interesting do you have to be to get on AM Northwest?”

“How interesting are you?”

“Well, my sister and I were slobs, and we each have three kids and we got organized and wrote a book about it. It's called *Sidetracked Home Executives: from pigpen to paradise.*”

“That's interesting.”

Four days later, we were on the show.

We were scheduled to be on for seven minutes, but we had so much fun with Jim and his co-host Margi Boule that they extended our time to twenty-four minutes. At the end of our time, Jim held up our new book and said with a big smile, “Well here it is, *Sidetracked Home Executives: from pigpen to paradise* and it's available in your local bookstore!”

I waved my hand and shook my head and said, “No Jim, it's not in any bookstores, because no bookstore would take it because we're unknown writers. But our mom is waiting by the phone and can take orders if people call 360-696-4091.”

Jim looked like I'd told him I was going to castrate his first born! He glared at me and said, “We'll be right back after a brief commercial message.”

When we got off the air, pandemonium raged. We were told AM Northwest had a huge viewing audience that included all of Oregon and extended to half of Washington and California. “We don't sell books that aren't in bookstores!” the executive producer exclaimed after charging out of her back office. How were Peggy and I supposed to know this? We didn't do this on purpose and we were so sorry to cause such mayhem.

Jim collected himself and when the show got back on the air, he gave out our mom's telephone number again and thanked us for being on the show.

Unfortunately for *AM Northwest*, all the disorganized homemakers from the state of Oregon and half the states of Washington and California, couldn't find working pens or pencils and had to write the number in the dust on their coffee tables. Many called the station to get our mom's number and tied up the KATU phone lines the entire day.

Suddenly, Mr. Binford was able to distribute books to bookstores that wouldn't touch it before. In six weeks, we had sold the 10,000 hardback books and asked Mr. Binford to print 20,000 more—this time in paperback.

We ended up selling 60,000 books before we sold the rights to Warner Books. As you can see, we were not organized throughout this process of writing the book or getting it out there to the wonderful SHEs we knew could use it. No marketing and distribution plan, no schedule for doing business outside of our homes. Our focus was on keeping our homes organized, embracing our "ness," and the rest we left up to providence.

### **Our "Ness" Leads the Way**

Because we had so much fun on television talking about our lives as slobs and sharing with the world how we organized our homes using 3x5 cards, we began getting invitations to appear on other talk shows in Seattle, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and San Diego. Peggy and I were funny and we bantered with each other the way only sisters can. We finished each other's sentences and said many in unison.

About a year later, we were invited to do five talk shows all owned by Westinghouse Broadcasting, and one of those shows was in Boston. We arrived from Portland at dark and were taken to the Boston Sheridan Hotel by limousine. Our room was on the 28<sup>th</sup> floor. I remember opening the drapes that next morning and there before me was a spectacle I wasn't prepared to see. The Christian Science Mother Church! There it was, its glorious white dome gleaming in the sun and I shouted, "Sissy! There's the Mother Church! Look!"



For us, raised in Christian Science, seeing this church in Boston would be like a Catholic visiting the church in Rome. It's a big deal! I said, "Sissy, you know what else is in the Mother Church?"

"What?"

"*The Christian Science Monitor!* Maybe we could get a feature story in it with our book!"

At that time we did not know anything about the *Christian Science Monitor* except that it was our grandparent's church newspaper. Every summer when they stayed with us they read the Monitor every day! Wouldn't they be so excited to open it one day and see a story about us? My thought to get our story in that paper was only to make our grandparents happy!

Later that day, after appearing on the television show, we went to the *Monitor* and asked to speak with a features writer. We had no appointment, but we explained we were raised in Christian Science and we came from Washington State to be on *People Are Talking* and discovered the Mother Church when we opened the drapes in our hotel room. That must have been a compelling story by itself, because a few hours later we'd finished a wonderful interview with a features writer (who also happened to be from the Pacific Northwest) and were getting our pictures taken with our book to go with the story. We couldn't wait for the day Grandma and Grandpa would see the article! They would be so proud!

A few weeks after our trip to Boston, I got a call from a man named John Boswell from New York City, who said he was a literary agent and he'd seen the "delightful" story in the *Christian Science Monitor*. I said, "Oh, are you a Christian Scientist?"

"Uh, no, I just read the *Monitor* and I'm very interested to read your book."

"Great!" I said, "It's ten dollars plus two dollars for postage and handling."

"No, you don't understand. I'm a top New York literary agent and I'm interested in reading your self-published book because I think I might be able to sell it to a big publisher."

“Well, it’s not for sale.” At that time, I had no idea what a literary agent was. The only type of agent I’d heard about was one that sold real estate, and the ones I knew were no big deal.

“Listen, I’m going on vacation in a week, and on a hunch I’d just like to read your book.”

Since Peggy and I had moved up in the world and were now taking credit cards, I told him I could charge his credit card for the 12 dollars and send it out that day, otherwise he would need to write a check and as soon as we got it and it cleared we’d send the book. Since sending the check would take too long and he wanted it before his vacation, he gave me his credit card number, and I sent the book to him that day as promised.

A couple of weeks later I got a call from him, and I recognized his voice.

“Did you get the book all right?” I asked.

“Yes, I did. Read it while we were at the shore and it is absolutely charming!”

“Thank you John!”

“I know I can sell this book.”

“John, as I told you before, it’s not for sale.”

Peggy and I were making lots of money. Having enough money to hire someone to clean our homes was wonderful and according to my plan and since our business was writing about what needed to be cleaned in a home, it was so easy to hand over our book to the new housecleaner, along with our card file. She loved it. We hired the same woman to come to our homes once a week to help us clean and keep it up. We hired BOPs to answer phones and run the office, make arrangements for speeches and travel. We were free to write and play. We were two happy grasshoppers!

But in time, the business came with more stress than we had thought possible. A tax audit cost us overtime pay for our bookkeeper and when a preacher’s wife infringed on our copyrights, our legal bills shot up. (The IRS found our books to be squeaky clean and the rip off writer turned out to be no threat to our work.)

Nine months later, John called again.

“Hello?” I answered the phone.

“Hi, it’s John. I know your book is not for sale, but I have a meeting at Warner Books about another book, and I was wondering if I could take your book with me and let someone take a look at it, not to buy it, but to give me an opinion about it. I would just like to know if my hunch is right about it. Wouldn’t you like to know what a real publisher thinks of it?”

I was intrigued by his thinking. “Yes, that would be fine. I would like to know what a real publisher thinks of it.”

The next week he called back and said five editors had read it and Warner Books wanted our book. John told me that was a big deal to have a bunch of people read it. By that time Peggy and I were pretty sick of publishing. We both loved being moms and we didn’t want to miss out on our kids’ lives while they were young. The “business” of publishing was taking too much of our time away from the fun there was right in our own backyards. Then John said something to me that changed the course of our lives.

“Pam, the way you are able to publish your book is in very small quantities and by the time you nickel and dime it, most of the homemakers you want to help will be dead.”

I was stunned at the thought and barely heard his next sentence as my mind wandered from funeral to funeral of my beloved SHEs passing, leaving behind seas of clutter, chaos and unhappiness.

He continued, “If Warner Books bought the book, they’d print 250,000 copies to start and get them distributed more efficiently and quickly than you ever could.”

I hung up with the thought of 250,000 deaths of messy souls who needed our help and didn’t get it. I called my sister.

“Sissy, John’s still trying to get us to sell the book, and he’s such a kind thoughtful person, do you know what he said?”

“What?”

“We’re being selfish if we keep it, because all those moms we want to help’ll be dead by the time we can afford to publish a large quantity, like 250,000.”

The next day we went to our bank and asked the bank manager, “Can we borrow \$500,000 to print 250,000 books?”

After a dumbfounded is-this-a-joke-look, he said, “No.”

We sold Warner Books the rights to publish *Sidetracked Home Executives*, and were assigned to senior editor and vice president Fredda Isaacson. I remember Fredda saying in one of our early discussions, “You both have an amazing talent for writing down to the mass market!”

“What’s the mass market?” We asked in unison.

“Eighth grade reading level.”

We looked at each other and burst out laughing.

“What’s so funny?” Fredda seemed confused by our giggles.

I said, “Fredda, we aren’t writing *down* to eighth grade level, we *write* at that level.”

Fredda was used to working with brilliant writers with enormous vocabularies and extraordinary IQs and I’m sure we were a first for her. She stared at us, nodding and letting the information sink in. “I never would have thought of that,” she chuckled.

The rest, as they say, is SHEstory.

It’s ironic that a book on getting organized began because the authors missed their flight because they forgot to change a clock. And had we put off writing *Sidetracked Home Executives* to get more education and maybe pull that C- up to a B, we wouldn’t have written it. Instead, we spent three days holed up by our tardiness and wrote to entertain each other. We laughed practically non-stop for those three days and knew when we were flying home that our book would help people, and it would be a success. We didn’t know how, we just *knew*.

## Secrets from this chapter:

- In spite of being disorganized, we each have within us the seeds of success and greatness. When we focus on being *who we are* rather than being organized, we clear the path to success and pave it with joy.
- There's nothing to do but be who you are.
- Once you start to embrace your highness—your you-ness—amazing things will start to happen.

## Chapter Six

### Your Future Success is in Your Mess

If you read my book *The GOOD Book: Get Out Of Debt*, then you've read this story. I wanted to include it in this book because it reveals a universal truth that the lessons we learn in our lifetime are often brought to us through what seem to be our short comings. Because you and I have struggled with disorganization, I share this.

When I was in the midst of my messy motherhood to Michael age seven, Peggy Ann age five and Joanna six months, my minister announced that Dr. Barnum, a very popular lecturer was coming from Southern California to lead a two-day seminar on the “principles of prosperity.” Everyone was excited about having this renowned speaker come to our little church. I believed his talk would change my life.

We lived in Salem, Oregon at the time. My husband made a good living for us. We had a beautiful home in a prosperous neighborhood. I was given the responsibility of handling our finances and being a careless bookkeeper, I struggled to make ends meet.

I remembered my economics professor at Clark College telling us that if you ask a guy who makes 40 thousand dollars a year if that's enough he'll say, "No, but if I could just make 60 thousand, I'd be in great shape." And if you ask someone who makes 60 thousand if that's enough, he'll say, "No, but if I could make 80, I'd be happy." He said that whatever the figure, it'll NEVER be enough, so learn to be happy with what you earn and budget it well.

As a stay-at-home mom I loved raising Michael, Peggy and Joanna, but I was extremely unhappy in my marriage. My husband was oppressively controlling and as bad-tempered as a Yellow Jacket in the fall. Money matters always set him off, so I juggled the finances with great fear. I don't think he ever really knew what it cost to run our household, because I was afraid to tell him. I was just as guilty as Enron, Leaman Brothers and Madoff only on a smaller scale. I hid documents, burned department store statements and receipts, made secret dealings between MasterCard, Visa and the now defunct Bank Americard and lied about how much I spent for fear he'd throw a fit. He did regularly anyway. I carried a huge burden of guilt for all the money secrets I kept from him, and I wished I could have my own income to make up for the discrepancies.

At the time I honestly believed that I'd have to wait until my kids were grown before I could pursue any money-making avenue. My husband continually reminded me that HE was the one who made the money and without HIM I would be nothing. I felt completely dependent on him.

That's why when Dr. Barnum said that each one of us was personally responsible for our financial state of affairs, I didn't agree. His philosophy was that it is *our own* consciousness that causes us to experience poverty or wealth. I remember going up to him at a break and saying, "I can see how a 'bread winner' is responsible for the financial status of the family, but since I haven't earned a dime since the day I married and because motherhood does not pay well, and I will not be in a position to make money or work outside my home until the children are raised, how can I be held accountable for the balance in the checkbook?" I'd run out of breath.

The man looked at me for the longest time, probably assessing the pitiful tone in my voice. Then after an interminable pause he replied, "My dear woman, you

have to claim responsibility for every circumstance in your life and money is a major part of it. Who says you have to go outside your home to make money? Have you not heard of the housewife who invented the Johnny Brush?"

I hadn't. "No, what'd she do?"

"She was a mom just like you and she didn't like putting her hands in the water when she cleaned the toilet, so she thought up a brush on a stick. She made a fortune and she stayed home and raised her kids."

Well, that was it. The story of the "Johnny Brush" lady inspired me to open my mind and let my creativity come through. Maybe I could invent some brilliant tool to help homemakers, or write some beautiful song that would make the whole world "fall in love all over again." Maybe I'd come up with a clever children's game that kids would play for hours at a time. Dr. Barnum's seminar was absolutely a turning point for me, although the evidence of that turn didn't show up for quite a while.

There was one remark that Dr. Barnum made that especially struck me. He said, "The opportunities for wealth are everywhere, but we often fail to see them especially when they are right under our noses. So keep your eyes open!" The words, *especially when they are right under our noses*, turned out to be quite prophetic.

The very next morning after getting Michael off to school, I'd snuggled back into bed to nurse Joanna and fell asleep. Peggy Ann missed the bus. As I dropped her off at kindergarten, Dr. Barnum's words were dancing in and out of my mind. I was excited to be watching out for my opportunities for wealth! As I drove back toward my home in my nightgown and bare feet, I noticed something bright red alongside the road. I drove about the length of a football field past it before the doctor's words leaped back into my head, *'Opportunities for wealth are everywhere, especially... right under our noses. So keep your eyes open!'*

I slammed on my brakes and backed up. I was grateful I was in a very rural area because of my attire. I quickly jumped out of my car and ouch my way across the gravel to the side of the road where the red opportunity for wealth lay. To my utter dismay I discovered a child's red plastic bank, still recognizable as a pig, but completely smashed and EMPTY.

I was embarrassed. My husband was right. He was always telling me I had my head in the clouds. How stupid could I get? Here I was standing barefoot in my nightgown at the side of the road looking for my fortune in a piece of red plastic! I slumped back in the car and noticed that the engine had stopped. I was pretty sure I'd left it running when I'd leaped out to claim my fortune. I turned the key but the engine would not start. I cranked it again. Nothing. Again. Nothing. Then I noticed the needle on the gas gauge rested on the E. I know this isn't looking like a success story, but it REALLY is, so stay with me.

If I was embarrassed before, I had just added humiliation and despair to my feelings. I looked around and saw a house about 50 feet away. I grabbed the baby, and walked with difficulty over the stony country pavement and across the people's yard. I stepped over toys, a pile of dog poop and a garden hose that snaked its way to the front door. I knocked and waited. A woman in her bathrobe and slippers answered. My lost opportunity for wealth was forgotten. I was just eager to get back home.

"Hi, I ran out of gas. That's my car over there." I pointed in the direction of the car. "Could I use your phone? I need to call my husband."

You can guess what *HE* thought of the whole thing. *HE'd* already made it clear how ridiculous I was for taking a class on the principles of prosperity when *HE* was the one bringing home the bacon. *HE* had not been happy that I had been gone all day Saturday *and* Sunday night. *HE* was angry that I'd spent \$25 for Dr. Barnum's class (it really cost \$45) and \$10 for babysitting (actually \$20).

This was the topper for him. As he emptied the red gas can into my car's tank, I got the lecture I was expecting. I've cleaned it up considerably. "A lot of good that class did for you! You need to get your head *out of the clouds*. Look at you! You're in public in your nightgown and no shoes. The house is trashed. You had to iron me a shirt two minutes before I walked out the door this morning and then, what did you do? You went BACK to bed! Peggy Ann missed the bus, and now you're out of gas. You need to *get your act together*." I hated to admit it, but HE was right.

I didn't tell him about the piggy bank.

As he peeled out, I got into my car like a scolded, naughty child. I sat in the noise of self-degradation as the tears poured down my cheeks. I felt absolutely worthless. Joey began to fuss with me as my blubber session went on for



several minutes. She sensed we were in trouble. I finally pulled myself together. Before I started the car, I put out a tiny request to God. "Please put some meaning into this fiasco."

As I drove along the country road that paralleled I-5, I was suddenly made very aware of the distance it took to get to the freeway on-ramp. A revelation struck me! If I had NOT stopped and backed up one hundred yards to look at the red pig, I would have had enough gas and momentum to take me onto the interstate. I would have stalled out *on the freeway*. I would have had to walk at least two miles with no shoes on, carrying a six-month-old baby with a loaded diaper. And even though my nightgown was flannel, the very thought of the danger and humiliation of being stranded on an interstate highway in my nightwear was terrifying.

The symbolism in that event, tickles me to this day. The way I figure it, the red bank represented the idea of something that was created to hold money, but was smashed and worthless. It was a sign. The Universe was showing me that my spirit was being crushed and broken and unable to hold onto money. It also occurred to me that I'd had Divine Protection. It was the start of a new realization. As long as I allowed myself to be in an unhealthy relationship I would continue to block the very source of my prosperity. I had a great deal of work to do *right under my nose*. The fact that I ran out of gas in my nightgown was testimony to that. There were changes I needed to make along with many lessons to learn before I could attract money and put Dr. Barnum's ideas into practice. It wouldn't be until four years later that I would finally divorce and my sister and I would make our first fortune helping women get their homes organized.

Your success is right under your nose.

### **Secrets from this chapter:**

- No amount of money will ever be enough, so learn to be happy with what you earn and budget it well.
- Claim responsibility for every circumstance in your life.
- There's nothing to do but be who you are.

- Opportunities for wealth and success are everywhere, especially.... right under our nose. So keep your eyes open!
- You have Divine Protection. Claim it.
- Ask what it is you need to know and then listen.

## Chapter Seven

### There Arose Such a Clutter

Our lives are hectic in this 21<sup>st</sup> century, which makes establishing peace in our homes more of a necessity than ever. We need a sanctuary from the frenzy. When our homes make us feel safe and cozy, they become a refuge where we can recharge our spirits that can get pulled in so many directions out in the world. Peace is a personal matter. What defines peace for me may not come close to your definition. When I think of peace, a lot of “R” words fly around in my mind—like release, rejuvenate, refresh, relax, and rest. Whatever your definition of peace, consider that you are not just a homemaker or a housekeeper, you are a peacemaker and a peacekeeper. The tone of your home rests in your hands. That’s a tall order, but when you reduce the clutter in your home, it’s much easier to keep the peace.

We've all heard that the one thing that never changes is change itself. Things don't ever stay the same in our life—the very fact that we get up each morning to a new day is proof. Much of our stuff is about what *was*. Little by little, day-by-day we have to let go of who we were, to become who we are, and when we release the clutter in our homes we are allowing that process to happen. We spend our lives losing what was, to what is. As mothers we lose our babies to toddlers and our toddlers to children, then to teenagers and adults. De-cluttering is key to the natural processes in our life. When you de-clutter, you will be allowing your space to reflect who you and your family are now. Your home is your most prized material possession and you have the right to live in it “joy” fully and “peace” fully. As I've grown older, I've watched my dark auburn hair give way to gray. I *feel*/like I did when I was 25, so when I look in the mirror and see my reflection, I see me in a really good old lady costume and mask, and it tickles me. You get to decide if letting go is hard or easy, sad or fun. So why not have fun?

### **Shut the Fuss Up!**

There are only two ways I suggest to shut the fuss up! Either get rid of it, or put it away. If you get rid of it, throw it away or give it away. Well, why not sell those unwanted items? Because you don't want to give yourself another task to do. If you give yourself that option, you set yourself up for a garage sale project with a mountain of pricing or a bunch of time spent on Craig's List, both of which requires a lot of follow-through and dedication to the task. You aren't looking to gain money, you are looking to rid your home of clutter and invite peace back into your life. Getting rid of what doesn't make you happy and peaceful now is the fastest way to shut the fuss up.

This plan to de-clutter is not for those who find peace in their clutter. What I mean is, if you happen to find peace when you are surrounded with your children's handmade pottery, tchotchkes you purchased on your travels with your spouse, or your grandkid's watercolor paintings, by all means, don't throw them out. But if your clutter bothers you and you wish your home were freer of it, start regarding it as a throng of revolting voices disturbing your peace.

There are different categories of clutter but they all nag, taunt, shame, badger, heckle, scoff, jeer, and pester. You've tried to organize some of it, but most of it just gets moved around (that migrating clutter I wrote about earlier). Trying to organize clutter is like trying to get a bunch of tone-deaf people together to

start a choir. You can't clean when you have clutter, because you can't find your surfaces. So your house gets dirty. I once met a blind woman who said she could walk into a home and know if it was messy or not. She said, "A house full of clutter has a different sound and smell." Clutter has energy of its own and it can sap our spirits with its countless venomous voices.

Clutter is also insidious. If it's left in one place for more than 21 days, it becomes invisible and it lowers its volume, becoming white noise in the background that you get used to. Have you ever noticed the relief you feel when that white noise gets turned off? Your ears are suddenly enveloped by a silence you didn't even know you were missing! You'll get that same relief when you deal with your clutter. You'll be amazed at the peace you'll feel that you didn't even know was possible!

Take a few minutes and look around you. Let what you see speak to you. Where is the most noise coming from? What's clacking the loudest? What's drumming in the background, more quietly, yet persistently? By using your imagination to add make-believe sound to your clutter you are actually sharpening your awareness of what you want to kick out or make a place for. You'll also begin shopping with a new awareness. Everything you bring into your home has a voice. Have fun with this new awareness. Talk back to your stuff and warn it of its pending eviction and ask everything that comes into your life, if you need it and love it.

Paying attention to the voices is fun and enlightening. When I started to eliminate my clutter, I discovered that at one time some of the voices harmonized with my home's interior, but as time passed, the voices that had once sung happy songs were now crooning annoying melodies. *It's a small world after all, it's a small world after all, it's a small, small world...*

There were also those tired voices of stale, outdated ideas from a stack of old magazines, chanting, "We're O Magazines, from 2006! Even though we're filled with *old* news, just take ten minutes of your free time and read one of us. Read us read us! See what you missed in 2006!" We keep old magazines because we haven't read them, we don't want to miss anything, *and* we think we'll actually take the time (at some point) to peruse their pages. Search for the delicious looking recipe on the cover. Rip out the Top Ten Beauty Must-Have's list from years ago. Realistically, when we have an extra ten minutes in our day, we're NOT going to decide to read old information from an outdated periodical.

Chances are really good you have last month's magazine sitting there unread too, and that's at least still a current possibility. So dump anything that's outdated. If you're still feeling guilty, know this: thanks to the internet, all the old copies of magazines are now archived online. If you really need that Beauty Must Have list from 2009, then you can Google it. Dump and Google.

Note: If you subscribe to any magazines and you don't read an issue before the next one comes, you are a true SHE, and SHEs *shouldn't subscribe . . . to anything*. (Besides, you can always catch up on old news while you wait at the dentist.)

For me, one very distinct voice I needed to ignore was the price I'd paid for things that no longer fit my criteria for keeping: do I need it or love it? I remembered I spent good money for that lamp, but in time, it refused to go with my new loveseat and end table and so it begged, "*Please release me, let me go,*" every time I saw it. That fancy decorator box I spontaneously splurged on had turned into a subtle souvenir of my vulnerability to advertising, and so it hummed of guilt. Maybe you've been *given* a lot of your stuff. Free is a nice price. But keeping free stuff that doesn't make you feel happy is like having the television on with some stupid program you hate watching. It's free. So?

When I'm having trouble letting go of things because of guilt over what I paid or because the item was free, I think to myself, 'There's probably a family out there who needs this very thing. They've been looking all over for a red and white polka dotted tablecloth to take on picnics and they just can't find one. And here I am, keeping this tablecloth all to myself and not even using it, when that family is out there who will use it , love it and give it a happy home.'

Envisioning this family helps me remember how much I have and how much my unwanted stuff might bless someone else. You know that saying: "One woman's give-away is another family's favorite polka dotted tablecloth."

Another voice of clutter comes from the homeless. That's all the stuff you love and use, but don't have specific places to put it. It's probably stuff you've had to look for in the past. You'll catch yourself saying, "Oh, there you are! I was looking for you yesterday." Just think how much time you spend each year looking for stuff! (It's probably at least a couple of days.) It seems easier at the time to just put those items down somewhere, or out of sight in a drawer, because there's not a dedicated place to put it. To quiet the noise from your homeless stuff, you have to establish homes for each individual voice.

Cramming a voice in the wrong closet, drawer, cupboard, the basement, attic, or under a bed, is like hushing a gossip and putting him or her out of sight. Clutter shoved out of sight does may go out of mind, but the minute you open a drawer or closet that holds an assortment of muzzled clutter, you'll be like Britney Spears opening her front door to a mob of ravenous paparazzi. It isn't pretty.

The other day I had a mess in my office from a recent video shoot. I ignored it for three days because I told myself it was more important to be writing this chapter. But I could see the mess out of the corner of my eye (and hear it out of the corner of my ear) and it wouldn't shut up! Finally, I put my timer on and said to myself, "I can take five minutes to clean this up," and began delivering the noisy voices to their homes. One of the items was an assortment of ribbon. I have a plastic storage bin that holds all my ribbon for wrapping gifts and decorating. As soon as I put the wayward ribbon into the bin with the other ribbon, it was like putting singers together. There was harmony, because they all belonged with each other.

If we minded the rule, "A place for everything and everything in its place," we'd never have to search for our glasses, car keys, purse, coat, cell phone, shoes, scissors, or tweezers again. To break the cycle of losing things and find homes for stuff you want to keep, you could use your imagination.

If you're a romantic, you could pretend to be Cupid. For example, take an item that you tend to spend a lot of time looking for, say your car key. Pretend you're a matchmaker and you're going to hook up Miss Car Key with Mr. Wooden Peg and Mr. Right Pocket (that place in your purse where you are going to put Miss Key when you are out with your car). As a matchmaker, you can relish seeing them together and be so happy for the new couple that every time you see them together you feel like Cupid. Oh, and what Miss Key does with Mr. Wooden Peg when you're not looking is none of your business!

Or, here's another idea. If you think of Miss Key as a real person who is direction-challenged and needs your compassion and help to make sure she gets home each time she's in your care, you'll have more fun establishing this habit. Think of it as a "keys are people too" concept. Say to your car key, "Okay Miss Key, I'm going to find two homes for you this very minute. At home, it's going to be a convenient spot so when I head for the car you'll be right there in my face. When I get out of the car after I've driven somewhere, I'm going to choose a home for you in my purse where you'll always go." Once you've

established homes for the common things you tend to lose, the stories you've attached to them will help you practice using the new homes until they are second nature for you.

Included in the homeless clutter is what I call IPODs—Important Piles Of Decisions. These IPODS are in strategic places throughout your home where you chronically dump your indecision. They are piles of miscellaneous items that you didn't want to put away either because there was no "away" or because you were tired or just didn't want to deal with them at the time. Piles are very personal and we don't like to talk about them, but they need to be cured if we are to enjoy a peaceful home.

### **A Cure for Piles**

There are two categories of piles: good piles and bad piles. A bad pile is more than six inches of miscellaneous stuff to include coupons, deposit slips, immediate attention mail, credit card receipts, junk mail, old magazines, notes from a recent seminar, greeting cards, maps, old grocery lists you made (and forgot to take to the store), bills, devotional cards, memos and more junk mail. The stuff of IPODs. A good pile is any pile of "like" stuff; such as a stack of old magazines, a collection of bank deposits, just junk mail etc. It takes approximately five minutes per inches to take care of a bad pile of papers, but it only takes a minute or two to deal with a pile of like items.

Much of our clutter is made up of IPODs. What is it about us that we can so easily get into the habit of putting off decisions about what to do with something we have in our hand right now? I think it's that we get so busy and are optimistic we'll have time on another day. But another day just adds another couple of inches to our piles. Chances are if you have many IPODs, you've got closets, cupboards, and drawers packed with miscellaneous stuff too. Bad piles are symptoms of constipation. In the worst case scenario, the garage can be an IPOD too! "Oh, I don't know Hon, just put it in the garage." Unfortunately, that sentence has created an epidemic of homeless cars. You can find cars parked in the driveways all across America. A car parked in the driveway at the end of the day means only one thing—the garage is an IPOD.

Typically, you can find IPODs on the dining room table, the kitchen counter by the phone, the chair in the master suite, the coffee table in the living room, and the passenger seat of the car. If IPODs are left unattended, they heat up and

turn into bigger IPODs. When the IPOD is taking up needed space—say, so you can eat, entertain unexpected company at the door, or drive someone somewhere—these IPODs are “temporarily” moved to still another location, and the indecisions are bagged or stashed out of site. That’s how our closets, cupboards, and drawers get constipated. These stashed bags of uncertainty turn into archives and in time those archives grow to haunt us and cost us money! Fibber McGee’s closet can easily turn into Fibber McGee’s storage unit at around \$100 a month. The cure is spending fifteen minutes every day de-cluttering. If thirty minutes of decision making takes care of six inches, fifteen minutes will reduce an IPOD by three inches, and in a year’s time, just fifteen minutes a day will eliminate 91¼ feet of junk from your home.

Once you’ve eliminated an IPOD, it’s important to ensure that it won’t come back. Because it has been a convenient drop off spot, in order to stop the habit you need to put some sort of decoration in that spot like a vase of flowers, a candle or a bowl of fruit. It will probably take 21 days before you’ll stop wanting to put something down in the spot, but once you are out of the habit and have established the habit of putting things where they belong, you can actually leave that space with nothing there!

Dealing with clutter is all about making decisions to let go and finding homes for what you need and love. That takes energy, but it can really be fun especially when you look at it as a way to establish peace. When you spend 15 minutes every day de-cluttering, you will be letting go of noise, finding happy homes for noise, and creating peace. In one year, you will have spent 3.8 days as a human tranquilizer, Cupid, realtor, and caregiver. You will have become a saver of space, time, and energy, and an ambassador of your own peace.

There are other nagging voices that sap our energy, peace, and happiness in the same way the “stuff” of clutter does. Those are the voices of routine chores that need attention: the chanting of dusty furniture, the screeching of smudged windows, dishes in the sink bellowing for suds, and dirty laundry shouting things out. Then there’s the nagging from uncompleted projects like the dress that whines to have the other sleeve sewn in, the jealous half-read book that sulks and moans because you are onto a more *interesting* book, or the shoes that need repair and sit physically challenged wailing for a helping hand. (I can’t wait to show you how to deal with routines and undone projects, but that’s a little later. I want you to focus on de-cluttering first, because it will bring the most dramatic results. And peace of course!)



## Where to Start?

Start in your favorite room in the house and in the most peaceful place you choose in that room. Clear a spot for a candle. Light it, and envision yourself immersed in peace. Feel how safe it is to be there—how warm, cozy, and inviting it is in the light of this flickering candle and your new-found approach to de-cluttering. Say:

*I am in a peaceful place. All the peace I can experience is mine right now. All I have to do is be open and alert to accept this peace that is mine. I'm no longer going to fight my disorder, instead I'm going to use my wonderful imagination to lead me to make this room a peaceful and inviting center for me. I'm going to be steadfast in refusing to listen to negative thoughts, especially from myself and from others that sabotage this promise of peace I've made. I declare that peace will grace this room with its soothing presence from now on. In this moment, my peace rushes to me, enough to share with my family, my community, and my world. I am a peacemaker and a peacekeeper, and I'm not alone in my quest to put peace into this room. My Creator is always mighty in the midst of me. I love who I am, and I'm going to do this for me and in my way. My way is the only way for me. My peace can never be denied me because my source of peace comes from God, the indwelling essence of my life.*

Okay peacemaker, as you tranquilize this room, transforming it into a place you love to go, you'll be spreading the margin of peace to end up including the entire room. There is such power in de-cluttering and once you get into it, you'll find it's fun! You're going to need a timer and two GROIN (Get Rid Of It Now) containers for this peace mission—a box and a bag. Put a GROIN box or plastic tub in the middle of the room you've picked, for the stuff you want to give away. (Having it in the middle of the room will grab your attention over the ruckus of all the unwanted and unneeded clutter, and remind you of your goal.) Hang a GROIN garbage bag over the back of a chair with its mouth wide open for the junk you'll throw away. Now you've set the scene for making peace with this room. Every day set a timer for a fifteen minute GROIN session, and when you've handled every culprit that's been disturbing the peace in that room, you are ready to take your GROIN tools and your imagination to the next room.

Once you've established peace in that first room, anytime you get overwhelmed, take a break and go to that room, light the candle, and remind yourself what you really want. It took a long time for things to get out of order, and it takes time to de-clutter too. Be patient with yourself, and don't give up.

Note: Sometimes it's fun to do the three-minute GROIN Dance in rooms used most by the family, like the kitchen and living room. Put a fast-paced tune on, grab a GROIN bag, and see how much you can throw away in three minutes while the song is playing.

Soon you'll have a home that is simple and serene and reflects who you are now. It's a holy process of letting go of the past and creating a home that makes you happy to be in. A home that fills you with peace just by walking into it. Once it's de-cluttered, you won't be preoccupied and consumed by "stuff management." You'll be able to spot the onset of clutter when things start to get out of place, or something hasn't been used for a long time and needs to go. You'll be in happy awareness mode and you'll have arrived at a whole new level of freedom. You will not only be establishing peace in fifteen minute increments, you'll be liberated from the past and free to enjoy your home as you were meant to. When you de-clutter gradually, you won't see immediate results, but if you'll trust the process and stay with the plan, you'll be pleasantly surprised how easily you will transform your home.

Now, if you didn't, go light a candle, and read my prayer of peace. Every time you have a GROIN session, end it by taking a few more minutes to light your candle and enjoy the peace. Be glad that you are expanding that peace in your own time and your own way.

### **Secrets from this chapter:**

- You are not just a homemaker or a housekeeper, you are a peacemaker and a peacekeeper.
- When you reduce the clutter in your home, it's much easier to keep the peace.
- You get to decide if letting go is hard or easy, sad or fun. So why not have fun?

- Getting rid of what doesn't make you happy and peaceful now is the fastest way to shut the fuss up.
- A car parked in the driveway at the end of the day means only one thing—the garage is an IPOD.
- Dump and Google.
- Clutter has energy of its own and it can sap our spirits with its countless venomous voices.
- Light a candle and envision yourself immersed in peace.

## Chapter Eight

### IHOP (International House of Peace) Corps

We're not quite to the official Peace Plan yet, (the IHOP Peace Plan) because first, you have to join the Corps. If you've decided to join me in being a peacemaker and peacekeeper, let's pretend we're official members of the IHOP Corps. I've written a pledge as a guide for us to remember why we want peace in the first place.

#### **The IHOP Pledge**

I pledge allegiance to my desire to have a clean, cozy, peaceful home. I know that peace on earth starts with me, and I promise to put myself first in all that I do, knowing that enlightened selfishness is the only way to fully be of service to my family and the world. I am a beloved child of God and therefore, I promise to be loving and kind to myself. I promise to adore who I am, adore where I am, and adore everyone in my life. I promise to take care of myself physically and spiritually while honoring God, the indwelling essence of my life. All is good.

#### **IHOP Badge of Creativity**

I know you're creative! We SHEs just are. Your badge of creativity shows all around you. My Aunt Tottie (my dad's sister) was a true SHE and also very creative—her extremely disorganized home was evidence. Remnants of unfinished craft projects graced every room from beads and feathers and paints, to cut glass and scrap books. My mother (remember, she was a BOP) used to roll her eyes at the way Aunt Tottie lived.

No room had a specific function. In other words, you could eat in the laundry room, get dressed in the kitchen, sleep in the bathroom. I remember one time all of us gathered in her master bathroom for a "sing in," (Aunt Tottie said the

acoustics were perfect in there) and as we sang in perfect harmony I noticed the bathtub was filled with bedding (unmade of course). I found out later that one of my cousins slept in there and that Uncle John had disconnected the water after a few accidental turning-ons.

I also remember one of the upholstered chairs in the living room had a broken leg, so Uncle John just took the other legs off because he couldn't fix it. When you sat in that chair your legs went straight out onto the floor. I loved it! Aunt Tottie had a beautiful baby grand piano in her living room until she got the bug to paint it robin egg blue. It was still beautiful that color, but as I recall, paint got onto the felt pads and Uncle John took the whole thing apart and couldn't put it back together. It ended up outside in the backyard and was a source of great family amusement.

Aunt Tottie also wore baggy clothes day in and day out and rarely put on make-up during her child rearing years. But when she *did* get cleaned up, she was a *knock out*. Mom said when they were young, Aunt Tottie would get all gussied up to go out dancing and she looked just like Lauren Bacall and could make an entrance that would drop jaws.

My aunt *loved* to get a reaction from BOPs like my mom. Good or bad. I remember watching her make orange juice from a can of frozen concentrate while she talked with my mom and me in her chaotic kitchen. She couldn't find a clean spoon to stir the three cans of water into the orange lump, so she said, "Oh hell," and stuck her whole hand down into the pitcher and stirred with it. My mother was aghast.

Because of Aunt Tottie, I had a real life example of a successful SHE. I don't ever remember her apologizing for her mess. In fact, I've heard more BOPs apologize for being caught in a "mess" like a newspaper left on the coffee table or a glass left out on the kitchen counter.

Some might look at the life of my Aunt Tottie as a life of royal mess-ups, but she didn't see it that way and neither did her family. Uncle John adored her and she kept her family happy because of her love and sense of humor. Aunt Tottie never seemed overwhelmed in life. She was comfortable in her mess

and portrayed a confidence that attracted almost everyone she came into contact with. Everyone loved her; especially her husband, three kids, and me.

After her three children were grown, she became a very successful real estate agent in southern California, selling homes like they were Girl Scouts cookies. Uncle John was a mailman for forty years and when he retired they moved from the home I remember and bought a condo in Manhattan Beach. I never saw it, but Mom said it was lovely! I did see photos, and they revealed the fact that Aunt Tottie had gotten organized! My mom could hardly believe it, but she was soon going to see her own two Aunt Tottie-esque daughters do the same.

If your house is like Aunt Tottie's, I understand it can be easy to feel overwhelmed and in a state-of-mind that can cause you to freeze, want to bust out of the place, or retreat under the covers. But all those actions make things worse. Whenever I've whirled myself into being overwhelmed, all I have to do is get a hold of myself and think about Aunt Tottie. I remember how loved I felt with her hugs and smiles, and remember, love is more important than a temporary mess.

Happiness is not dependent on whether the bed is made or dishes are done. I imagine what Aunt Tottie would say if she were in my overwhelmed position and I can hear her tell me, "Oh hell Pammy, all is well! Do what you can do right now and get over it!" The feeling of being overwhelmed is just a state-of-mind. But the good news is states-of-mind can be changed even when the true facts and circumstances haven't. In fact, if you're overwhelmed by your messy house, you have the power to change your mind right now and decide to not be overwhelmed. That's actually the best place to start! It just takes giving yourself time to practice feeling peaceful *right now*. If you don't have an Aunt Tottie in your life, you can borrow mine. Before I got organized, I was so deep in my mess that I forgot all about Aunt Tottie. In a perpetual state of chaos, I also fed the fire of a very bad marriage. My unhappy husband was a traveling salesman and was gone a lot. Since I had no clue how to be organized, I'd play with the kids, sew, and watch TV while he was away, and then I'd clean all night and the next day to get the house back in shape right before he'd come home. Once it was clean and company-ready, I'd promise myself I'd keep it

that way, but as soon as he'd leave, I'd go back to playing and making my messes again.

I also think part of why we create hassle in our lives has to do with adrenalin addiction. Being disorganized was the perfect lifestyle for my adrenalin abuse. Although it's not scientific, here's how it worked in the laboratory of my life.

Our bodies release adrenalin in situations where we need to respond quickly. We've needed it to be able to run from a flying Tyrannosaurus or a springing tiger, and today we still have this supply somewhere in our bodies just itching to be used to save us. In my case, I started "using" in junior high school. For me, procrastination was like a needle to an addict, a sure-fire way to get the drug released into my system. I'd leave a six-week project until the weekend before it was due and drain my source of the drug by staying up all night, neglecting food, imagining failure, pushing through the stress, and studying. (Oops, I just remembered it's the Pterodactyl that could fly, not the Tyrannosaurus.) On Monday morning, I'd waltz into the school with the flair of a seasoned actress, presenting my completed project—that even Steven Spielberg would have been impressed with—and earning an A. By the time I married, I was a practiced and exceptionally outstanding procrastinator, unconsciously addicted to adrenalin.

In my chaotic, disorganized past, I was also known for putting off Christmas preparations until December 24, hiding from unexpected company, running for school buses while dragging a child or two, and ignoring the mail box. With the advent of credit cards, I discovered a great way to get a quick fix, just by reading the monthly statements. "EEGAD!! IT'S MAXED!!

Being disorganized can seem like a curse, but as I pointed out in Chapter One, you have precious gifts and one of them is your creativity. In fact you probably already know that your creativity, like Aunt Tottie's, has gotten you into many messes, but has also been the source of rave reviews. When you were in creative mode you no doubt lost track of time, forgot to eat and sleep, and let the daily musts pile up. But there's always a payoff. For one thing, we create reactions that can be real fun. Like the drama of "before and after." The bigger the mess the more fantastic a clean-up will look.

Unfortunately, when you keep your home “company ready” you lose the drama of being able to say, “Tah Dah!” When you look good all the time, you just look good all the time and you don’t get to hear the whistles and “Wow, you look fabulous!!!” outbursts from family and friends. We lose the exclamation marks, but are they really worth the stress we put ourselves through being in a constant state of disorder? When you get organized, you’ll have to give up the exclamation marks you received for your “before” and “after” clean-ups, but you’ll get them back with glowing appraisals from what you’ll create when you have a more peaceful and organized life.

The other way to get your exclamation marks is immediate: by watching movies. I think that’s why we love to go to the show, subscribe to Netflix, watch TV, and buy DVDs. It’s probably why prisons show movies to the inmates. They get to vicariously partake in the drama on the big screen and get it out of their systems. I discovered long ago that watching the *right kind of drama* not only sparks my creativity, but satisfies my need for drama. I’m not talking about all those popular, smarmy reality TV shows that highlight the troubled lives of rich people, pregnant teens, or sensationalize dysfunction. Those are actually happiness sappers and not the right kind of drama I’m talking about. The right kind of drama involves fiction, involves an escape, allows your mind to be creative and pretend (not gawk in horror). Movies have a way of vicariously filling a part of me that craves fantasy. I think if we all watched more movies and the right kind of drama on television, we’d have less of a tendency to have drama in our real lives. Just in the last week, I’ve sobbed, cringed, laughed, as well as felt revenge, anger, fear, pity, and delight just by watching three movies. Part of my success at being organized is because I include watching at least two movies each week into my routine and I no longer need those negative emotions that go with a disorganized home.

I also use movies for creative ideas in fashion, interior decorating, entertaining and travel. Just think what we can learn from artistic set directors and wardrobe experts! My BOP mom used to watch soap operas with the sound turned off. She said it was a great way to see the latest in fashion, hair, make-up and interior decorating. She was always up with the latest trend and credited *Days of Our Lives* and *All My Children*.



When I got organized, I went through adrenaline withdrawal! What happened to the rush of barely catching the flight? Where'd the drama go when dinner guests arrived and I was at the door (instead of still in the shower) all dressed, make-up on, hair combed, holding hot hors d'oeuvres fresh from the oven? Was my life of being organized, suddenly going to be dull and drug free? Since there was no Adrenalholics Anonymous, I had to work with my addiction alone. I had to think a lot about what my transformation from pigpen to paradise was doing to me.

I realized I needed a little drama in my life because it makes me happy. Now that I know Nelly (she is a drama queen), I get to be dramatic but in a much more responsible way. As far as adrenalin goes, I still enjoy its effects, but it's way more fun now that it's in moderation. I can honestly say I'm a "recreational user." If you've been disorganized for a long time, chances are good you are addicted to adrenalin too. But when you start playing with my simple system, you'll be creating a magical routine that will free you to be who you have always wanted to be, and do what you've always wanted to do.

In the next chapter, I'll tell you how to schedule time to get your drama fix from a couple of good movies each week, not from real life mess-ups. It will be part of a weekly must as you have fun putting peace in your home. And when your life is more organized you'll start getting a parade of exclamation marks because the world needs what you are going to create for it.

## **Just Say No**

The first lesson we SHEs need to learn in order to kick the adrenalin habit and become a full-fledged member of the IHOP Corps, is the ability to give ourselves instant permission to say, "NO." We are notorious for overbooking ourselves. We love to wear invisible capes and think we can save the world all by ourselves. "Sure, I can take thirty toddlers to the zoo, as long as I can get back home in time to frost the six cakes I baked for the church cake walk tonight." "Yes, I can price all 2,000 items for the rummage sale, as long as I can be at the humane society by noon to groom strays."

Besides the adrenaline rush, I think there are several other reasons behind this overbooking disorder. One is the desire to be liked. We want people (especially other women) to talk *well* about us behind our backs.

“Janine! What a woman! Did you know she singlehandedly organized the Holiday Bazaar?”

“Yeah, and did you know she designed and built the float for the Founder’s Day Parade?”

“Yeah, *and* she grew the flowers that were on it *from seed*.”

“She’s so creative!”

“She’s amazing!”

“Everyone loves her!”

“What energy!”

“She’s perfectly incredible!”

“I wish I could do all those things so people would want to be like me!”

The truth about Janine is, she’s exhausted, takes performance enhancing steroids, cries when she’s alone, requires sleeping pills and anti-depressants to smooth out her private mood swings, can barely walk through her messy house in spite of her futile foray at Feng Shui, can’t use her oven because the smoke alarms go off when she preheats, is scared of the mystery food in containers in her fridge, and is on the verge of divorce.

But what the other women are *really* saying behind Janine’s back is,

“Janine is such a sucker!”

“Yeah, she’s a real control freak.”

“Mmm hmm, but she sure can’t control Frederic, I heard he goes out of town a lot. Gary saw him in a San Diego restaurant and the woman he was with was *not* Janine.”

“Really?”

“Hey, not to change the subject, but at the next PTO meeting, let’s elect her to lead the teen camping trip into the Himalayas.”

“Great idea! there’s no way she’ll say no.”

It was around Christmastime when I first realized one of the reasons why I constantly overbooked myself. It hit me right after agreeing to make all the costumes for the nativity play that I choreographed at a church where I wasn’t even a member. I wanted to impress Agnes Flannigan, an elderly woman I loved at the bible study I attended at her church. I imagined her saying to other women, “Pam is so talented. Did you know she was a choreographer? She’s also a very gifted seamstress and agreed to make all the costumes for the pageant. And to think, she doesn’t even belong to our church. I wish our members were more like her!”

Agnes praised me for all my work and in my immaturity I thrived on it. But looking back, was it worth having to give my sister the coat I was making for her without the sleeves on Christmas? (I did include the pattern’s instructions and the two orphan sleeves.) Was it worth taking the phone off the hook for three weeks, having the neighbor girl care for my three-year-old son during the entire Christmas season? Was it worth the all night sew-a-thons and the lack of time to decorate our own Christmas tree? Agnes was an amazing woman and years later when my son Michael was attending Lewis and Clark Law School, I discovered that the chapel on the school campus was named after her! She obviously impressed a lot of other people too. (To date, there is no chapel named after *moi*.) In hindsight, if Agnes had had a state named after her, her praise was not worth what I did (and didn’t do) to get it.

Right after that crazy Christmas, on New Year’s Eve, I made a resolution to say “No,” more often. I put a note by the phone that said, “Say no!” and another one in my purse to remind me when I was out and about and lured to impress others.

Another reason we SHEs want to say yes is when someone needs help. We are nurturers and we care, but helping someone can also give us a reason to escape. Focusing on others means allows us to *not* focus on ourselves. If *your* *yeses* are used to get out of *your messes*, let an alarm go off in your head and

turn that wonderful energy onto your own home. The next time you jump at the chance to help a friend clean out *her* closets when you can barely get into yours, just say no. When a relative wants you to help him clean his home when yours could use a crew of janitors for an extended period of time, just say no. While you are establishing peace in your home, be selfish about what you will do for others. It's admirable to want to be of service, but if it's a means of escape from your own messy dilemma, don't do it. Just say no.

Saying no isn't easy at first, and it felt awkward responding in the negative when people asked me to do something. To ease my discomfort, I was tempted to give a justifying excuse (which occasionally was a stretch of the truth). "No, uhhh, I have, uhhh, a sick mother-in-law to feed." Until you can feel comfortable with just saying no, here are a few suggestions to use, especially on those who value a worldly work ethic.

"No, I'm working on a huge project right now." (aka: You're making your home peaceful.)

"No, I'm booked solid." (aka: You're working on your IPODs.)

"No, I have an appointment with some very influential people." (aka: You're going to spend time with your family.)

"No, I'm waiting for confirmation on a project that's going to take up a huge chunk of my time." (aka: From now on, you're playing with your kids when they get home from school.)

"No, I have some traveling coming up." (aka: You have to run errands.)

"No, I've got a deadline looming." (aka: You've got to get groceries.)

"No, but you might wanna ask Janine, I'll bet she can do it."

"No, I can't at this time."

"No, I'm sorry."

"No."

While writing this section on saying no, I talked with Jenya (my bonus daughter-in-law who is the mother of Philip, my two-year-old grandson), about

the psychology behind the problem women have with saying no. Jenya has a master's degree from Harvard in early childhood development and is working on her doctorate in the same field. She told me that her husband Eric (my bonus son) and Philip are the most important people in her life and she has become extremely selective with her time spent outside of them, but she still has a problem with saying no. We agreed women are more sensitive about it because we don't want to hurt anyone's feelings and that men don't get their feelings hurt as easily so they are just fine with giving or receiving a "No."

It took me some time to get used to saying the word no without worrying if I was offending people, but over time and with practice it became much easier. Now, I can say no with relative ease. I figure if the person is going to get her feelings hurt, it's up to her. We need to attend to what is really important to us and be selfish about it.

Before you turn to the next chapter that outlines the peace plan, I would love you to practice saying no. Continue to get rid of what no longer makes you happy and find homes for everything that does. Take some time to think about Aunt Tottie and the way she embraced who she was and didn't worry about what people thought of her. By recognizing why you overextend yourself and by saying no more often, you'll be well on your way to joining the peaceful ranks of the IHOP Corps!

### **Secrets from this chapter:**

- Never apologize for your mess.
- When you feel overwhelmed, think about Aunt Tottie and remember, love is more important than a temporary mess.
- Happiness is not dependent on whether the bed is made or dishes are done.
- If you're overwhelmed by your messy house, you have the power to change your mind right now and decide to not be overwhelmed.

- Part of why we create hassle in our lives has to do with adrenalin addiction. Being disorganized is the perfect lifestyle for your adrenalin abuse. When you get organized, you'll have to give up the exclamation marks you received for your "before" and "after" clean-ups, but you'll get them back with glowing appraisals from what you'll create when you have a more peaceful and organized life.
- Watching the *right kind of drama* not only can spark your creativity, but can satisfy your need for drama.
- Use movies for creative ideas in fashion, interior decorating, entertaining and travel. Just think what we can learn from artistic set directors and wardrobe experts!

## Chapter Nine

### That's a Fine Mess You're In

Whatever kind of mess you are in, it is a fine one, because within it is all the answers to what makes you happy. Not wanting the house to be messy is exactly the thought you need to give you motivation to get out of it. I adore each of you who has wanted to be organized so much that you've read books, attended seminars, and made gallant efforts in the past. The very reason you are reading this book is testimony to your beautiful desire to do better. Before this moment, you were *trying* to "get organized," but now we've turned the most important mental corner when it comes to your mess. Now you are *seeking peace* instead of trying to get organized. Don't sweat the mess; it's like a common head cold—it's going to go away.

I used to think that once I got organized I'd find peace; that peace was a natural consequence of getting organized. But being organized does not *guarantee* peace. When I finally got organized, my critical husband turned up the heat on his discontent and escalated his anger. The house was organized but we clashed more. There are tyrants who run very organized homes, ships, companies, and countries, but if the people involved are scared, there is no peace. Instead, I now offer up the opposite notion; that when you find *peace*, order will be the natural consequence! I promise this is true, but it will be order on *your* terms, not anyone else's.

Making peace with your home just as it is now is crucial. Instead of striving to get organized, you are going to play at finding ways to make each room defer to you by inviting you in to enjoy its essence. For me, once I established the essence of each room, I was able to pinpoint the most important function each room needed to have in order to give me the most peace it could. Later in this chapter I share what each of my rooms does for me and what I have done in them to enable them to give me peace.

### The IHOP Plan

Okay my adorable peacemakers; the IHOP Plan is broken down into daily and weekly focuses.

You will need a few tools in order to be successful with the plan.

Remember how fun it was to get new school supplies? It's time to go shopping if you don't have the following: a wall calendar for your family to see, a personal calendar for your desk or purse, a watch, a timer, a small 3x5 card file box, a package of yellow, white, and blue 3x5 cards (you could start with a rainbow pack that comes in three colors), and a package of dividers numbered 1-31 for the days of the month. If you prefer to use technology to keep track of things, many of my subscribers to Make it Fun use Cozi Calendar; a free digital calendar you can link up to your cell phone and computer.

The IHOP Plan is very simple, but it does require you to make a daily habit of looking at your calendar and the 3x5 cards in your file box, and becoming more aware of time by wearing a watch. We SHEs have little concept of time and typically lack direction. The 3x5 cards are like baby steps directing you to peace and the trickiest thing about the file box, calendar, and watch is that you have to *look at them* if you want them to work for you.

## **IHOP Daily First**

As the star of your new peace project, it's important that you put yourself first. First thing in the morning, before you pee, look yourself in the mirror and say, "Your name I love you!" Then jump in the shower, get dressed all the way to your shoes, and fix your hair and make-up. Feel beautiful! This is the very first habit I want you to establish. You are worth your time, care, and effort! You deserve to spend some time every morning making yourself feel as beautiful as you can. Pretend you are in a play and you are the star. You are not only the star, you're also the playwright, director, and the producer of this new you! In the past, you've probably been caught hundreds of times looking haggard and frumpy in your pajamas and bathrobe, with bed-head and raccoon eyes from smudged mascara you didn't take off the night before. To make the decision to feel beautiful first thing in the morning puts you in the position of making the day *yours*. Then you'll be ready for whatever wonders await you. And when you happen to see yourself in the mirror during your day, smile, and give yourself the kind of compliment you'd like to hear from others. It might be, "Hey, cutie, I love you," or "Lookin' good," or "You always look so nice."



There's something almost magical about being prepped and ready for good to come to you. It's like saying, "Bring it on!"

## Now, Let the Games Begin

Now, open your package of yellow 3x5 cards and the dividers 1-31 for the days of the month. Yellow cards are going to be for daily reminders. Note what today is, and take the dividers in the package apart at today's date. For example, say today is the 12th of the month. Take the dividers one through eleven and place that hunk of dividers in the back, so the 31st is in front of the 1st and the divider for the 12th is in the front. Place the dividers in the card file box. You can keep your blank 3x5 cards behind the dividers so they're easy to get to and they'll hold the dividers up until you've filled out 3x5s as you go. The first 3x5 card you are going to write should say: *Feel beautiful, first thing in the morning.* (This will be your daily reminder.) Place it in front of the divider for today. I'll guide you through each step of creating this peace plan, so just be easy with this and don't jump ahead. For now, you have one yellow card filled out and it is so important. (In fact, if you minded just that card for an entire week, you would begin to see more peace and joy in your life.)

The IHOP Plan requires you to have a partner—your inner child. (I hope you're having fun with her already.) You know the *bring-your-daughter-to-work* day our nation promotes? Well that's what you'll be doing with this peace plan. While you're shutting the clutter fuss up, you can still begin your peace plan, because there are some decisions to be made in each room and those decisions need to be discussed with your inner child.

My IHOP Plan requires going into each room and asking three questions of that room.

1. What is its purpose?
2. How can it serve that purpose better?
3. What is one thing that can be done on a daily basis in the room to bring a sense of peace and order?

I suggest the one thing you come up with in each room will be an activity you'll want to make into a habit, so you'll end up with a habit from each room.

Pick a room and stand in the doorway with your inner child in mind. Act as if it's the first time you've invited her into it. Ask the three questions of that room and give her a tour and explain how the room could better serve you. Talk to her out loud. Ask her what she thinks. As you talk with her, don't leave the room until you can name one place in the room that if changed, would make the room serve you better. This "mental" kind of planning has such power because it will force you to adjust your thoughts about cleaning in a way that will bring you pleasure. On a yellow 3x5 card, write down one daily habit to establish in that room. Place that card in the front of your file box and today's date. If you're married, tell your mate what you are thinking and find out what he's thinking. We women can't forget it's his house too.

As you walk through your house with your inner child, you'll be adding one yellow 3x5 card with a daily task for each room in your home. You'll add these to the pile in front of today's date. As you complete each daily task on a yellow card, you get to file it behind today's divider and in front of tomorrow's. At the end of the day, today's divider goes to the back of the file box and the next day's divider moves forward with all the yellow cards for that day. Any card you weren't able to do still goes to the next day, and you could make a note that it got skipped. Chronic skipping of a task will begin to paint a skipping picture. You can then question why you are skipping certain cards. Maybe that task isn't important to you. Maybe you didn't have time and just needed to skip something. In the end, you may eliminate the card entirely because you just don't care.

As I wrote this chapter to explain my plan to you, I decided to take Nelly to our bedroom and ask her the three questions. It struck me we hadn't discussed our bedroom since I'd known her. We agreed that the primary purpose for the room was sleep and when we looked around we found a shelf of books, two baskets of books (Terry and I both love to read), a telephone, and a digital alarm clock. All these items were not serving the purpose of the room. But when we came to the third question—What is the one thing in the room that will bring more peace every day—Nelly popped up with a shocker!

"I think it's stupid to make the bed every day. Just because your mom made the bed every day and she made you do it, why do we have to?"

"Well, the reason I gave in my previous books was to make the bed out of self-respect. I wrote, 'If you checked into a hotel room and the bed wasn't made, you'd be appalled and you'd demand another room.' And besides, it's a habit

now and since I've told everyone else they should make their beds out of self-respect, now we have to."

"No we don't!"

"Yes we do, because we don't want to be a hypocrite."

"You should NEVER have told ANYBODY they HAVE TO make their bed! Only if they *want* to! No one sees the bedroom. It's a very private place and showin' it's like showin' them your bras and underpants."

"So you don't like the bed made?"

"Yeah, I like it made, but I don't care if it's not made every day. . .only on Friday when we change the sheets. I love changing the sheets on Friday. I love clean sheet day!"

"So would you say there is peace in this room whether the bed is made or not?"

"Yes, definitely, and I love that we keep our clothes hung up and we open the curtains every morning and talk to the new day! And it would be way more peaceful if you didn't insist on making the bed every day. I'd rather go for a walk."

Nelly caused me to think about a habit I'd established years ago and I realized it was just that; a habit that had become joyless. Think of a task that, right now, is void of joy for you. Maybe it's making the bed. What could you do to bring joy to it? What could you do to change your words from *have to* to *get to*? How could you make yourself want to smile once you made the bed? I asked myself the same questions and here's what I came up with to put joy back into the habit.

I brought my sense of smell into the equation. Since Nelly and I absolutely love clean sheet day because of the wonderful fresh smell of clean sheets, I just had to think of a way to extend that sense into the other six days of the week. So I decided that while the covers were all messed up in the morning before I made the bed, I'd mist a shot of cologne or perfume over the bottom sheet before I straightened the top sheet over. And when I'd finished making our bed, I'd spray a couple misty shots of my Make it Fun All-Purpose & Glass

Cleaner over the made bed. I love the delicious scent which I call “Sweet Lemon Drop.” (If you’re wondering why I’d spray a window cleaner on my bedspread it’s because the solution is made entirely of non-toxic ingredients and the fragrance comes from essential oils of lemon, lavender, and rosemary.

That’s what I’ve been doing every morning since my little talk with Nelly, and I can actually say to myself, “I get to make the bed!” Engaging my sense of smell gives my bedroom a final touch, like blowing a kiss to the room we spend a third of our life in.

The point of sharing Nelly’s and my dialogue is to help you see that you can question why you do things and do them only if they please *you*. What happened between Nelly and me is really important to note. What tasks do we do because our mothers made us do it, or because a friend we admire does it? Or people in the movies, magazines, television, and internet say they do it? I realized that what we do in our homes is an extremely personal decision. When we enlist the innocent wisdom of our inner child, we can learn a lot about our thoughts and motives.

I told Terry about my exchange with Nelly, and since it’s his bedroom too, I was curious if he needed to have the bed made. I found out he could care less if it was made every day. He did choose to keep his basket of books next to his side of the bed, but I took my basket and the books on the shelf (all mine) out of the room. The phone’s gone too. I also found an adjustment on the digital clock and was able to dim the numbers so they didn’t bother me during the night.

As we focused on the purpose of our bedroom, Terry and I also agreed that it was most important that our bed was comfortable. We’ve put great importance on luxurious, comfortable bedding. I love my linens and our pillows are filled with down, as is the comforter and mattress. It’s truly like sleeping on a cloud.

If you aren’t sure what tasks to do in each room, just as a suggestion, here are the list of habits I’ve established for each of my rooms. Note: the cards for the habits you want to establish are simply temporary tools to help you remember what you have planned. Once a task is a habit (about 21 days), you can throw the card away unless you want to use it to delegate. Remember, you are going to become a master delegator. In fact, right now, put this book down and go tell somebody to do something!

## **Kitchen**

I decided that for me, filling the dishwasher and turning it on right before I went to bed and emptying it first thing in the morning was what gave me peace. When your dishwasher is empty, it's so easy to get the family to put their dishes into it after each meal as the day goes on. Sinks get filled up and can't be shined because dishwashers are full of dirty or clean dishes, the same way rooms get messy because closets, cupboards, and drawers are full.

(Just a note about our kitchen.) Terry is the dishwasher in our home, and when he's through with the dinner dishes and turns on the dishwasher, I get to wipe the counters. Before I do the counters though, I light a candle I have in my kitchen window. It takes about five minutes to wash down the counters and when I'm through, I put a fresh dish towel and dish cloth out. I got that habit from my mom. She said, "It's very important to have a fresh, white dish cloth and change it every day. If you have guests come into your kitchen, they will judge the condition of your dish cloth and assume your bras are just like it." Ahhem! I've seen many a dish cloth in many kitchens across the country, and I think I agree with my mom.

The last thing I do is blow out the candle. It makes me happy to watch and smell the candle smoke as a signal for the last kitchen-work of the day. I love a vase of flowers at the sink and a clutter-free kitchen. If you've watched any of my cooking videos on the Make it Fun website, you can see how little is out on my counters. Empty counter space helps me feel peaceful and like the kitchen is in order.

Morning: Empty dishwasher while making breakfast.

Evening: Turn on dishwasher as the last thing to do in the kitchen.

## **Bedroom**

Morning: Open drapes and admire the day, make bed, and spritz with Sweet Lemon Drop. Evening: Put on nightgown, hang up clothes that can be worn again, put dirty laundry into hamper. Set out clothes for tomorrow. Check calendar for any appointments for the next day. No distractions, be asleep within ten minutes from getting into bed.

## **Bathroom**

Morning: Shower, dress all the way to shoes, fix hair, put on make-up. Hang up towel and put away toiletries. Put nightgown away. Take dirty clothes to laundry room.

Evening: Wash face, brush teeth.

### **Living room**

No messes left out. Check hands before going through any doorways so I don't unconsciously kidnap articles from their rightful place. I discovered long ago that we SHEs tend to go halfway when we set out to put something away, especially when we have to go through several rooms before we arrive at the home of the article in hand. When you put something down instead of putting it away, that's like leaving a child in the park when you've promised to deliver him to his doorstep. Once you establish a home for an item, start treating it with respect and take it all the way home.

### **Laundry room**

One load a day. Laundry is a four-part process: wash, dry, fold, put away. You know what happens when you leave a load of clean wash in the washer (it smells), you know what happens when you leave a load of wash in the dryer (they wrinkle), you know what happens when you leave a load of wash on the couch (company can't sit down). Leaving out a part of a task just creates more work for you later and laundry can come between you and your peace.

### **Family room**

No food, dishes, clothing, crafts etc. left out at end of day.

### **Car**

Don't leave purse, litter, packages, mail, or take-out containers in car.

### **Office**

Turn off computer by 7:30 p.m. Clear desk.

## **IHOP Daily Musts**

There are three things you **HAVE** to do every day that will add to the peace in your home.

1. You have to eat, so you need to fix food daily.
2. Unless the whole family eats over the sink, you'll need to have clean dishes to put the food on, so you'll need to do dishes daily.
3. Unless you and your family are nudists, you have to wear clothes so you need to do at least one load of laundry daily.

Make out a yellow card for each must. Add it to the yellow pile in front of today's date.

## **The IHOP Daily Dozen**

Now before you panic with the thought of twelve more things to do, DON'T. Making out twelve cards will take you about a minute, but it will be a minute well spent because you will be assigning a level of importance to these elements. In addition to the habits you are going to establish in each room, the IHOP Plan has twelve elements I believe create a wonderfully balanced life. If you will focus on weaving these elements into your daily round, you'll see such improvement in the peace and joy in your home and, of course, in you. For each element, make out a yellow 3x5 card and place the cards in the front of your card file box with your daily habit cards and the daily musts. What I love to do is hash mark these twelve cards as I include each one in my day, before I file it for the next day. By tallying each element, I can easily see which ones I'm not including on a daily basis and that gives me a clear picture of where I can improve.

I suggest you include: rest, solitude, nourishment, relationships, exercise, study, play, music, laughter, gratitude, creativity, and work. Some of these elements will already be daily habits and some won't. For example, rest and nourishment should be givens, although they can be easily abused.

### **Rest**

We need at least eight hours of sleep in every 24 hours. Please be selfish about this! Go to bed early enough to get your z's, and give yourself the gift of a fresh new morning. I have a very dear friend who actually made her New Year's Resolution to get more sleep! How wise! One of my favorite quotes is, "It's time to go to bed, tomorrow needs you." Don't let the television, computer, cell phone, or some great book cut into your eight hours. Note: It's also important to remember that drinking too much alcohol has a big effect on your sleep. While you might fall asleep quickly at first, very often you'll wake up a few hours later and be awake in the middle of the night. Limit yourself to that one glass of wine or one drink if you are going to have any at all.

### **Solitude**

We need time alone to pray, meditate, and dream. It helps to have a quiet place that's *yours* and is free from distraction. When my children were young, they learned early on not to disturb my time of solitude. Even today I have a sign I can put up on my office door that reads, *I'm in Meditation*, for unscheduled times I need solitude. (No, I'm not a monk or Yoga teacher. I just like that wording better than *Leave me alone* or *Do not disturb*.) I have a comfortable love seat in my office with a cozy quilt some of my lovable readers made for me. I learned years ago there is no wrong or right way to meditate as long as we take the time (at least fifteen minutes) to relax and breathe. The fastest way for me to relax is to cuddle up in a blanket as if I'm going to go to sleep. Then as I focus on my breathing, and I'm able to enter into a state of awareness that surrounds me with love and peace.

I also walk alone in the wilderness that surrounds our home on some days to give myself time to think and pray. Then I can cross off solitude *and* exercise for the day. I prefer practicing solitude in the morning (after I'm feeling beautiful of course), as it really sets a wonderfully joyful tone for my day.

Another great idea for solitude is to create a Peace First Aid Kit. It's just a journal of what I love—from places, to animals, to people, songs, movies, thoughts, sounds, tastes, feelings, smells, and such. So whenever I get smacked out of whack by any event that is not wanted, I refer to my Peace First Aid Kit and it instantly puts me at peace.

It's also in solitude that we perfect our gift of imagination. Your imagination is the most powerful spiritual tool you've been given. When I finally decided to change, I pretended my home (1200 square feet and in a very depressed neighborhood) was a penthouse suite on Park Avenue in New York City. In other words, I raised the value of the space in my mind from its real value (about \$12,000 at the time), to 12 million dollars. I also imagined that I needed to get that space spiffed up so I could sell it and move on. At the time, I wanted to move on in more ways than one. I wanted to find a way to get and stay organized, get out of my marriage, and get out of that house. Changing my mind about my circumstances gave me energy. I got excited about really making a change and as I developed the system that gave me direction, I discovered peace!

The time you spend in solitude feeling good about your life, your family, and your home, is key to making peace a constant. It's in your time of solitude that you can master raising your emotional frequency by practicing being happy



and peaceful. There are two special times in the day where imagining your life peaceful and happy has more power to bring additional peace and happiness to you—just before you fall asleep and when you first wake up. Try thinking good thoughts during these two special times. I've been practicing that my whole life and it has served me well. Peace, love, and joy are states-of-mind, and with a little imagination, they can be had regardless of our circumstances.

## **Nourishment**

We need to eat healthy, real food. On my website [www.makeitfunanditwillgetdone.com](http://www.makeitfunanditwillgetdone.com), I have a series of cooking segments called *She's in the Kitchen*, where I demonstrate how simple and convenient it is to cook from scratch. We've been talked into the idea that we need convenience foods because they save time. You may think they save time, but most convenience foods are filled with preservatives that help food live longer than we will if we eat them, so we just might be cutting our lives short. Besides, convenience foods do not save more time than the preparation of real food. I've been off the can and out of the box for more than 20 years, and I've saved time, money, and I'm healthy. Real food is more convenient than convenience foods!

When we eat right, we don't have weight problems or health problems. For too many years, we've been told to eat the wrong foods for a healthy, balanced diet. I learned what we should be eating from Gary Taubes, a science writer for the New York Times. If you've had a weight problem, it is not your fault! Read Gary's book, *Why We Get Fat and What To Do About It*.

Nourishment also has to do with what we use on the outside of our bodies, for both our personal hygiene and skin care. We are now beginning to find out how many chemicals fill our beauty products and thankfully there are healthier choices available to us that are not harmful. My bonus daughter, Kristi Marsh, is a seven-year breast cancer survivor and her brilliant book, *Little Changes*, gently educates readers about how simple it is to baby step our way out of our toxic environment by changing out products in our home little by little.

## **Relationships**

Our lives include relationships with others. We have husbands, ex-husbands, children, in-laws, best friends, casual acquaintances, neighbors, mothers and fathers, grandchildren, and of course pets. Relationships are necessary to our well-being, but they take time and care on a daily basis. Our relationships are

important and our calendar is the best tool for remembering birthdays, anniversaries, and other special events involving our relations.

If you're married, please insist on a date night and honor it. Your marriage deserves it. I was in marriage counseling with my first husband and the counselor taught us to see "the couple" as a separate entity. While that marriage was beyond saving, I've used that notion in my healthy marriage. We are a couple and it needs attention as such. The couple needs couple-friends and couple-activities, while Terry and I have individual needs that are independent from the couple.

### **Exercise**

We need daily exercise to stay strong and feel good. When we include it into our daily routine, it doesn't become an option. Since exercise is one of the easiest elements to put off, a good way to keep it on your daily schedule is to add music to it and make sure your exercise is enjoyable.

### **Study**

Keep learning. That's one of the reasons we were born! Insist that it be a daily affair. There are many learning programs on television and the internet. When we choose to learn more about what interests us personally, we'll be more inclined to study those subjects. I never plan to learn how to build a 400 horsepower combustion engine, but I do love learning about horses.

### **Play**

Even though you may be a few years past the age of nine (or a few decades even), we still need to play every day. Use your children or grandchildren as play motivators. Be young again! Color, have snowball fights, watch an animated movie, have picnics, hike, play board games, and sing with them. No young children or grandchildren? That's no excuse not to play. Consider becoming a Big Brother or Big Sister to a younger child who needs a mentor. Host an activity for the neighborhood kids. Volunteer to play with children at a hospital or family shelter. At the very least, go purchase your own box of 64 crayons (the one with the sharpener in the back) and a few new coloring books. Coloring has been proven to lower stress levels in adults. So get at it!

### **Music**

If you are a music lover, make sure you have a good sound system in your home and have music on as much as you like. Listen to music while you exercise or work in the yard. Music changes your frequency of energy, and if

you play fast-paced music like jazz while you do housework, you'll get it done more quickly, allowing you to move onto more fun things like play. I belong to a singing group called Sweet Adelines. We get together once a week and perfect our harmony together. To sing with very talented women who sing for the love of it is heaven to me! Looking forward to singing with them gives me great joy and energy.

## **Laughter**

Laughter is a gift. Laughter is a prayer. Laughter is the most potent mantra, chant, diet, or get organized program we could ever find. We were born to laugh, and just think, no one taught us how! Can you imagine having to learn to laugh? A conversation between two mothers of one-month-olds infants would never go like this:

“So, when do you think you'll get McKenzie into a laugh class?”

“I'm not sure. I've been reading you should get'em in one by the time they're two months, so I'm getting' a little panicky. Is Jacob in laugh class yet?”

“No, because there's a waiting list for the best class and I want him in that one.”

Laughter is like a spiritual milkshake. A good laugh lets joy flow through us, just like our favorite milkshake on a hot summer day. It refreshes us from the moment it gets in our mouth to the swallows of cool, creamy goodness. The good thing is that unlike a milkshake, laughter is calorie-free. Laughter costs us nothing! You'll never get a statement in the mail for the laughter you used up! I laugh at something at least every hour! If there were such a thing as being charged for the laughing I do in a month by some government bureau like the Federal Bureau of Laugh management, I'd be afraid to open the statement to see what I owed. I actually keep an alert eye out for things that make me laugh. I have many friends who are guaranteed to crack me up if I make a connection with them. My husband makes me laugh, all five of my kids are very funny and make me laugh, and really, I'm not embarrassed to admit, often I crack myself up!

If you haven't laughed really hard by the end of a day, you could use your timer to remind yourself to laugh. My mother told me I was a sulky child. I don't remember that phase because she literally timed it out of me. I'd be in one of my “moods,” and remember her saying, “Pam, if you are going to pout, you

need to go do it in your room, and you've got ten minutes to get over it." I remember going to my room and feeling so, so sorry for myself. I'd whine and tell myself how sad and unfair something was, and then I'd hear that timer ding, and my mother would be at the door with a hug and a kiss and a starting-over plan-of-action. It was wonderful how good it felt to start over and wipe the slate clean! Everything in your home (including you) should make you feel good. If you need some inspiration, always be on the lookout for items that make you laugh and bring them into your home. Things that make you laugh once are certain to make you giggle again and again!

### **Gratitude**

Gratitude is the most magical of all the elements for me. It is truly transforming. The more you can carry gratitude into each moment, the happier and peaceful you will be. Whenever you need a good dose of gratitude, I suggest watching this You Tube video by Brother David Steindl-Rast on gratefulness for this day. I watch it once a week and have it on a 3x5 card in my file box.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Zl9puhwiw>

Did you ever see *Scrooge* starring Albert Finney? I loved that movie. It's my favorite rendition of *A Christmas Carol* and we watch it every Christmas season. I was especially moved by the scene in the Cratchet household on Christmas day while Scrooge and the ghost of Christmas present watched through the window. David Collings played Bob Cratchet, and his extreme joy and gratitude over what little the family had made me ponder how little material things have to do with our joy and peace.

Each one of us lives in some kind of structure we call home. Our home is more than the address on our driver's licenses. Our home is located on an exclusive spot on the planet and it's filled with our energy. We are all blessed to live where we have electricity (unless we've had it disconnected because we forgot to pay the bill), but a quarter of humanity lives without electricity and several million women in the world spend half their day getting water. Whatever your living arrangement, whether it's a one room apartment with a hot plate to cook on, or a 40,000 square foot mansion in a gated community, we can feel grateful for what we have. The drastic difference in pictures I've painted is only to point out, that in the infinite variety of accommodations and the experiences we can have in them, the emotional range they generate is very limited.

Every emotion you can think of has a range. You can only get so sad, mad, scared, happy, anxious, or the dozens of other emotions. What interests and excites me about this idea is that truly no matter what our circumstances, we are in charge of the range of our emotions which puts the power into our hands. In other words, you take yourself with you wherever you go and you are in charge of how you feel. When you choose to be grateful for what you have right now you will fill your home with peace. How would you feel if you were thankful for everything in your life? Feel that way.

### **Creativity**

Because you are a very creative person, it's so important for you to indulge in creative projects. The artist in you can easily get pulled into the left brained world of busy work. Just think how we continue to fight to keep the arts in our schools. When school boards have to deal with budget cuts, music, drama and the arts are the first to get chopped. As a writer, when I get pulled into the work of running my small business, often the time I have available for writing suffers. If I don't write for just a few days (which happens more frequently than it should) my spirit suffers. Schedule time for your creativity and be selfish about pursuing creative fulfillment every day.

### **Work**

We all need work time. All play and no work would depreciate the fun of play. Many of you have full or part-time jobs in addition to tasks in your home. If you work outside your home, get help with the cleaning of your home. Just do it. Don't give the excuse I've heard a million times, "I can't afford it." I feel strongly about you getting the help you need, and when I've counseled women on this, I've received hundreds of very creative ways to get the help.

One woman started a neighborhood work co-op with four of her neighbors who were stay-at-home-moms. Every Tuesday they'd clean one of the houses together so once a month their homes each got a thorough cleaning. They enjoyed working together and she reported the time flew and they were usually done in a couple of hours.

Teenagers are a great source of work. You can go to your local high school and ask the principal for suggestions. You might need to do a little more training than if you hired a cleaning service.

As you gain skill in delegating, you are going to get a lot of help from your family.

As a peacekeeper, part of your work is to continue finding homes for wayward items, and show items that no longer make you happy where the door is. I have actually turned most of my work into play, by using my imagination while I do it. I asked some of my on-line friends to share with me how they have reframed housework; how they turn the idea of work into play by using their imaginations. I love these ideas.

Debbie in Missouri writes: *Okay here are three: When my daughter was younger, putting away dishes was "feeding the cabinets and drawers." Each morning, I take my shoes for a walk. Mopping the floor, becomes "swab the deck," or maybe "swab the poop deck" for mopping the bathrooms.*

Emily and her inner child Amelia Bedelia in Buffalo write: *Strip and wash the bed linens is "Prep the bed for the evening's festivities!" I swear fabric softener is an aphrodisiac to my dear husband or, as Amelia Bedelia says, "undust the furniture!"*

Sherry and her inner child Searra write: *When I do the laundry, in my mind it is like shopping for clothes again and refilling the closets.*

Becky and her inner child Becca report: *We use high-falutin' talk in front of the kids. Worse that will happen is that they learn more words: immerse the offspring = give the kids a bath. Feed the car = put in more gasoline. Nourish the carbon based life forms = serve dinner. And I like to refer to my job (outside the house) as "income producing activity." It just sounds nicer than work.*

Bonnie, Erica, and Violet write: *Get a tan = mow the grass; play in the sprinkler = wash the car; play in the bubbles = do dishes. We usually say "Feed Curby" (the recycle can), when we vacuum we "take Velma out for a spin" and when we move the laundry from the washer to the dryer we "change the twins."*

I suggest you work with the twelve daily elements for at least twenty-one days or maybe even for a whole month before you start adding the weekly, every other week, monthly, and seasonal jobs (which I'll tell you about in Chapter Ten.) For now, the cards you have made out are going to work wonders for your soul. And don't forget to keep de-junking at least fifteen minutes every day, so make a yellow card out for that too. Don't forget that mess and clutter are noisy. It's what's referred to as visual noise. Just as loud, blaring music

hurts your ears and head, rooms crowded with mess and junk bother your brain and sense of peace. Keep spending a little time every day de-cluttering (which I hope you are doing), and you'll continue to take the noise out of each room, gradually allowing the room itself to speak to you. These efforts add up and soon you'll baby step your way to peace and contentment in your home. If you go on my Make it Fun website, you can listen to what a mess sounds like. [www.makeitfunanditwillgetdone.com](http://www.makeitfunanditwillgetdone.com)

### **Secrets from this chapter:**

- Making peace with your home, just as it is now, is crucial.
- The IHOP Plan is very simple, but it does require you to make a daily habit of looking at your calendar and the 3x5 cards in your file box, and becoming more aware of time by wearing a watch.
- We need at least eight hours of sleep in every 24 hours. Please be selfish about this!
- Create a Peace First Aid Kit.

## Chapter Ten

### Now It's Time to Delegate!

In Chapter One, I gave you a brief lesson in the art of delegating, and I said you have to know what has to be done in order to get help. When you finish reading this chapter, you'll see just what you GET to delegate. I capitalized get to emphasize that the list of jobs in a home is for *everyone* who lives in the home and can work for food. Having the jobs you deem important for a peaceful home out of your head and onto a list will make it easier for you to delegate many of those jobs to others.

What's very interesting about delegating is that once a job has been assigned to someone else and you are no longer responsible for doing it, you'll find that your inner child will be more willing to do that job as well. For example, Terry does all dishes for every meal and with that chore off my shoulders, Nelly feels free. In that freedom, often she'll have the thought, "Pam, let's surprise Terry and wash all the pots and pans before we call him to dinner," or "Let's tell him after breakfast that we'll do the dishes because we know all the extra work he has to do right now." Also, when jobs are delegated and there is an offer to help by the delegator, there is so much gratitude for the help! Before you know it, the delegatee will return the favor and do one of the chores on the delegator's list. It's a beautiful cycle!

As the peacekeeper in your home, you are only responsible for managing *your* energy. The tools you use to manage your energy consist of the twelve elements from Chapter Eight and the IHOP daily focus below.

#### **IHOP Sacred Order: Daily Focus**

In the mid-90s, Carolyn Myss, the author of several popular spiritual books about healing, came into my life on the wings of one of her cassette tape series called *Energy Anatomy*. At the time, my personal life was fabulous except for one glaring detail; Peggy, my only sibling, co-writer and business partner became very ill and the lifeblood of our work began to quickly dry up.



Wanting my sister to get well, I latched onto Carolyn's work in the field of spiritual healing and she helped me to heal myself. I would walk miles every day with my Walkman and my dog Chelsea Marie, listening to Carolyn's wisdom and insight. Unfortunately, my sister didn't get well, but I was given the courage and energy to continue writing and helping disorganized people in order to keep our company afloat. I learned early on there was nothing I could do to help her with her illness, but I was able to let go knowing she was in God's hands.

On one of my walks while listening to Carolyn, I was struck with a sweet moment. Carolyn's "chocolate" spirituality and my "peanut butter" down-to-earth, get-organized-methods came together in a peanut-butter-cup epiphany down by the little league baseball field. I figured out a way to fuse Carolyn's sacred ideas into my organizing ideas, and I couldn't get back home fast enough to write it all down.

Carolyn's message was based on her discovery of the similarities of three of the major religions; Eastern Vedic religions and their theory of seven chakras, Christianity and the seven sacraments, and Judaism and its Tree of Life with seven elements. The similarities are no coincidence and demonstrate the profound truth that we are all one regardless of our religions. There is high voltage healing power in the truth and the meanings behind the seven elements.

The Dalai Lama said, "All major religious traditions carry basically the same message that is love, compassion, and forgiveness and the important thing is they should be part of our daily lives."

That's when it struck me that there are seven days in the week and if each day were dedicated to one of the seven elements, sacraments, chakras, and branches on a sacred tree, our days would be filled with God's energy and so would we. Nelly got excited about it too. Her thought was, there are seven colors in the rainbow and seven notes in the scale, so each day could not only have the meaning behind the sacred elements, they could have a special color and musical note as well!

It's important for me to tell you that as far as religion goes, I'm a Christmushindjewbud. I've studied all the major religions when I studied to become a minister in my twenties, and I saw the oneness in them all. I never tell in my writings what house of worship I attend (when I do) because it

draws lines we don't need. I've always enjoyed the questions, "Are you LDS?" "Are you Catholic?" "Are you Jewish?" "Are you a Buddhist?" Usually the question comes from someone in the religion they think I must be. What a wonderful thing!

According to Eastern religions like Buddhism and Hinduism, chakras are like seven computer data banks where every thought you've ever had is recorded and is an energetic complement to your physical anatomy. In Carolyn Myss's words, "your biography becomes your biology." Start thinking of yourself as an energetic being and start discussing your feelings with your inner child and life-long partner.

The Tree of Life is a symbolic diagram that has been used by Kabbalists (Judaism's most ancient mystical sect) for several thousand years. It explains how energy flows down from God into the world.

The two common teachings in the Judaic, Christian and Vedic religions are, thou shalt not kill, and live in the now. So, don't kill anybody and don't hold onto thoughts that take power away from you. You already know that negativity zaps your energy and drains your spirit, but I'm guessing you don't know what happens to your spirit if you kill somebody, and I don't think you'll want to find out.

Because of technology, science now knows we are energy beings. If you are aware of your thoughts and emotions, you know you are always running at different frequencies of energy. Music is a great frequency changer. So is bad news, good news, sunny mornings, puppies, food, and the list goes on and on. When we practice being aware of our feelings at any given time, we can stop letting negative emotions take from the energy we're given every day.

I try to stay conscious of where my frequency is moment-by-moment. Most of the time I operate like an air traffic controller; tracking the thoughts that buzz around inside my head and redirecting negative thoughts before they have a chance to land and become negative emotions. But sometimes those negative emotions sort of sneak in. That's when Nelly helps because she knows how to get my attention. You know how your real children can sense when you're not all there and they'll do anything to turn your focus back to them? That's what Nelly does. She'll start out thinking something like, "I'm sad." I'm not sure how many times she thinks it before it comes right out of my mouth and I say, "I'm sad," but I know by the time I verbalize the emotion it's been coming and

going for at least ten minutes, sometimes more. I have so much fun practicing being conscious of when I'm losing my energy and stopping it with just a simple conversation with Nelly. Here's a discussion we had recently while writing the chapter that included Aunt Tottie.

"I'm sad."

"Okay, Nelly, let's talk. When did you start feeling sad and what caused it?"

"When you wrote about Aunt Tottie, I started thinking about our cousin Maggie."

"Oh, I know, she was just like Aunt Tottie, so fun and disorganized, and remember she turned out to be super successful in spite of her disorder!"

"Yeah, but we never kept in touch with her after Aunt Tottie died and I miss her."

"Wow, I wonder how long it's been? Let's see, the last time we were with her was when *The Sidetracked Sister's Happiness File* came out. Holy cow, that was in 1983. It's been 30 years!"

"We shoulda kept in touch!"

"Well we'll find her. Would that make you happy?"

"Uh huh, I can't wait to talk to her!"

It took us three days to connect with Maggie who lives in Los Angeles, and we've promised each other some catch-up time which Nelly is really looking forward to. It's this kind of talk between you and your inner child that can really lift your moods and also your energy frequency. I have this sense that when we are experiencing the high frequency emotions like joy, gratitude, hope, great expectancy, love etc. we are actually feeding our bodies with energy it needs. Since everything is energy, I believe our cells get nourishment from our food as well as our positive feelings.

**Implementing the Sacred Order Daily Focus**

As you read this next section, you might find it bumping into your beliefs. I hope you can have an open mind and be able to see beyond the barriers our religions can put up. If you aren't a religious person, I hope you can find it helpful in creating a weekly plan that will give you more joy and peace in your home. I've outlined the seven daily focuses below. Remember, this whole idea is supposed to help you use your energy in a sacred way. But if you start to feel like it's too much to do as you read each of the seven different days I've outlined below, just stop. You don't have to do everything the way I do it; it must be meaningful to you. If you don't want to actually implement the ideas below, at least make out the dividers, so you'll have them in your card file box if you decide to try the plan on another day.

If for the next year, you were able to wake up in the morning, acknowledge what day it is, know your daily focus, be happy to start your day, feel grateful to be alive, and ready to use your day's gift of energy as only you can, that would be perfect. That's the whole point.

Here is a synopsis of my week.

### **Baptism**

The essence of baptism is about your earthly beginning and what your family and ancestors taught you about spirit. One day a week, I focus the energy I've been given towards my family. My prayers are centered on my present family (my children, their spouses, and my grandchildren) and my past family: my beloved parents who have passed and my ancestors I never met. I thank them for their part in why I'm here today and what was given to me in spiritual education. When I shower on my baptism day, I baptize myself thanking my family for their legacy of faith they passed on to me, as well as thanking myself for coming here from my spiritual home to this physical one.

As far as the focus for my baptism day, it's the day I focus on the family. Saturday is probably the best day for this focus when you have young children. It doesn't mean you don't pay any attention to your family for the rest of the week, it just means it's the day to schedule fun and work involving the family. It can also be the day to schedule a family meeting and it needs to be posted on the wall calendar for the family to see.

- ☯ According to eastern philosophy, those beliefs your family placed upon you are recorded in the first Chakra, which is at the base of your spine.

- ✧ On the Judaic Tree of Life, starting at the base is Shekhinah, which is the symbol of creation.
- ✍ The color Nelly chose for baptism day is green. But feel free to pick any of the seven colors in the rainbow for your baptism day.
- ♪ **Do** is my note for this day. “**Do**, a deer, a female deer.” I smile because Nelly loves to hum it.

## Communion

The essence of communion is our connection to community, our friends, co-workers, colleagues and neighbors. My prayers are centered around my community of neighbors, friends, employees and those whom I interact with on my website. In my prayer time, I let go of my need to control events and other people. I remove my fear that I am not enough and reinforce my knowing that I'm not in competition with anyone. When I focus my energy on accepting each person connected to me in life as part of the Christ within, I lose all fear. Knowing my source of energy comes through the Christ within and it is inexhaustible, my relationships thrive (including my relationship with money).

The focus on community takes me out of my home to do errands and I schedule any community work for that day. I sing in a chorus on my communion day and feel the harmony from that group all through my week. When I shower on communion day, I focus on the truth that we are all one. For me, there's something very spiritual about shower time. I guess it's because the luxurious hot water pouring over me causes me to shut out the world and allows me to direct my thoughts more purely and inward. I love to set my intention before I step in the water by naming the day I'm in, and Nelly likes to pretend the water is her color-of-the-day.

- ☯ According to eastern philosophy, your connection to the world is recorded in the second chakra, which is up a notch on your spine from the first chakra.
- ✧ On the Judaic Tree of Life, the second level up is Yesod, which is the symbol of foundation.

✍ The color Nelly chose for community day is yellow. (She pees in the shower every day, but on baptism day she can't bring herself to imagine the water coming down on her yellow.)

♪ **Ra** is the note. "**Ra**, a drop of golden sun."

## Confirmation

Confirmation is all about confirming your personal honor code with yourself (to thine own self be true). Confirmation day is MY day and it's a free day to do mostly what I want to do. I make it easy on myself in as many areas as I can. Laundry consists of towels and linens that are easy to fold. I also grill outside to eliminate having to clean the stove.

In *Sidetracked Home Executives*, we had a weekly plan and in it we had a free day to do just what we wanted to do. It's so fun with my busy schedule to continue to insist on this one day to practice enlightened selfishness. I really do just what I want to do. When I shower on confirmation day, I thank each part of my body from my head to my toes for its health and support of me while I'm using it.

☯ According to eastern philosophy, your connection to your higher self, your soul, is in the third chakra, and it is located along your spine a little above your belly button. It's right where your solar plexus is.

☆ On the Judaic Tree of Life, the third level is Neza, which is the symbol of majesty and endurance. (Remember your majesty, your highness!)

✍ The color Nelly chose for confirmation day is orange.

♪ **Me** is the note. "**Me**, the name I call myself."

## Marriage

The sacrament of marriage is all about love. As we grow spiritually, we begin to understand that in order to love someone intimately, we have to love our own being first or the marriage will not survive in joy as it's meant to. Marriage is the perfect advanced education for learning about one's self. When one or both people in an intimate relationship have learned everything there is to

learn and subsequently grown from the learning, the couple most likely will part. Being single after being married gave me the opportunity to use those lessons I learned in the marriage to become more understanding of myself and to love myself in a deeper spiritual way. It also prepared me to have a life partner whom I adore and who adores me and allows me to be myself.

I have just started to embrace the masculine part of me which has given me more of a “spine.” Terry, on the other hand is getting to know the importance of his feminine side (which many men are doing today). That doesn’t mean he’s sobbing and writing poetry all the time and I’m moving heavy furniture and ordering people around. It just means we are balancing our masculine and feminine aspects so there is more unity and peace as we go through our days.

On marriage day, I focus on our master bedroom. It’s the day I change the sheets and it’s Terry’s and my date night. It’s a moderate cleaning day (there’s not much cleaning done in the kitchen because we go out to dinner) and because Terry typically does the dishes and I cook, we both get a break from our ordinary routine on marriage day.

- ☯ According to eastern philosophy, the fourth chakra is located along the spine beside your heart.
- ☆ On the Judaic Tree of Life, the fourth level is Tif’eret, which is the symbol of beauty. (Just think, our creator uses beauty to bring us together. Remember how you used to spend time getting ready for a date?)
- ✎ The color Nelly chose is red...and no, I don’t wear red on every date night.
- ♪ Fa is the note. “Fa, a long, long way to run.”

## Confession

The essence of confession is all about your will and judgment. When you admit to someone about a wrong choice or wrong thought you’ve made, you automatically lift a burden off your heart. I remember getting caught in a lie when I was seven and how free I felt when I came clean to my parents. I had told my first grade teacher, Mrs. MacElroy, that we had a new baby at our house. (My sister was two and a half and hardly a newborn.) My parents must have talked to my teacher and she congratulated them on the new arrival.

When they confronted me, I burst into tears and admitted the lie. Mom helped me figure out what was behind my lying: I wanted attention and certainly news of a new baby got that for me once. I wouldn't doubt that it was also a wake-up call for my parents to throw a little more attention my way. I do remember my parents were very careful to give my sister and me equal affection and attention, but my adorable little sister was continually gushed over by friends and relatives who were not as sensitive to matching hugs and kisses. I've never forgotten the lesson, and I make sure I give equal notice to older siblings when there is an adorable baby on the scene.

We can partake of confession without going through someone else if we can be totally honest with ourselves. By being alert and aware of where we are sending our energy, we can face our mistakes, forgive ourselves, and do better. I imagine that our thoughts are like emails and they go where they are sent. When we think badly about someone and that person has low self-esteem, he or she will accept the negative thought on some level. However, if the person is in a positive and loving state of mind, the negative thought returns to the sender, unopened. We can't afford thinking negative thoughts about anyone or letting low self-esteem be an open door for others' negativity.

My focus for confession day is on planning, correspondence, and bookkeeping. It's my mental day and I also refer to it as my desk day. It's the day I straighten up my desk, pay bills, and file paperwork. My prayers center on calling my spirit back from the past and future. I have a very strong will and this one day a week I remind myself to let *Thy* will be done, not *mine*. I want to be willing and open to what God wants me to be and do. When I let my ego run my week (which usually means I've ignored the guidance from God), I always have a lot more work to do on my confession day getting back that sacred connection. We are always being guided and protected in every second of our time here on earth, and it's really up to us to listen and follow that guidance. When I do follow my guidance system, my workload almost disappears. It just takes practice. Focusing on this one day a week will help you spread it to every day.

- ☯ According to eastern philosophy, the fifth chakra is located along the spine, even with the Adam's apple. Just think, it's where your voice box is located; that magical place that turns your thoughts into tangible words.



✧ On the Judaic Tree of Life, the fifth level is Hesed and symbolizes judgment and mercy.

✍ Nelly picked blue for confession day.

♪ So is the note. “So, a needle pulling thread.”

## Ordination

When a minister is ordained, he/she is given the authority to administer God’s word as he/she sees it. God doesn’t need a go-between. God is within each and every one of us and it’s a matter of taking time to know this. By letting the Divine Spirit direct your life, you are ordained. On ordination day (mine’s Sunday), I focus on the sacred, and I go to church or out in nature (they both work for me). I love my church community, and I receive a monthly magazine which keeps me connected. I also visit a website that keeps me abreast of teachers I want to see.

We need a sacred place in our homes for spiritual retreat. A place where we can have quiet time and it makes us happy to be in it. Ritual is important if it helps you to calm down, relax, and become aware of the love that always surrounds you. Just like we have a specific place to sleep, it’s nice to have a specific place to soak up spirit.

🌀 According to eastern philosophy, the sixth chakra is even with the third eye (that’s the place in the forehead where some people place a jewel). It has to do with the mind and it is through this center that we receive God’s direction and guidance.

✧ On the Judaic Tree of Life, the sixth level is Hokhmah, which symbolizes understanding and wisdom.

✍ Nelly picked indigo.

♪ La is the note. “La, a note to follow so.”

## Extreme Unction (Alias: Last Rights)

The essence of extreme unction is burying the dead. It’s all about closure and letting go of what was. I picked Monday for my extreme unction day and it’s

the day I tie up loose ends from the week before. It's a great day to see how much I can add to that Goodwill container we keep in our garage. All week I get to say, "I'll do it Monday," knowing I really will.

- ☯ According to eastern philosophy, the seventh chakra is located at the crown of the head. Its essence is oneness.
- ✧ On the Judaic Tree of Life, the seventh level is Keter and symbolizes the crown.
- ✎ Nelly picked violet.
- ♪ Te is the note. "Te, a drink with jam and bread."

If you're going to try this out, put the 3x5 dividers in your ME section of the card file. Please have fun with this tool! I've been playing with this weekly plan for more than a decade, and it's so fun to wake up each morning and start my day by naming the sacrament, the chakra, the branch on the tree, the color of the day, and Nelly loves humming the note. But if it doesn't interest you, please at least find a way to make each day have a special focus. In *Sidetracked Home Executives*, we had a weekly plan but it was void of sacredness. Weaving the sacred into my daily and weekly responsibilities helps make my week run smoothly—but remember there are millions of people who don't have a weekly plan (or even know what day it is) and they are doing just fine. This has to be something your highness wants to do as well as your inner child.

### **IHOP Weekly Cleaning Focus: Five Departments Divide, Focus, and Clean (Delegate)**

This division of labor was inspired by my brother-in-law, Danny Jones. He weeded his yard according to the five zones in his sprinkler system, so he was on a rotation schedule that kept his yard and garden beautiful and weed free. Back in the day, Peggy and I adapted his outdoor divide and conquer routine for inside our homes. It really works!

The premise is primarily to divide your home into five departments to correspond to the five weeks in each month. If you leaf through your calendar, you'll notice week one and five of some months do not have seven days in

them, but the middle three weeks do. It's important to make week one and five lighter workloads than weeks two, three, and four, since you won't have the full amount of days available to you. Once you've divided your house into five departments, you can focus your cleaning attention to the area of the house that corresponds to the week you are in.

For example, I use this program, and I am in Week Two as I write this. For me, Department Two is our kitchen and laundry room. We do any and all organizing and cleaning in the kitchen and the laundry room in this week. (So, once a month they get special cleaning and organizing attention.) If we see that we got behind on things because of the holidays or summer vacation and such, and I see that the master bedroom has gotten away from us, I just say to that mess in the bedroom, "Shut up, we'll take care of you next week because you are in Department Three." Don't feel overwhelmed by your messes and start mixing up your weeks. Your messes in other rooms will be right there waiting for you when their own weeks rolls around. This part of the plan is to help you focus on one area or department at a time, knowing you aren't procrastinating if you put off some mess, you are just postponing it until its scheduled week.

Here is how I've divided our home into the five departments. Be sure to customize your division of labor to work for you.

- Week One/Department One: Entryway/Front Porch/Dining Room
- Week Two/ Department Two: Kitchen
- Week Three/ Department Three: Bathrooms and Guest Room
- Week Four/ Department Four: Master Bedroom
- Week Five/ Department Five: Living Room/Family Room/Den

Take five blank dividers and write Department One on the first one, Department Two on the second one, and so on. Write on the body of the divider what is in that week. For instance, if you are going to follow my division of labor, you'd write: Week One is the entryway, front porch and dining room; and on another one you'd write: Week Two is the kitchen, and so on. Put the dividers and the description cards behind the DELEGATE divider.

If you'd like to try out my division of labor schedule, it corresponds to Flylady's use of this division of labor idea. She calls them zones because that's what my sister and I first called them. We gave Flylady permission to use the idea, and if you want to have daily reminders from her about what zone (department) you are in, sign up for her emails at [www.flylady.net](http://www.flylady.net).

Now here's the list you've been waiting for (or maybe you haven't). I put a round bullet next to each of my daily tasks at the top of each category. Ultimately, you get to decide how often the tasks should be done. Go down the list and customize it for your family. Cross off tasks that don't apply and add ones not on my list that apply to your home and family.

Once you've customized the list, make out one 3x5 card with all the daily tasks for each room, and put each card in its respective room in an inconspicuous place. For example, I have my daily kitchen tasks card taped inside one of my kitchen cupboards. It gives the person cleaning up the kitchen a checklist of what has to be accomplished in the kitchen for the day. Then make out one 3x5 card for each task, and file those cards in your card file box in front of the appropriate department divider. Using the kitchen again as an example, I have all the kitchen tasks that aren't daily chores filed in front of my Department Two divider. So every month, when week two starts, I go to my card file and there are the tasks to delegate to my husband, my housekeeper, and me.

Any jobs like paint the walls in a room are really seasonal jobs. You can make out cards for project-type jobs and file them behind a divider marked SEASONAL or YEARLY.

Some of the jobs like Plan Menu, will probably go into your ME section to be done on your confession day, which is also your planning and desk day.

## TASK LIST

### Kitchen

- Empty dishwasher
- Wash pots and pans
- Scour sinks
- Empty garbage/recycle
- Wash countertops
- Sweep floor

Wash canisters and knick-knacks

Wash and polish woodwork

Clean dishwasher door

Polish faucets

Wash window over sink  
Wash floor  
Shake scatter rugs

### **Range/Oven/Microwave**

- Clean knobs/clock
- Clean microwave door

Scour/replace drip pans  
Scour rims  
Clean under drip pans  
Clean microwave inside  
Clean range hood  
Clean oven inside

### **Refrigerator/Freezer**

- Clean door

Defrost freezer  
Clean inside  
Inventory frozen food  
Clean drip pan under freezer

### **Cupboards/Drawers**

Empty and wash shelves  
Change shelf paper  
Clean cupboard doors  
Clean fan  
Paint/wash walls, ceilings  
Wash/dry clean curtains  
Clean toaster, can opener  
Clean and disinfect cutting board  
Clean under sink  
Clean light fixtures  
Clean telephone

### **Bathroom**

- Clean tub
- Clean sink
- Clean toilet

- Hang up towel
- Put away toiletries

Clean shower stall

Clean and organize cupboards and drawers

Wash shower curtain

Wash scatter rugs

Wash/dry clean curtains

Wash mirror

Wash windows

Wash (paint) walls, ceiling

Clean/polish tile

Wash floor

Clean and polish woodwork

Polish countertops

Clean brushes and combs

Cobwebs

### **Bedrooms**

- Make beds

Turn mattress

Wash mattress pad, bedding

Change linens

Clean under bed

Vacuum

Polish furniture

Dust furniture

Dust picture frames

Clean and organize closets and drawers

Wash windows inside

Cobwebs

Sort seasonal clothing

### **Living room, Rec room, Dining room**

Vacuum carpet

Shampoo carpet

Dust furniture

Polish furniture

Wash windows inside

Dust picture frames  
Wash ornaments  
Curtains and drapes (wash, dry clean)  
Mirrors  
Move furniture (vacuum under)  
Dust lampshades  
Clean walls  
Paint walls  
Cobwebs  
Clean furnace vents

### **Miscellaneous**

- Laundry sort, wash, dry, fold and put away
- Change kitty litter
- Clean bird/hamster cage
- Defrost food
- Prepare meals
- Feed dog/cat
- Set table

Clean light diffusing bowls (the pretty bowls over your lights, where all the dead bugs are)  
Clean laundry shelves  
Clean laundry floor  
Mend/iron  
Hand washables  
Bathe dog  
Polish shoes  
Bake  
Plan menu  
Make grocery list  
Water plants  
Fertilize plants  
Clean off fingerprints on light switches  
Dust high places/ledges  
Clean purse  
Repot plants

### **Outside of home**

Patio/deck (clean and sweep)

Sweep porch and walks  
Mow lawn  
Gardening  
Clean eaves  
Pruning  
Septic tank cleaned  
Clean out car  
Wash car  
Car tune-up  
Carpool children  
Visiting, volunteer work  
Dry cleaners  
Post office  
Library  
Grocery shopping  
Carpools  
Go to work

### **Desk work**

- Balance checkbook
- Answer emails
- Dump junk mail

Make appointments  
Write letters  
Bookkeeping  
Income tax preparation  
Pay bills

### **Special projects**

Plan vacations  
Plan Christmas

### **Family**

Family council  
Church  
Children's lessons  
Candlelight dinner  
Husband's regular commitments  
Dinner out



Breakfast out

### **Baby**

Formula

Wash bottles/nipples

Change

Bathe

Clip nails

Wash clothes

Wash diapers

Nurse/bottle feed

### **Personal activities**

- Personal grooming
- Shower, shampoo, makeup
- Leisure
- Read
- Study
- Jogging/exercise

Regular appointments (note departure time, not arrival time)

Haircuts

Dentist

Doctor

Classes

Self-improvement

Shave legs

Manicure

Pedicure

Fun shopping

Lunch out

Hobbies

Friends

Telephoning

Errands

Children's activities

Requests from family

### **Christmas activities list**

Wrap presents for mailing

Mail Christmas cards and letters  
Mail packages  
Make Christmas decorations  
Get the tree  
Christmas cards  
Address Christmas cards  
Write Christmas letter ONLY if you are a good writer  
Plan Christmas menu  
Put up house lights  
Decorate tree  
Decorate house  
Take children shopping  
Christmas caroling  
Work on church program  
Help plan kids' party at school

### **Other Priorities in the IHOP Plan**

There are some very important activities I hope you'll include in your week. Allow for one hour of rest midday. Make out a 3x5 card that says *Recharge* and put it in your ME section. Listen to music, nap, mediate, or just day dream, but allow for it. I'm so sure it's the right thing to do. Our country doesn't give much credence to this, and we are experiencing an epidemic of chronic illnesses. Our bodies need time to recharge in the middle of each day. We're better at making sure our cell phones are charged than we are about recharging ourselves. Having that 3x5 card reminder will make such a difference in your energy and performance throughout your day.

Watch at least two movies per week, your favorite television dramas, or sporting events and games. Make out a 3x5 to help remind you that this downtime is important too.

I'm happy to tell you, I no longer need my personal 3x5 cards to remind me what I want and need to do. That's the beauty of habits! The 3x5 cards are just like crutches. Once a leg is healed, crutches are no longer needed. Once an activity is a habit, you no longer need something to remind you to do it. For a long time, I have not been exercising regularly and it's one of the twelve elements I believe makes for a balanced life. (I used to walk five miles a day, six days a week for eight years.) Needless to say, the fact that I haven't been

exercising is constantly nagging me because I know it's good to have exercise in my daily routine. Since I've memorized the twelve elements, they are embedded in my daily routine so I no longer need to use the cards to remind me. Usually, I can stop at any point in my day and ask myself which of the twelve elements I haven't done yet that day. Once you've established a routine, when you stop a habit, it will nag, especially when it's something you know is good for you.

Once you've set up your card file box with its two sections, ME and DELEGATE, all you have to do is use the file and cards to give you and your family direction. Every morning, you'll look in your card file at your ME section and go over your twelve element cards, (in 21 days, you'll have them memorized). Look at the daily card that tells what the day's focus is, and let that theme guide you through the day. You'll also have the habit cards you've decided are your responsibility, as well as the daily cards you've decided are yours.

At the beginning of each week you need to note what department you are in and explain to your family about the department and the cards for *that* week. Have the card file in a place the whole family has access to. You can rotate the dividers each week, having the current week and department in the front of the file box. When you establish cleaning times using your weekly plan, the cards can come out and be divvied up or given to cleaning help. The 3x5 job cards are such a great delegating tool. The written word has more authority than a woman's voice (even if it has been altered to sound sweet and loving).

Even the jobs behind the DELEGATE section can become routine. My housekeeper doesn't need to see cards for what she does in our home, and after she's left, if she skipped anything, it glares at me. It's rare when this happens, but when it does, I make a note of it and tell her the next time she comes to clean.

I remember when Peggy and I were teaching our 3x5 card file system, our mom came to one of the classes. When we had our students make out all the cards using the list in our book, our mom, being the BOP that she was, found an additional job that she thought she might need to make a card for. It was *Clean the groove in the sliding patio door*. I remember telling her I didn't need that card because every day I put dog kibble in the groove and Chelsea did a very nice job of cleaning it, thank you very much.

Okay my adorable peacemakers, here's the deal; your card file system is a tool to give you direction. I suggest seeing it as sort of an atlas. You probably have a Rand McNally and I'll bet you only use it when you need direction. Have you gone to every place in your atlas? Of course you haven't, and you don't feel guilty over it. The card file is no different. If you have tasks in the file and you don't do them, don't feel guilty. Do you feel guilty because you've never been to Djibouti?

Use the cards for direction until you know the way. That's ultimate freedom and peace.

### **Secrets from this chapter:**

- Having the jobs you deem important for a peaceful home listed on 3x5 cards will make it easier for you to not only use, but delegate those jobs to others.
- When we are experiencing the high frequency emotions like joy, gratitude, hope, great expectancy, love etc. we are actually feeding our bodies with energy it needs.
- Having talks with your inner child can lift your moods and also your energy frequency.
- Allow for one hour of rest midday.

## Chapter Eleven

### Getting Your Children On Board

Chances are, if your kids are in a mess it's because you are in one too. As a young mother, I saw the crippling effects my disorganization had on my family, and my worst fear was that my affliction would slop over onto my children and they would grow up struggling to be organized as I had. The good news is, kids can learn the basics of organization, routines, and habits and we can save the next generation a lot of grief.

There is hope for your children to get and stay organized when you make it fun. What will make the difference? *Magic!* But in order to put magic into the mix, you'll need to call upon your children's imagination. You've already been using your imagination more if you are practicing seeing your home as you want it to be. As you encourage your young children to use their imaginations, it will help you work more with yours as well. Kids' imaginations run as smoothly as Michelle Kwan behind a Zamboni. They are natural imaginers!

#### **Enter the House Fairy!**

When my sister and I decided to get organized, it was June 16, 1977. We agreed to set the standard of orderliness first and then help our six children who, at the time, ranged in age from two to twelve. We knew sooner or later we needed to deal with their disorder, but we weren't sure how we were going to do that. Since Peggy and I got organized in the summer, it was the perfect time to let the kids play and enjoy their summer vacation. We knew that when school started, three of our six kids would be in school and back into a routine, while the remaining three (two BOPs) would be easier to handle. Joanna, my BOP daughter was washing her toys when she was two. When she was eight, someone asked her if she'd like a doll house for Christmas and she replied, "Oh, I don't think so, it would be just one more thing to keep clean."

One day, well into autumn, my daughter Peggy Ann came home from second grade announcing that the Desk Fairy came to call and she got a surprise.

“A surprise? For what?”

“A surprise for keeping my desk neat.”

“Really? And yours was neat?” (Peggy was one of my messiest children.)

“Yes, because Teacher says we never know when the Desk Fairy will come, so we have to keep our desks neat all the time. She says the Desk Fairy checks our desks when we’re out playing at recess and if they’re neat we get a surprise.”

This fantastic idea got my creative brain to cooking and within a week, I was dressed in a crazy wig, a dress with a twirly skirt in four layers of iridescent pink, green, purple, and orange, spiked heels, and a wand made from the vacuum cleaner hose with a tennis ball, covered in aluminum foil, tucked in the end. Armed with three wrapped surprises, I headed over to my sister’s house to make the first House Fairy inspection call.

I rang the doorbell and Jeff, one of my nephews, answered the door.

“Hi, I’m the House Fairy and I’m here to check your room.” He recognized me and seemed confused by my attire and spiel. My sister stood right behind him with a mixture of delight and confusion.

“I’m the House Fairy and I have three surprises for the children if their rooms are neat and clean,” I repeated. By then, my other niece and nephew, Chris and Ally, were in the doorway making a quartet of gawkers.

I talked slower. “I’m the House Fairy and I have a gift for Chris, Jeff, and Ally *if* their rooms are neat and tidy and their beds are made.”

Jeff ran toward his room to clean up, but alas the House Fairy beat him to it and declared, “Oh, I’m sorry, no surprise today, but I’ll be back another day.”

On that first visit, Chris (my sister’s BOP) got his surprise, but Ally and Jeff did not.

“I’m so sorry you two didn’t get to have your surprise, but I’ll be back when you least expect me and if your beds are made and your rooms are neat and tidy, next time you will get a surprise.”

My sister and I took turns bursting in on the children, never forewarning an inspection and it worked miracles in our respective households. It even got to the point where all we'd do is mention the House Fairy and rooms would transform.

In 2007 my husband Terry and I got a brilliant idea. Why couldn't we bring the House Fairy to the internet? What if kids could see the House Fairy on their parent's computer and learn from her? And better than that, why couldn't I be the House Fairy? I could get children to use their gift of imagination to empower them to behave, help around the house, and keep a neat and tidy room. I would be able to help parents motivate, inspire, reinforce, and recognize their children's good behavior in a positive and loving way. The House Fairy would help kids get organized before they grew up and got homes of their own to trash. She could teach children how to clean their rooms, have good manners, be kind to animals and each other, and be helpful around the house!

I think the reason other people can have more influence over our children is because our kids get so familiar with our voices that they can often tune us (especially moms) out. Ah, but what about an elderly, loving, godmother-type fairy with wings and a wand? I know from raising my children, that over time they are more likely influenced by someone other than their parents. Teachers, neighbors, friends, and grandparents can sometimes get a child's attention better than a parent can. As my adult children began to have children, I realized how much more clout I had with those kiddies than I did with their parents! Our grandchildren know the rules at our house and they would never disobey me or their grandfather. I'd forgotten how "special" my grandparents were when I was young.

Anyone who has been a kid or has given birth to a few of them knows that motivation is an ongoing challenge—and nothing motivates quite like having company over. There's nothing quite like knowing "they" are coming, which naturally inspires you to spruce things up. It gives you a new pair of eyes. You start seeing your home through the eyes of "the company," and you get an energetic spurt to clean and tidy up because you want your guests to ooo and ahhh, and say nice things about you behind your back: *"I was in Pam Young's home and it was just absolutely lovely. What a woman!"* When you know company is coming, things that were invisible to you for months suddenly leap

into view saying, “What’ll they think if they see this?” Some people don’t give a rat’s whisker what “they” think, but I love to create a good impression.

I think that clean-for-company feeling is normal. We all love compliments and we love to get approval not only from our immediate family, but especially from outsiders. Ultimately, we know that seeking approval outside of our own self-approval can have us running around trying to please. That’s not the kind of approval I’m talking about—it’s not the needy kind of approval-seeking. Seeking approval from someone who will probably *never* approve is the kind we want to avoid. But receiving praise from loving people who have no agenda other than joyous approval, is heavenly. The House Fairy is that loving, joyful entity who adores children and pours praise and appreciation on them.

The House Fairy has another very important role. In a magical way, she takes the pressure off the parent for being the bad guy. Each December, my children would transform into great listeners and agreeable darlings who always picked up—mainly because “Santa” was always watching. But that only happened once a year! With the House Fairy, you get to reap those benefits all year long, not just the last month of the year. We receive testimonials from families every day saying that they are finally experiencing peace in the house for the first time. No more nagging, no more whining and dragging of little feet, just joy and excitement to clean! There are hundreds of testimonials posted on the website for you to view.

When we are raising our children it’s so important to compliment them generously every day, since much of our work as parents is to correct and teach. Our children love us to pay positive attention to them. When I look back to when my kids were young, some of the most common sentences I heard were, “Look Mom,” “Watch this Mom,” “Look at me Mom,” “Mom, watch me,” “Will you play with me Mom?” I think this approval issue is one of the reasons the House Fairy works with our children. When children learn about her, they go into that clean-for-company mode. Their precious imaginations kick into gear and suddenly they find delight in the mundane.

As a grandmother, I now have time to devote to creating ideas for children. By watching my kids be parents, I realize now that they don’t have the luxury of time that I have. When I was a young mother, I didn’t have the time either! Now I’m able to devote hours to creating tools for parents to lighten their busy loads. By bringing the House Fairy to life via the internet, children have a real



person to relate to and play with in their imaginations, and parents have a new best friend.

The House Fairy concept has been around for a long time. We even mentioned her in *Sidetracked Home Executives: from pigpen to paradise* and to those who might worry about telling this little white lie to your children, stop it! There are thousands of children who were raised on the House Fairy and as adults they still have fond memories of the excitement. One pair of sisters told me they continued the fun by playing House Fairy on each other when they were in college.

Having the House Fairy make inspections is only part of the project. The new House Fairy program helps the parent help the child. Children cannot do it alone. The parent needs to help the child make his/her room House Fairy ready. In the program, I show you how to streamline your children's rooms to set the stage for them to begin establishing habits and routines that will serve them well forever.

The very afternoon that Terry and I thought of creating a cyber-fairy, I was so excited, I went straight to Goodwill where I found colorful toys for our set decorations, a sparkly gown, and a wig. I bought some wings at The Dollar Store and Terry and I threw together the set. We began shooting segments for our website that same day. I remember sitting at the table on our set explaining to the children (using the sweetest voice I could conjure) the difference between smacking when one chews and chewing without smacking by keeping ones lips closed, when I started to smell something funny. My body had begun to heat up under the lights and the dress from Goodwill (I hadn't taken it to the cleaners) began to emit the body odor of the previous owner!

The House Fairy went on the internet in 2007 and she was a big hit, even in her smelly dress. Two years after we launched, we had signed up almost 20,000 households. But there was a BIG problem! Since I'm the House Fairy, my voice is what the children were listening to on the videos. Unfortunately, I used that same voice to record my audio books and emails started pouring in. One woman wrote, "I was listening to *The Mouth Trap: the butt stops here!* and Emily, my five year old raced to her room and made the bed and put a bunch of toys away. She heard your voice and thought it was the House Fairy!" Do Pavlov's dogs come to mind?

The problem with *me* being the House Fairy created other issues. I made an appearance on AMNW, Portland's morning television talk show. The host knew me as an author and frequent guest on the program. I was in my full House Fairy costume (by then I'd had it dry cleaned) and make-up, and I thought I'd made it clear that I did *not* want to be introduced or interviewed as Pam Young. I wanted the host to interview the House Fairy. It didn't happen. The host introduced me as Pam Young and began with this question:

"Tell us why you're in that costume?"

"I'm the House Fairy, and I make surprise inspections into children's bedrooms and if they are neat and tidy, I leave a surprise."

I truly appeared to be certifiably crazy and perverted. Pam Young had snapped, thinking she was a fairy who goes into children's bedrooms to see if they've made their beds. When I think about it, I could be in prison right now as a premeditated pedophile. Something had to change.

Terry had the answer. We could make the House Fairy the size of a chipmunk and give her a chipmunk voice. She could interact with me in videos to show her size in relationship to me, and I could speak to the parents as me when introducing the House Fairy's lessons. When going on television to promote the House Fairy, I go on as myself and have video clips of the House Fairy.

By making her small, it opened up a whole new can of joy! She could talk from inside a tulip or on top of a mushroom. She could be on my shoulder or in my hand.

We dumped the Goodwill gown, and House Fairy upgraded to a real ball gown a fairy godmother might wear and with her new voice (she purchased from The Voice Shop in Fairyland) she no longer sounds like me. Terry took green screen lessons and the House Fairy re-immersed as you see her today on our website, [www.housefairy.org](http://www.housefairy.org).

I decided to share a little of the House Fairy program in this chapter in the hopes that if you have small children or grandchildren and would love help from the House Fairy, the basic information parents need to know would be hidden in this book. Your children will still want to know the House Fairy personally by watching her as she talks directly to them on the internet.

I remember when I was five; I listened to a kid's radio program called *Space Patrol*. My mom let me join the Space Patrol and I got a Space Cadet badge, a decoder ring, and a glow-in-the-dark belt with a spaceship belt buckle! I spent so much time in my mom's windowless closet looking at that belt glow. I loved my space stuff, so we've made sure children can get special items from House Fairy when they sign up for the program.

To introduce your children to the House Fairy and see if they would like her to become part of your family, go to [www.housefairy.org](http://www.housefairy.org). The video your child will see is House Fairy and me talking to each other. The House Fairy then explains what she does and asks the children to take a little test to see if they can pass it and be put in House Fairy's appointment book. She asks the children to put five toys away and show their parent that they did it, at which time the parent can sign up for the twelve week program.

Here are some testimonials from happy House Fairy subscribers.

*Dear House Fairy,*

*Your program is working great for our family! I heard about you through Flylady. She has been such a help to me, giving great advice and encouragement. I've used a lot of her "secrets" with my children, but I tend to be a "drill sergeant" when it comes to getting my kids to do their chores. Your website has been an eye opening experience for me. Not only were my kids IMMEDIATELY responsive to your videos, but also I realized that I've been trying to motivate them with "do this" then "do that," and not making it fun. You are motivating THEM, and teaching ME how to make every day routines fun. Like Flylady, you are such a helpful mentor to me. Thank you so much!*

*Love,*

*A mom of three in SC*

***\*\*THE HOUSEFAIRY ROCKS AT MY HOUSE\*\****

*Hello there, In the meantime, the House Fairy (including the welcome letter and the story I read to the children) has done wonders for our home. Since the HF letter arrived, my 5-year-old daughter's room is tidy every day and my*

*messy 7-year-old's room is vastly improved! When we do have to clean up, it only takes a few minutes instead of the hours it used to take. Even my son says how nice it is to have a tidy room. He has even resolved to keep his desk at school tidy because he can see that life is easier when you are more organized and you can find your things when you want them! Thank you for this lovely program. I can see that it is giving the children a chance to develop life-long skills, without my having to nag them!*

*Regards, Samantha*

*I was quite skeptical that ANYTHING would motivate my four kids (Alex 9, Kristina 7, Katie 5, Matthew, 3) to clean-up or maintain their rooms. We showed them some videos from the website, and they sang "The HF is comin' to my house" for most of the evening. Alex now makes his bed every morning and picks up the floor before bed (that never happened before). The girls' room looked like someone threw a hand grenade in the door. With some mommy help, we can now see the floor plus all clothes are put away. It still needs to have some toys and dolls find a new home, but a big improvement. Katie now asks what she can do to help clean the rest of the house. Kristina is my big challenge.... For the first HF visit, there were membership cards, HF rules and introductory letter left on the desk with a tiny bit of fairy dust. In a room that you could not see the carpet for all of the clothes, toys, dolls, books, papers and garbage on it, Kristina sees the glitter and complains "That House Fairy left a mess on my desk! I thought that she was supposed to help kids clean their rooms, not leave a mess!" My husband and I almost choked to death laughing at this.*

*Dear House Fairy,*

*Well, I'm amazed. We started three weeks ago and the results were almost instant. I have 9- year-old quadruplets and out of the four I have one BO daughter. But even she had started slipping and was stashing laundry and not cleaning her room as well as she had been. Since House Fairy started to visit they have all jumped on the bandwagon. Our two "slob sisters" now keep their rooms, closets and bathrooms picked up, and are making their beds almost daily. Our son who will stash and dash and try to get away with as little cleaning as possible is making his bed daily, cleaning his room, picking up his bathroom. Last night when I tucked him in he spotted a spider on the ceiling and helped me vacuum it up. Then, while the vacuum was out, he did a quick*

*run over his carpet. My daughter left a note with a drawing and asked if she could work with House Fairy and Santa Claus too when she grows up. I am so grateful for your program. I was so frustrated and there were times I asked the kids to come out in the hall to kiss me goodnight because their rooms made me so upset. No amount of yelling, punishing, bribing would get it to change. Oh maybe for a day or so. A bonus has come from your program. I am able to get through my cleaning more easily. Now I notice with the children's rooms picked up (plus they each have another room in the house they are responsible for) it's not as daunting for me to go through my clutter. It's like the peace is spreading throughout the house. Before I didn't see any hope and now it looks very manageable. It's just a matter of time before our DS 14 gets it. He's still in the "House Fairy is stupid" phase, but she's waiting to see some small changes in his room so she can leave a CD, sheet music, a cool pen, or something else that he likes.*

*God bless you for all that you do. You are terrific.*

*I ordered the program and showed my 7 and 4 year old girls the videos. They watched two videos and were off. They cleaned their room, the toy room and even vacuumed these two rooms plus the stairs. Then they waited they looked at their 17 month old brother's room and didn't want the house fairy to forget him so they cleaned his room as well! Of course as soon as their dad got home from work I headed into town to get their surprises and the fairy dust. They were so surprised and giggly when they woke up this morning! They made their beds and came up and tried to make mine while daddy was still in it! Then they wanted to call all their cousins to tell them about the house fairy, even grandma who introduced us to you got a call. Thanks for all your hard work and the program, I know our lives and house will never be the same!*

*Sincerely,*

*Jessica*

*Hiya! I want to thank you so very much from my heart of hearts for your program. I am a single mom in school 40 hours a week and I have 2 young sons, 8 and 6, who were the dirtiest, messiest, totally unmotivated to clean up their messes little boys as you can believe. I was skeptical about anything working (especially on the 8yo) as I have tried about everything else prior to finding your program. I testify now that you were completely correct when you*

*said your program has IMMEDIATE effect on kids, because it sure did on mine. Both of my boys immediately ran to their room and couldn't quite find 5 things each to pick up so they went to living room! They ran back here to watch a couple more videos and then immediately went and made beds and got clothes ready for the next day. I was SHOCKED! I just praised God, and you for the very best money I have EVER spent in my life. The next day after school, the boys came home and were disappointed that you had not visited their room right away! I showed the 8yo the video showing how to clean your drawers. He got straight up and went to his room and dumped out all 6 of his clothes drawers, folded all the clothes, and put them away how you said. I nearly had a heart attack. The House Fairy came the next day with 2 boxes for fairy dust, the printed certificates and the chores/rules list already hung up on a cork board which was hung just inside their bedroom door! They loved it! My 8 year old stood there and read all the chores/rules. He obviously memorized them because when I had to mention about setting his clothes out, he stated "That is not on the chores list!" OOPS! He reminded me actually that that rule is from FlyLady! LOL Your program is AMAZING and again, thank you for blessing our family!*

*Northern Cali*

### **Assess the Mess**

Once you've signed up for the House Fairy program, I suggest you go to the messiest child's bedroom and take a *Before* picture so your child can enjoy the contrast when the make-over is complete

After more than 35 years of experience helping messy people de-junk their homes, I know that most Americans have too much stuff. I think that often times, many of us go on vacation to get away from our stuff. Think about it. You go off to some peaceful place where you can only take just what you will wear for a week or two and those things you pack are probably your favorite things you love and actually wear. You get to a condo with a kitchen that has just exactly what you need, nothing more. Ahh peace! But wait! What if all of your stuff was pre-shipped to that condo, ALL your clothes, ALL your toiletries, ALL your kitchen appliances, gadgets, food, the stuff in the garage, I'm talking EVERYTHING? I guarantee your peace would go out the window. As you help your children get their rooms back, keep in mind you are helping them achieve peace.

A very shocked mom emailed me about being at her wit's end with her eight-year-old son. She said she and her husband had HAD it and they made a

drastic move! While the boy was at school, they gutted every closet and dresser drawer in his room of everything but the clothes that were currently in the laundry (in other words, the clothes the child was actually wearing on a regular basis). They removed every toy except for a collection of small Army men the child played with regularly and every book except for one his father was currently reading to him before bed. They left just the bed, a table with a lamp on it, an empty bookshelf, and an empty dresser except for the clean laundry. They took the twenty garbage bags of belongings to the attic and they left a note from the House Fairy that read:

*“Dear Jason, I have taken all of your belongings to Fairyland for a vacation. You have too much stuff and your toys, clothes and books, were feeling left out, so now they are happy being in Fairyland until you can keep your room neat and clean. I love you so much and I know you are going to be happy when you don’t have so much to keep neat. If there is any specific item you think about that you really, really need, please write it down in this new notebook I brought you, and I will bring it to you the next time I inspect your room. Hugs, the House Fairy”*

The mother told me her child was so happy to have a clean room! He didn’t want any of his stuff back! I have received three separate reports from parents saying they gutted their child’s room and the child immediately turned into a happy person! Kids love order. Less stuff equals less work and more time to play.

I shared the “gutting” story because I want to impress upon you how clutter affects our children. Most children truly are happier with less stuff and it’s up to parents to make sure children don’t get bogged down in the stuff of our materialist society. It’s all up to you whether you choose to drastically gut your child’s room or break the gutting down into smaller parts. Either way, it comes down to getting rid of 50% of the accumulated stuff in your child’s room if your child’s room is anything like the rooms I’ve seen in my career.

The best place to start is with the children’s clothes, because they HAVE to get dressed every day (they don’t HAVE to play with certain toys or read certain books every day). The first week of the House Fairy Program deals with this issue and the children get to see a video of a real child beginning the program.

**Kids Grow Quarterly**

As a grandmother, my grandkids call me Ila (pronounced eye-lah). I've been in most of my grandchildren's closets and drawers numerous times (not to snoop, but to help get them dressed). I have realized that it doesn't matter how much money the parents bring home—we have a lawyer married to a Microsoft executive, a teacher married to a stay-at-home mom, a Target executive married to a stay-at-home mom, and a single mom who stays at home and works for me—because all my grandkids' closets, cupboards, and drawers are jam-packed. And it's not their fault! It's the out of season and wrong size clothing that causes much of the mess in rooms which leads to cranky children and parents.

I think this needs to be a bumper sticker for parents of growing children: KIDS GROW QUARTERLY. As we come to the end of each calendar quarter, that should mean as much to parents as it does to Boeing Inc. I like to think that God made seasons not only as a miraculous gift of change, but also as a sign for parents to go through their children's clothes every three months. (Of course, calendars work as a reminder too.)

Here's the deal; let's say you have a five-year-old and spring has sprung (that happens in March). The adorable, long-sleeved, turtle neck, cable-knit sweater with Rudolf on the front still fits, as do the flannel footy pajamas with cute little snowmen on them and the stocking caps and warm woolen mittens. They probably would still fit the child well into summer although they'd start to hurt and be way too hot. BUT, it's spring now, and ALL the winter clothing is out of season. By next winter, your five-year-old will be six and into a bigger size. BUT, (again) those items that will not be worn by your child EVER again ARE STILL GOOD! Children grow out of most clothes before they wear them out, so there is still a lot of wear left in the stuff. You know how much you paid for the items (there is a place in our brains, even if we hated math in school, that records and can instantly recall the amount of money spent on each item you've bought). You also remember if the item was a gift and you can easily entertain guilt that makes it hard to let go when it's over. It's at moments like these you must buck up and have the courage to face Rudolf and say, "Goodbye, reindeer, it's been fun, but it's time for you to move on."

If you haven't been culling your children's wardrobe quarterly, you are in for an adventure! Take one of your child's drawers out of its dresser, and dump it upside down on a table or a made bed so you can stand upright to do this experiment. I guarantee you are going to feel like Al Gore examining the strata in a glacier. The strata in that drawer will tell a story too; not about climate



change, but about global hoarding. The clothing on the top of the pile (which was at the bottom of the drawer), will be clothing that has not been worn or seen in months and will not be worn again by your child. When you come to this realization that it's OVER, you will be at a crossroads. Do you save the clothes for a younger child to wear next year, or do you give them away?

If you are highly organized, you can store the clothing for a younger child. (Many BOPs only have one child so this might be a non-issue for them.) If you do not fit the description above, you need to let Goodwill Industries be the hand-me-downer.

As I said earlier, it's going to take courage to give up stuff that has served you well. "Let go and let God." My parents drummed that sentence into me and it's one of the most important sentences in my life. There is a higher plan in this Universe and each one of us is part of that plan. We can let go and let God provide as he always has. Be like a bird that is fearlessly perched on a branch: if the branch breaks, he can fly.

Once you have purged your children's clothes, you can easily stay on top of the problem of too many clothes by putting a container in the child's closet within reach. When the child realizes an item is too small, he or she can put it in the container. It will gradually fill up instead of the child's room. Plan to make a monthly trip to Goodwill with the collected clothes. I suggest putting it on the calendar, however if you are a woman you could let your body remind you another month is up. (This works only if you are not pregnant. Or not menopausal. Or peri-menopausal. Or irregular. On second thought, just write it on the calendar).

I received an email from a mother who had signed up for the House Fairy Program and she got the idea to leave a special laundry basket the child had never seen before in her son's room with this note from the House Fairy.

*Dear Michael,  
I am leaving this basket for you to fill with any unwanted toys, books and clothes that don't fit you anymore. When I come to inspect your room, I'll take the basket to Fairyland for the poor children who need them. Thank you!  
Hugs,  
House Fairy*

If you leave such a note, you'll want to take the basket of stuff to Goodwill while the child is gone.

Once clothing is dealt with quarterly, you'll find a huge difference in your child's bedroom. The less they have to clean up, the happier and more peaceful they'll be.

### **Ten Musts for a Child's Neat and Tidy Room**

1. Waste paper basket
2. Hooks
3. Dirty clothes hamper
4. Small containers for toys with many small parts
5. Easy to make bed
6. Streamlined dresser drawers
7. Lowered rod in closet or safe stepping stool to reach rod
8. Small hangers
9. Book shelves
10. A launch pad for next school day (designated place for tomorrow's clothes and school work)

### **House Fairy's suggestions for good behavior**

1. Mind my mom and dad without arguing.
2. Go to bed on time.
3. No food in my bedroom.
4. Set out clothes the night before.
5. Help with household chores.
6. Brush my teeth without being reminded.
7. Be nice to brothers, sisters, and friends.
8. Put dirty clothes in the laundry room and put away toys and books.
9. Do homework.
10. Make my bed every day.

The new House Fairy Program includes a step-by-step guide for parents and children. When you purchase the program, you receive up to five videos each week designed to entertain and teach your child and one email each week for

you—giving you tools to print out and prepare in advance for the next week's lessons for your child.

### **Assignment for Chapter Ten**

Spend this week *thinking* about your children and *observing* their habits. Observe their moods and notice how often there is tension between family members because of the messes in your home and specifically in their rooms. Take *Before* pictures of your children's room. Start a list of items you will need as your project continues.

My mother, being the BOP that she was, had read a child psychology book that said, *If you have a messy child, just shut the door to his room and sooner or later, out of a natural desire to be orderly, he will clean it up.* She tried that, but every Saturday she'd end up throwing a SRF (Saturday Room Fit). In other words, shutting the door doesn't work! I was completely fine in the mess! Trouble only occurred when I bumped into her idea of what my room should look like. I'm so grateful that she gave me such a wonderful example of what order brings to our lives. My childhood was filled with love, laughter, and order. We can have those vital requirements to peace with just the wave of the House Fairy's magic wand.

### **Secrets from this chapter:**

- If your children are messes now, with the help of the House Fairy, you can help them learn the basics of organization, routines, and habits and save them a lot of grief when they grow up.
- Teachers, neighbors, friends, and grandparents can sometimes get a child's attention better than a parent can.
- Most children truly are happier with less stuff and it's up to parents to make sure children don't get bogged down in the stuff of our materialist society.
- Leave a special laundry basket the child has never seen before with a note from the House Fairy telling the child she'll take the unused stuff to children who need it.

- This needs to be a bumper sticker for parents of growing children: KIDS GROW QUARTERLY.

## Chapter Twelve

### What Do You Really Want?

It has been nearly 36 years since I faced my disorder. Since then, I've changed. I found out I always have exactly what I need to be happy and peaceful in any moment, regardless of circumstances. Because of that knowledge, I turned my house into a clean, cozy peaceful home.

Before I changed, I kept trying to squeeze happiness out of material things, but it never worked. That temporary new-car-thrill wears off faster than new-car-smell. It's what I call *commercial* cheer. It's phony, billboard elation. It's conjured up in back rooms at ad agencies to beguile that part of us that wants to be happy, but hasn't yet figured out that furs, diamonds, hamburgers, shiny hair, yachts, frosty beer, or sex on demand won't bring lasting joy. (Mom said if happiness was all about sex, prostitutes would be the happiest people in the world, and I'm pretty sure they aren't.)

The kind of happiness I wanted had to do with loving my life just because I have it and it's mine. I love finding joy in *everything* I do— loving who I am and the way I do things. The happiness I've found is about being myself and taking

full responsibility for what I've created in my life. It comes from being face-to-face with the wondrousness of who I am, the wondrousness of others, and being thankful I'm alive, complete with the ups and downs.

As long as we think we'll find happiness and peace when this or that happens we'll be disappointed. I wanted to get organized to be like Mom, but when I realized I really wanted just enough order to enjoy myself, I was free to get organized just enough to be able to play with my gifts and talents.

## Your Gifts and Talents

There is only one YOU. There is such power in your uniqueness! You were born for one purpose; to be you and express your uniqueness. Your version of beauty, joy, love, harmony and yes, even order, is the only version with your spin. You reveal life in a way that has never quite happened before and never will again. God didn't make you and then say, "Hmm, I think I'll make another you because the first one didn't quite work out."

When I set out to write this book two years ago, I was pulled into a whirlwind of joy. It was summertime, and we were in Boston when the idea struck me. I started taking notes as fast as thoughts came to me. Sometimes they came so fast I could barely keep up. One of the notions was so powerful, I was stunned by its implication when I went back over my notes a few days later. It was in the form of a statement: *YOU are the only person who can write this book. No one else can. YOU are the only writer on the planet who knows and loves so many so-called "disorganized people" personally, and has been helping them for as long as you have. Your experience with SHEs (and some famous ones) is unmatched. Now that you've met and worked with Nelly for eight years, it's time to share your unique message.* When I wrote that statement, I was writing so fast, it was hard to read my handwriting later, but I was able to decipher it by going over it several times. When we got home from Boston, I had a notebook bulging with ideas, and I began outlining the book.

Within a week of arriving back home, we were invited to a friend's home for a barbeque. I was introduced to a lovely young woman who was a very intelligent and successful immigration attorney. She was bright, beautiful, and brimming with self-confidence. I thoroughly enjoyed her passion for her work, her sense of humor, and her love of life. I asked her where she went to law school, and it turned out she went to the same one my son had gone to. I said,

“Oh, my son graduated from Lewis and Clark Law School too.”

“What’s your son’s name?”

“Michael Brace.”

“Michael Brace! Oh, we were in the same graduating class.”

It was with this information that my new attorney friend froze! Then she said, “Wait a minute! I remember Michael’s mom wrote a bunch of get organized books and I read them all! Oh my God, I can’t believe this! You would not believe the mess I’m in! I couldn’t let you see my closets.....”

Suddenly, this successful immigration attorney had turned into an apologizing wreck! It was a wink from the Universe that I must write this book for every SHE that has put herself down for being disorganized. I had done the same thing when I was young, and I understand how hurtful that self-ridicule can be. It’s my prayer that you stop that kind of self-talk now. I have lived to deliver that message to you. Stop it. Be nice to yourself.

## Use the Power

There is a power for good in the Universe that just waits for us to use it. I prefer to call this higher power God, but there are so many other words for *It*. Besides, I really don’t think *It* cares what we call *It*, as long as we use *It*, love *It*, and know *It* loves us.

I’ve never written about the story I’m going to share with you, and only a few of my close friends and family know about it. I wanted to tell this story because I think it illustrates that when you want to change something that has seemed to be negative, you can call upon your higher power and *It* will help you. It also illustrates that we are never alone.

As you know, I was raised in Christian Science. You may or may not know, Christian Scientists don’t go to medical doctors. Although I’m no longer affiliated with the church, to this day I rarely need medical attention. I’m seldom sick and don’t really put much faith in doctors, as I’ve often been advised to do things that were not in my best interest.

On my honeymoon with my first husband (I was twenty), we were in a terrible automobile accident. I was driving (we took turns driving on our way to southern California from the state of Washington) and was stopped on the onramp waiting to merge onto the I-5 (the highway that runs from Canada to Mexico). It was Thanksgiving weekend and the traffic was heavy. A car came from behind us on the onramp and hit our car at an estimated sixty miles per hour. My husband, who was in the back seat because his legs were so long, had seen it coming and yelled, "They're not going to stop!" He leaned over me and cranked the steering wheel as far to the right as it would go. I had the car aimed toward the traffic on the freeway and was waiting for a semi-truck to pass. When the car hit us, we flew fifty feet to the right and crashed into a huge light pole. If he hadn't turned the wheel, our car would have shot straight onto the freeway and into that truck.

There were no seatbelts in those days, but because my husband never let go of the wheel, his hands acted as a seatbelt for both of us. The tops of his feet were bruised because they were wedged under the back of the front seat when we crashed. The car was totaled. I was crushed in between him and the steering wheel, and my nose and two left ribs were broken. I was also in excruciating pain internally.

The two boys in the car that hit us had been drinking, and the passenger in that vehicle went through the windshield of their car. When we all arrived at the small hospital in Tulare, California, I refused any drugs for the pain because I was a Christian Scientist. Because the pain was so intense on my left side, the doctors feared I'd ruptured my spleen. They strapped me down in a bed so I was unable to move much and potentially damage something more while they cared for the severely injured boys.

At about 1:00 a.m. I was able to telephone Mrs. Piele, the Christian Science practitioner I dearly loved. When I told her what had happened she said, "Sweet one, God is with you and we're going to know that this pain is nothing you need to suffer with. You rest, and I'll continue to know the truth about you. God is with you right now and always and you are healed." Just hearing her voice caused me to calm down, but as soon as I hung up, I thought the pain would disappear like magic (this woman had helped me have several instantaneous healings as a teen), but it actually got worse!

I panicked and started crying and moaning. A nurse hurried in and said, "What's the matter darling?" I told her my left side hurt way deep inside and the doctors said my spleen might have ruptured and that can be fatal!

She put her hand on my left side right where my ribcage stopped and exactly where the excruciating inner pain was coming from. I felt her cool gentle touch. It reminded me of how my mom's hand felt cool when I was a child and had a temperature.

The woman was tall and very dark skinned. Her dark hair was in a bun at the base of her neck and its darkness contrasted against the stark white nurse hat she wore. She was beautiful. As I looked at her she said, "You're alright darling. Everything's fine, now you rest."

The pain disappeared and never came back. Hours later when the doctors had finished treating the two boys from the other car, the doctor came into my room to see how I was doing, and I told him the internal pain was gone. I also told him about how the nurse had come in and talked to me.

The doctor replied, "We didn't have any females on staff last night."

I believe that nurse was my guardian angel. I think God knows when we need more than just words to heal. At that time in my life, I needed to feel the touch of a real person in order to be healed, so God sent her to me. I named her Dee Dee because that's the name I gave to my imaginary friend my Mom said I had. (She also told me she and dad were a little concerned that I spent so much time with Dee Dee, but as soon as my sister came along, I stopped talking to my invisible friend so they figured it was just a phase.)

Dee Dee has appeared to me two times in meditation in recent years. I always thought she was Spanish, but now I think she's of Native American descent since I have ancestors from early America.

A postscript to that accident: Four years ago, I had a urinary tract infection and my doctor wanted to do a bunch of tests. (They found nothing, but I learned something.) While having an ultrasound, the technician showed me what looked like a bite out of my left kidney. She said that something very traumatic must have happened to it because of the gouge and the presence of scar tissue. She asked me if I'd injured it. That's when I remembered the accident 46



years earlier. Now I know my kidney was what was causing the pain, and it was healed instantaneously that night.

## **Think Like a Child**

Since I became aware of Nelly, she has taught me how to think like a child. The longer you know your inner child, the easier it will be to quiet your adult mind long enough to hear your inner child's voice. Jesus said that we must be like a child in order to enter the kingdom of heaven, and I couldn't agree more. The child in you is so pure and innocent and I believe she has a direct connection to God. I believe your inner child opens the door to your soul where God is always present. Your little one holds the key to your intuition giving you insight, guidance, and new ideas that have never been thought before.

The idea that came to me while writing this book—of seeing you and me as peacemakers and peacekeepers, not homemakers and housekeepers—came from that place in me. In bringing this book to a close, I decided to share with you dialogue between Nelly and me.

“I wanna share the exercise that you learned when you were young.”

“Whad'ya wanna tell 'em about it Nelly?”

“Well, I think it can help everybody have a home that's just the way they want it, filled with peace and all clean and cozy. I wanna tell the five steps in my words.”

“Okay, I'd love to hear them from your perspective. Go for it.”

“Kay. Step one'll help if you'll remember in the Wizard of Oz when that nice witch named Glenda told Dorothy she could have her wish?”

“Uh huh, it was to go home to Kansas.”

“Well remember, she always could go home, 'cause she had those sparkly red slippers on the whole time, she just didn't know their power.”

“Yeah.”

“Then Glenda waved her magic wand over Dorothy, told her to click those slippers together, close her eyes and say, ‘There’s no place like home, there’s no place like home.’”

“I can see the scene! I can hear Dorothy’s voice! She said it over and over.”

“Mmm huh, and when you close your eyes and say ‘I am love, I am love, I am love,’ I pretend it’s Dorothy’s voice and I can see her in her jumper and braids and I love the feeling that comes over us! I feel loved and safe and it lets me know I’m surrounded by love, like we’re in a beautiful bubble of love.”

“So you’re suggesting readers get quiet, close their eyes, and remember that scene in the Wizard of Oz and feel God’s love?”

“Yep, that’s step one, and it’s so much fun ‘cause God is love and peace and joy and goodness and I imagine those sparkles that came off Glenda’s wand and the light that was all over Dorothy. It’s so fun to feel those sparkles inside and all around us. Then step two is all about the shoes. Love, peace, joy and goodness are like Dorothy’s red slippers ‘cause they’re always with us, we just need to remember that.”

“That’s true.”

“Yeah and then since your readers got this book ‘cause they want to have a clean, cozy, peaceful home, it’s time for step three. Oh this one’s so fun ‘cause we get to use our imagination! Step three; we pretend that we *already have* a clean, cozy, peaceful home, even though we can’t see it yet. Just like when you plant a carrot seed, you can’t see the carrot ‘til later ‘cause it’s just a seed. You could think ‘where’s the carrot?’ I know ‘cause I’ve torn apart seeds looking for teeny, tiny vegetables or flowers inside that look like the pictures on the packages. When you’re thankful that you already have something and you know that it just takes time for it to show up, you can relax.”

“Okay, Nelly. I see where you’re going with this and I know what step four is, but I’d love for you to keep explaining.”

“Step four is to be thankful that what you want is already being taken care of.”

“Nelly, I love how thankful you are. It comes so easily for you.”

“It’s just ‘cause I’m a kid and everything is so fun and beautiful. I’m thankful that you let me spend as much time as I want staring at stuff like clouds and birds and flowers. And I’m thankful we sing and dance and laugh so much. And I’m thankful for you because you love me and listen to me and even let me write in your books.”

“Well, I love you too and you’re welcome. So explain the last step.”

“Alright, the last step is to stop thinkin’ about havin’ the clean, cozy peaceful home and let God take over how that’s gonna happen. Like say you’re gonna fly from Seattle to Boston. Once you’re in your seat you have to let go and let the pilot take off and get you there. You don’t go up to his door and ask if you can help. You have to trust that he knows what he’s doing and he’ll get you to Boston. So you go about doing other things, like reading, talking to passengers, sleeping or eating, but you leave the pilot alone. Think if all the passengers kept knocking on his door to help or ask, ‘are we there yet?’”

“Oh that’d be awful. And like you said, after you do that exercise, you go about your business at hand with your eyes and ears open for guidance, energy, and new ideas that are always there for you. Thank you Nelly for sharing your wisdom. Do you have something more to say to my readers?”

“Yes I do! I love you and I know why you can get in a mess and get overwhelmed. Sometimes it’s just plain hard being an adult! There’s so much you love to do and so many responsibilities like taking care of your kids, working at your jobs, paying bills, and problems like broken stuff and accidents. Sometimes you don’t feel good but you still have too much to do, probably ‘cause you’re like that Janine lady saying “yes” to everybody. You work so hard and you do so much, sometimes you just need to cry, but you don’t because you think that’s for babies.

“Also, now that you’re big, you get special adult privileges like staying up late, playing on the computer, and watching scary television programs that say ‘Parental Guidance suggested.’ You can eat anything you want and no one can stop you so you eat stuff your mom wouldn’t let you eat when you were little. You do whatever you want without having somebody tell you ‘NO’ and you can say anything you want to without being hushed or getting your mouth washed out with soap.

“Think how much you’ve changed since you were little like me. Back then, you didn’t worry about stuff ‘cause you knew your parents would be there and take care of you. Well guess what! You don’t have to worry now that you’re big, because God will take care of everything if you’ll just let him. Stop thinking you’re in charge of everything, ‘cause you’re not. All you’re in charge of is being happy and doing what you love to do.

“That’s another thing; you sorta forgot how to be happy like me. You say stuff like, ‘I don’t have time to play,’ or ‘I’ll play later.’ And then you use the word *should* instead of *get*. Like you say, ‘I *should* do the laundry,” instead of ‘I *get* to do the laundry.’

“Also, things have happened that have made you sad and mad, and you forgot how to let them go, like when you were little. When you were little you’d just say, ‘Oh well,’ and then you’d go play with the dog. Don’t be mad for very long, ‘cause it only hurts you not the guy you’re mad at. And when you’re sad, cry and cry and cry. It’s okay! Us kids do it all the time and it makes us feel better afterward and it’ll make you feel better afterwards too!

“I hope you’ll start being more like your inner child. If you listen to her, she’ll help you be happy and peaceful and cozy and it won’t be long and your house will be too.

“Thank you for reading my mom’s book. I hope you liked reading about me in it, ‘cause that’ll help you make friends with your inner child. I’ll tell you right now, we kids love to be loved and praised and talked to.”

I love allowing my inner child to have a voice. She truly has changed my life in uncountable ways.

Throughout this book I’ve shared my wisdom and that of many spiritual teachers. I have so many favorite sages and one of them is Abraham as channeled by Esther Hicks. I’ve attended one of Abraham’s seminars and the wisdom resonates with my thoughts about humanity. I’ll paraphrase the words. *You came here with powerful and clear intentions. It was easy to lose sight of them as you grew up. Getting clear about what’s important to you personally, and seeking your personal peace, will bring well-being to you and automatically bring it to others. Give yourself permission to be lazy enough to allow your intentions to become clear. The word lazy gets a bad rap, because it’s based on a flawed premise that the more you do, the more you’re worth.*

*Don't measure yourself against others, just be you. The true premise is; the better you feel the more you allow what it is you desire to come into your life. Take your time to do that. You could not be more deserving than you are right now. Do what you love, be kind to yourself, and enjoy your gift of life with every breath you take. Please know all is well right now.*

Here is what I'd like you to do. When you have ten or fifteen minutes that you know will be quiet and you can sit and think, I want you to go to your peaceful place you created and light a candle. Take some nice, deep breaths, close your eyes and get relaxed.

Think about ways you have put yourself down in the past and what circumstances caused you to do that. Pinning down a couple ways you allow this will help you be aware when it happens the next time. Putting yourself down (if you do) is just a silly habit. If it's another person who is putting you down, stop allowing it to affect you. The best way to do that is to ignore the person when it happens. From now on allow no one to cause you to stop loving yourself including you.

As a teacher, I'm concerned about the system I wrote about in this book. I don't want you to be overwhelmed, but I wanted you to know the scope of what there is to running a family and making your home clean and neat. At the same time, I want to remind you that change takes time. The change you want will not happen in a week, month or maybe a year or more. It doesn't matter! What really matters is your attitude about you, your home and your family. Your attitude can change faster than your circumstances. It may take a little practice, but it is the core to your success in having a peaceful home.

While you are in your peaceful place, start thinking of all the things you're grateful for. Another one of my favorite spiritual teachers is Meister Eckhart. He said, "If the only prayer you said was thank you, that would be enough." Gratitude is to the grime in your mind what Windex is to a dirty window. One spray of gratitude erases guilt, worry, fear and all the negativity that can sap your spirit.

One of the 12 elements I asked you to put on 3x5 cards was Gratitude. To help you get into the habit of being grateful, I'd love you to follow through with this important assignment to close this book. Write down a finish to these statements with at least ten endings for each one: I'm glad I was born because.

. . I'm grateful for . . . I appreciate my . . . I value my . . . I'm glad I'm not . . . I'm lucky I wasn't . . .

Now comes the fun part! Put your favorite statements in a few Thank You cards using your best penmanship. You could put one in the bathroom, one in your car or purse, one on your desk, in your special place or wherever you get time and can read over those precious thoughts. Having them in a pretty card will help you establish the habit of being thankful.

Meister Eckhart's wisdom applies to your home and I'll close with more of his insight. "Spirituality is not to be learned by flight from the world, or by running away from things, or by turning solitary and going apart from the world. Rather, we must learn an inner solitude wherever or with whomsoever we may be. We must learn to penetrate things and find God there."

God is mighty in the midst of your mess.

#### **Secrets from this chapter:**

- The happiness I've found is in being myself and taking full responsibility for what I've created in my life.
- As long as we think we'll find happiness and peace when this or that happens we'll be disappointed.
- Your version of beauty, joy, love, harmony and yes, even order, is the only version with your spin.
- Be nice to yourself.
- The longer you know your inner child, the easier it will be to quiet your adult mind long enough to hear your inner child's voice.
- Putting yourself down (if you do) is just a silly habit.
- The change you want will not happen in a week, month or maybe a year or more. It doesn't matter! What really matters is your attitude about you, your home and your family.

- Gratitude is to the grime in your mind what Windex is to a dirty window. One spray of gratitude erases guilt, worry, fear and all the negativity that can sap your spirit.
- God is mighty in the midst of your mess.

**The End**

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