

Just do Something



Jeana Babcock
Jeana@BabcockAutoCare.com

Organization. What feelings does this word evoke in you? Stress because you don't know how to do it or even where to begin? Frustration when you can't find things easily and you want to do better but don't know how? Anxiety from the chaos in your home or daily life? Fear at the thought of letting things go? Guilt or embarrassment for not being able to get or stay organized?

Helplessness because you have tried before but can't seem to stay on top of it all and you've just given up?

On the other hand, could the opposite be true for you? Maybe, like me, you were born with an "organizational gene" that gives you a natural inclination for cleanliness and order. Does the idea of decluttering a closet, cleaning everything, and putting it back together in a pretty, organized way bring feelings of happiness? Does routinely cleaning your refrigerator and arranging its contents weekly bring a smile to your face? Is organization so effortless for you that you don't need specific cleaning routines because it's second nature, knowing what to do and when to do it?

Just like in many aspects of life, there's a spectrum for this. Some got the same "organizational gene" as me and lean towards the highly organized side. Others might lack that "gene" and lean more toward the disorganized end. While others fall somewhere in the middle. Perhaps we stay right where we land on the spectrum or we shift depending on circumstances—challenging seasons of life, developing habits and making more of an effort, or even getting help from others. There may even be times when other people's junk disrupts our natural organizational tendencies and causes us to swing to the end of the spectrum that brings stress into our lives. Where do you fall on the spectrum? Where do you want to be? What are you doing to get there?

Over the past month, there have been several situations where I've witnessed complete disorganization—to the extent of making me feel utterly overwhelmed. When we feel overwhelmed, we have a choice—do nothing or do something.

My youngest son, Jace, who will be turning twenty-one next month bought property a block away from my in-laws in Casper, WY last year. Now this property isn't just any property—it was the property of a hoarder (we'll call him Ol' Ray). It sat empty for many, many years—probably because the family that inherited it was overwhelmed. Let me paint a picture for you.

The property is two acres. There are three houses—none livable. Two trailers—neither livable. Multiple motorhomes—not even close to livable. And various other sheds and buildings—livable only for varmints. Every single structure on the property was jam-packed with stuff, junk, and garbage when he bought it. Normally, one would have to be out of their mind to purchase something like this. But my boy has a dream and a vision for what it can be. And as his mom, I am the biggest supporter of that dream.

His first order of business was to clean up some of the mess and he's definitely whittled away at that over the last year. But what is most important at this point is moving out of his grandparent's house. And to achieve this, he is turning one of those unlivable houses into his first home. With his dream and my eye for redesign, Jace and I have developed a great plan for his house via multiple FaceTime calls. It has been fun helping him with his dream and witnessing all he has done to bring it to fruition.

A few weeks ago, I got to see his place in person. I am not exaggerating when I say I had instant heart palpitations. Though he has made miraculous progress on his house, the rest of the property is completely overwhelming.

My goal for the visit was to serve Jace and my in-laws and to help my nephew decorate the Airbnb that he just remodeled. But friends, we only had a week! And when you only have a week and you feel so overwhelmed with all there is to do, where do you begin?

Well, you begin by doing something. With the reconstruction of Jace's house, there are all sorts of things clogging up his path as he is learning to remodel—electrical and plumbing supplies, tools, insulation, etc. So, after seeing the things in his way, my plan was to move all of it to the basement then he could just retrieve it when needed. Oh, but friends, the basement! Let's just say that I had a brief image of a horror movie after descending the steps.

Okay, deep breath. First order of business—clean out the basement of a hoarder. But where would we put the mountain of tools Ol' Ray had kept beneath all of the garbage and debris? And where would we take it all once we uncovered it? We needed a space...

Okay, deep breath. There is a "shop" on his property. So, we went to check it out to see how much room we might have to move the basement chaos to. The picture shown here is what we lovingly call the "shop" (one-day post cleanup). When we began there wasn't even an inch of space to move things to!



Okay, deep breath. Do something. Our new first order of business—clean the shop. And so, it began.

Jace has a full-time job—though he did cut back his hours while we were visiting so we could spend time together and help him with other things, he had to work in the mornings. During that time my husband and I went through the shop. I am sure our lungs suffered as we inhaled the dust and grime found within, but we were almost too busy being in awe of what we found to pay much attention to what was filling our lungs.

Friends, if there was one hammer, there were fifteen more just like it. If there was one staple gun there were nine more identical staple guns—all in different locations. Ol' Ray was so far on the disorganized end of the spectrum that he clearly did not know where his nine staple guns were so he went to the store and bought a new one. If he replaced a car part, why would he even think about getting rid of the old car part, why not just build another shelf to store it on? If he was going to drink coffee, why not save all the coffee cans he had ever emptied and use them to store the endless nuts and bolts that he and probably the whole city of Casper would ever need?

In the thirty-ish hours we dedicated to the project, we cleaned and organized almost every single nook and cranny of that shop. We hauled two huge truckloads of metal to the scrap yard—including old engines and all the old car parts that were useless. But we were also careful to keep things that Jace wanted, might use, or might earn a profit from.

Alas, there was room for creepy basement stuff! As we sifted through the basement and brought the "good stuff" over, it too became organized. Ol' Ray was so vigilant in making sure he had a tool for every project, he also made sure he had one in multiple locations across his property. So, we added a few more staple guns to a dedicated drawer and we added all of the other basement tools to their identical counterparts in the shop. If Jace needs a wrench now or in the future, he has an abundance of choices at his disposal—not just diverse sizes, but multiple alternatives of the same size! As for a tape measure, I'm nearly certain that with the number we uncovered, he could measure his entire property and still have some to spare.

Jace was amazed at the transformation of both spaces. He can now be more organized in his remodel, he has an organized shop to fix vehicles in, and he'll find the right tool for the right job (in multiple varieties)—no matter what the project!

Because we didn't let the overwhelmingness of the project stop us in our tracks, we were able to do the most important organizational first step: "Just do something". When that something was simply picking up a piece of metal and adding it to the metal pile, there was more space on the ground and that led to the next step: "Just do something again".

What something do you need to do today? What chores have you put off that if you do them, it will open up space on your floor or counter and you can do something again? What about your vehicle, is there something you can do there?

Being in the business I am in, I've seen all sorts of somethings that have not been done. I've wondered, did they not smell the container of strawberries under the seat that have molded and started decomposing? I've wondered, how does one drive safely with that many things on the floorboard of the driver's side? I've wondered why not just throw out the to-go bag after the food is gone rather than keeping all the bags from the last six months in the back seat? I've also wondered why some would not remove garbage and debris like this before bringing it to their mechanic.

But then some of these wonderings started getting answered when I "met" Ol' Ray on Jace's property and also began learning about other people on the disorganization end of the spectrum. The truth is, I know a few people like this (though not quite as extreme as Ol' Ray). Before now, it's been difficult for me to understand them—maybe because I am so far on the other end with my "organizational gene" that I simply could not understand. However, with a desire to gain understanding, continually improve myself, and also help others improve and lend a helping hand, I began a learning journey.

I recently ordered the book "How to Manage Your Home Without Losing Your Mind: Dealing with Your House's Dirty Little Secrets" by Dana K. White. She is a self-proclaimed disorganized person who has put small steps in place to make a big impact on the lives of disorganized people. A friend of mine recommended this book to me for another friend of mine. And if my friends are reading it, I figured, why shouldn't I?

At the beginning of the book, Dana explains who the book is not for. She described me—ha! But what she didn't know is that I was reading it to understand and learn about others and how I might help and encourage them. It gave me a new understanding and even though I do many of the things she recommends already, I found myself excited about the things she was saying to those on the more disorganized end of the spectrum. I also found that she and I have similar thoughts in our "just do something" approach. In fact, the book is also on Audible—so in tapping into my organizational bent, I listened and cleaned/decluttered all at the same time.

Perhaps you might wonder—if I am as organized as I claim to be, why would I need to clean and declutter my own home? Here's the truth about organization: It's a lifelong process. Just because I am organized doesn't mean that I do it once and then forget about it. Life changes, the things I need change, the things that are important to me change, hobbies change, styles change, foods change (expires and molds—gross!), and people change. And because of these changes, we have to change what we keep and wear and we have to clean and declutter along the way.

Besides the "stuff" in your life, are there other areas that need organization? Do you get overwhelmed with appointments, to-do lists, countless emails, etc? With the world we live in today and all the happenings, how can we not occasionally get overwhelmed?

The good news is, we can apply my number one organizational rule to this part of our lives as well: "Just do something". When I have a long to-do list, seventy-two emails in my inbox, and a calendar full of appointments, I start to feel completely overwhelmed. Oftentimes when we feel overwhelmed, we get stuck. When we get stuck, we do nothing. Friends, we can't do nothing because of all the somethings there are to do!

Certainly, I've fallen into the "do nothing" trap before—or doing something that was not needed—like eating when I wasn't hungry, scrolling social media, shopping, etc. But I've learned that those things just mess up my stride in getting things done and having extra time for the things I really want to do—like spending time with God, enjoying time with my family in a clutter-free house, helping others, etc.

So this is the moment I want to share with you how I get from doing nothing to doing something: I pray.

The good news about prayer is that we can do it aloud or silently. We can do it any time of the day. We can do it in our homes, in the yards, in the office, and in our cars (did that just sound like a Dr. Seuss book?)! And the prayer doesn't have to be elaborate—we can simply say "Lord, I am stuck. I feel overwhelmed. Help me do something."

To be honest, I felt stuck when I was in Wyoming. And so I prayed—that Jesus would help me do many somethings to bless and serve others. Boy did He deliver. I shopped for flooring for my nephew's Airbnb, helped Jace pick out flooring for his new home, assisted my mother-in-law in some organizing, and had a real show-down with Ol' Ray's stuff! But even beyond these acts of service, God gave me an extra piece of goodness—understanding.

I may never know why Ol' Ray needed so many tools in so many places. And I may never know why some of us got the organizational gene and others did not. But I do know that God made us all different. And in our differences, we can do things to help each other—like writing books to help people who don't think like organizers and need a new way (thank you Dana!), like encouraging people to pray and "just do something", or like just getting down to the nitty-gritty with bandanas wrapped around our heads to fight the dust and debris and help people throw out and organize other people's stuff.



"We care for people and fix cars!"