If you think you could accomplish so much more if only you were more organized, you are not alone. Millions of people would love to learn how to become more organized, yet, hectic schedules and competing priorities often prevent us from attaining that goal. Still, if you start small and keep it simple, getting organized can make your life a whole lot easier. But remember, Rome wasn’t built in a day.

What’s going on?
The first step to organization is planning and creating a system that works for you. Sure, it sounds like another “To Do” on your list, but it can be a fun process. When you plan carefully, you can save time and create simple solutions to everyday problems. Everyone has a role in making the home less chaotic, so include your whole family.

● Make a list of your family’s daily activities and goals. In order to see the big picture, try to be as specific as you can. Include all the things you have to do, such as the carpool for your child’s activities, dates and times for doctors’ appointments, meal times, bath time, bed time, grocery shopping, meetings, etc.

● Don’t forget to add the fun things too, like favorite TV shows, manicures, sports, going out to dinner, etc.

● Now, prioritize your activities and place them on a monthly calendar or family bulletin board. This helps you sort your immediate priorities from things that can wait.

● Consider making your organizational chart a centralized source for information, by including phone numbers, addresses and e-mails.

● Then, ask yourself, “Where do I waste the most time?” Is it looking for keys, eyeglasses, phone numbers, or your child’s soccer uniform? Remove these stressful time-wasting activities from your life by creating simple solutions that can produce big results. For example, if you misplace your keys, buy a key hook and place your keys there. Teach your children to place belongings in designated areas. Eventually, they will see the benefits of organization and it will become a family routine.
Here are a few helpful tips:

1. Aha! moments – keep a pad of paper beside your bed, in the kitchen or wherever you feel its best to jot things down. This will help you remember that great idea later. Notepads are less likely to get lost than scrap paper.

2. Keep a grocery list on the refrigerator door so that when things run out, you can jot them down easily. This will save time on food shopping.

Everything has its place

It is OK to throw away your son’s drawing from 2nd grade. Now, that he’s in 10th grade, he won’t be offended. Put away just a few favorites and toss the rest. If you don’t de-clutter, you risk losing the important things, or becoming overrun by piles of stuff!

- Plastic storage bins are great for family mementos, children’s old school projects and clothes. Put these bins away and commit to an annual purge.

- Keep frequently used items in convenient locations. Put seasonal items in storage.

- Have a special place for personal papers such as Social Security cards, tax statements, or your children’s immunization records. Consider a safety deposit box for birth certificates, passports, marriage certificates, etc. You should also keep appliance manuals and warranties handy.

- Have a designated place for unpaid bills. Make a monthly schedule for paying your bills and stick to it! Throw away junk mail; don’t leave it on the counter for later. The rule is: handle it once and don’t mix the bills with junk mail!

- Include the kids when packing away old toys and items no longer in use. Consider donating them to charity. This helps de-clutter your home while helping others less fortunate, and teaches your children a great life lesson.

- Don’t hesitate to throw things away! Not everything needs to be saved. Most of us know in our gut which things should be kept or tossed. Be willing to part with it, especially if it is broken, or hasn’t been used in the last year.

- Get into the habit of picking up after yourself and putting things back in their rightful places.

Involve the kids

Getting organized should be a family affair. Teach your children how to put away toys and clean their rooms and play areas. Have patience, be persistent, and work together as a family to decide who will organize what. Your children will learn an invaluable sense of responsibility and pride. They will also learn to respect their home, time, and each other. Your children will come to understand that pitching in and staying organized means having more free time for fun and family activities. Start early and these lessons will carry them through life.

Get enough sleep

There really just aren’t enough hours in the day, and that’s okay, but always, always make time to get enough sleep! We live in a 24/7 society with plenty of things to do, and sleep is important enough to put near the top of your list. Most adults need 8-9 hours of sleep per night. You can get by with less, but you will be less productive, more forgetful and more accident prone.

Be flexible

Your goals and priorities will change over time. Remain flexible as you organize. Plan on dedicating a little extra time and energy upfront and the end result will be worthwhile! Getting organized is an ongoing investment, but does get easier with time. Remember, busy families do best when they help one another with the responsibilities of the home. Let’s live and work smarter, not harder!