

Managing your mess

Professional organizers help with your clutter

By **LINDSEY KEILTY**
for Metro Halifax

Clutter, clutter, toil and trouble — this is an all-too-familiar cycle that many homeowners struggle with. Big homes and busy lives compound into a sometimes unmanageable mess. That's where Jane Veldhoven comes in.

As a professional organizer with her own company — Get Organized! Professional Services — Veldhoven knows what it takes to get any disaster cleaned up. Her career isn't just about organizing closets, though. Organizers assess and fix any aspect of your life — your home, your office, your filing, even your clogged e-mail inbox.

In 2001, Veldhoven happened upon a website advertising professional organizers and she quickly realized it



Professional organizer Jane Veldhoven arranges a bookshelf. Veldhoven recommends you spend 15 to 30 minutes every day picking items up and putting them away once you've organized your home.

was an ideal career path for her.

"Interestingly enough, people either come from the same side as I do, where they're naturally an organized person and they really enjoy organizing and they want to teach other people to be that way, or

some organizers come from the other side, where they were very disorganized and it affected their life in a bad way, so they took the steps to become organized and they now share that information with other people," she explains.

"We've learned through

studies within the business that 25 per cent of people naturally have organized brains — they can take a mess and turn it into organization. The other 75 per cent of people would stand there and go, 'Uh, oh.'"

Whether your house is just messy or your whole life seems to be a complete disaster, Veldhoven says there is a common thread — time.

This time of year is especially stressful in many households, Veldhoven points out.

"Paper is a huge issue in people's houses, especially if they've got children — they've got bills and statements, and then especially at this time of year when kids are bringing everything home from school, there's paper everywhere," she says. "I've seen people just leave the binders and papers until the end of August, and then there's a big panic when it's time to go again in September. It's a better time of year to do that now, rather than letting it loom all summer."

tips from a professional organizer

» Professional organizer Jane Veldhoven has some tips to help even the most disorganized and mismanaged.

» The most important part of an organizing project is to determine a goal. Why do I want to get organized?

» Remember that having an organized home is more about the way it functions than the way it looks.

"Don't be deceived by what you see on TV," she says. "It's normally not possible for people to keep it looking like that; organizing is more about making the space work than all the pretty labels."

» There is no such thing as being perfectly organized. "That's what stresses a lot of people out; it can't be perfect. We find a lot in our business, that if I come in and transform a space like that for you, I'm still going to have to come in afterward and help you learn how to maintain it because what you're trying to do is break a lot of habits you've had for a long time."

» The key to organizing is having a home for everything and being able to find things when you need them.

» Start with something small. "If I'm going to reorganize an entire kitchen, I'm not going to expect to do it all at once. I think that's where a lot of people get frustrated and quit, because they start something huge that they can't finish. Start with one cupboard and when it's finished and clean and perfectly organized, you'll have something to show for your efforts."

» When editing down your possessions, focus on what you use right now and what you really love.

» Don't shop for containers or shelving until you have finished sorting and purging, and have decided where you will store everything. "We all want to do this because it's the most fun, but the trouble is, you bring the containers home and you go to put the stuff in it and it doesn't fit and then the container doesn't fit where you intended it to go either. It's important to measure the space as well."

» Set up 15 to 30 minutes EVERY day to pick up and put away — if your systems are successful, this should be quick and easy.

—LINDSEY KEILTY/FOR METRO HALIFAX