

Sequel: How to Have An Organized Lifestyle Every Day of the Year!

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Are you *still* living with chaos in your environment? [Last month, I shared](#) “10 tips to stop operating in crisis mode and be ready for Shabbat early, cool, calm and collected with lots of time to spare!” and I cited “[the Chatzos Lady](#)”, Azriela Jaffe.

Eliminating the weekly Friday chaos surrounding Shabbat preparations is healthy for you and each family member. So this month I thought I would expand this concept and share what I’ve learned over 50 years of *un*housekeeping and what I changed 19 years ago after I came across Marla Cilley, aka the [FlyLady](#).

Before Marie Kondo came on the scene teaching her KonMari Method of getting the masses and celebs to tidy up, and before the Netflix series *The Home Edit* tackled California messies, there was a young woman named Marla Cilley from North Carolina USA. (You can almost “hear” her sweet southern drawl in her postings.) Back in 1999, after a number of years struggling to gain control over her home in chaos (**can't have anyone over syndrome**), she started incorporating the “SHE” (**Sidetracked Home Executive**) system as taught to *her* by two sisters, Pam Young and Peggy Jones who wrote a book called *From Pigpen to Paradise* in 1977. (We all learn from other people, right?)

Marla became very popular on her homefront because of her shining example and heartfelt helpfulness. And so FlyLady (the brand) was born. Almost 23 years later, she is still going strong, offering advice, mentoring, coaching, teaching, holding hands, gently but firmly prodding and encouraging people from around the globe. It’s amazing how some people can maintain such tidy, uncluttered and clean homes.

When I was growing up, my sister and I had chores. Chanchi was always cleaning something and was quick about it. I, on the other hand, disliked chores, begrudgingly did them, albeit slowly, but eventually finished them. Mom would never fail to compare my method to my sister’s, who seemed to be “born with a schmatta (rag) in her hand”! “Why, oh why couldn’t you be more like your (*younger*) sister?” (I found out later on that she cheated!)

As a young mother, my biggest problem, besides lack of sleep, was keeping up with the dirty cloth diapers (yes, I am *that* old!). We did not have a washing machine and needed

to take our laundry to a commercial laundromat. I ended the horrid diaper situation by switching to the new-to-market disposables. It was much healthier for our internal environment and my sanity. When the baby would allow, I worked on the worst areas of our apartment. Prioritizing what was most essential, like dishes, pots and pans. Regular dusting was not on my radar until I started coughing. Little by little, I was learning (the hard way) what needed to be done to make my home more enjoyable to be in. Never, ever as well done as my sister, but done, it was. By tackling one area at a time in manageable chunks over a several-day span, eventually it all gets done.

After my second child came along and enrolling in Nursing school plus working part-time, house chores became sporadic. I did what *MUST* be done and the rest, oh, well. Not exactly “KonMari”.

Fast forward a lot of years. Things got a bit better as I matured and gained knowledge in Feng Shui. I wanted a house with “good energy” so I started to tidy up, move furniture around for better flow, added plants and took pride in how it looked. It took some effort but it was worth it. And once I achieved what I was hoping for, it was somewhat easier to keep up.

I divided the house into zones and concentrated on each one until it was uncluttered and under control. There were daily chores, weekly chores, monthly, seasonally (like Passover preps) and yearly. I created charts to help keep me on track, along with endless notes. Some chores felt endless, due to living with a beautiful purebred Dalmatian that looked like he was straight out of a Disney story but who shed little short black and white hairs nonstop! We bought a better vacuum cleaner and several clothes brushes.

In 2001, we moved to Baltimore (the DalPal had crossed the “Rainbow Bridge”) and we had downsized significantly, but as we soon learned, not enough. It took us what seemed forever to unpack and get organized. It was a great challenge as we did not have as much space in the small apartment as we did in the large house. My system did not work quite as well; it wasn’t the system, it was me. We experienced a bit of a crisis in our family. My mother-in-law had to be admitted to a Nursing Home and my own mother was not well and wanted to move up north from Florida. I needed to find an apartment in an assisted living facility. Chaos ruled our home for a while as more urgent matters required my attention. Housework was not on my radar, especially after both moms passed away on the same day in the same hospital only hours apart. The house wasn’t alone in chaos, we were too.

In 2003, I stumbled across FlyLady. Her kind and humorous approach to getting organized was what I needed. Starting with baby steps, the very first thing I had to do was “shine my sink” before I went to bed. Sounds odd, doesn't it? In order to clean and shine the sink, you have to wash, dry and put away the dishes, pots and pans that are in it! There is a lot of psychology, behavior modification and mentoring going on. She starts by telling us that there are three rules she lives by:

1. Don't sweat the small stuff; what doesn't matter, doesn't matter.
2. Laugh every day even if it's at yourself.
3. Love like there's no tomorrow.

She advocates for creating routines, decluttering systematically, having a “Control Journal” and setting reminders/alarms on your cell phone (I didn't have a cell phone way back when I started). Marla nudges you along the way, reminding you that perfectionism is the killer of success, and sends daily messages of inspiration and guidance. She reminded me of my own old method of working in zones, tackling hot spots, 5-minute “room rescues” and more.

It's been a long 19 years since I discovered the FlyLady and today she's offering her same sage advice as back then in a more updated technological outreach.

Now I use a combination of the various methods that made sense to me throughout the years and are relatively easy to do on a daily basis within a short period of time. It takes a little bit of time to read/watch/research, but if you take what works for you from each expert, you can put together something that is sustainable and will give you the results you are looking for. If it's not something you can continue over the long-haul, you are only going to be left feeling defeated. So find what works for you, and even more importantly, find someone to inspire and motivate you every day.