lesson 1 commit, decide, declutter!

WELCOME!

Welcome to Organizing with Your Kids! I'm thrilled you (and your child) are joining me for this workshop. When you teach your children how to get organized, you're giving them an amazing gift—a present they'll enjoy for the rest of their lives.

I have been organizing with my kids since they were very young. My kids were just six and four when I became a professional organizer. As I started going into people's homes to work with families, it became very clear that knowing how to be organized is an essential life skill. And yet, many people aren't taught these skills or don't know how to organize in a way that works for their growing family and the demands of modern life.

Fortunately, organizing is a skill that can be learned. You don't have to be born with an organizing gene to live an organized life, and neither do your kids!

Even if you're fairly organized, it's always a different ball game when you're organizing for someone else. And when it's your own child, the stakes are even higher. I find that parents often judge themselves based on the results of their children. For example, right after becoming an organizer, I realized some of the spaces in my home didn't look like they belonged in the home of a professional organizer. My daughter's bedroom was right at the top of that list! She was a four year old who loved her stuff. All of it! The stuff was coming in—from birthday parties, Christmas, gifts from grandparents—faster than we could keep up and clear things out. This, coupled with my daughter's sentimental side, made it difficult to keep her room clutter free…which made me doubt myself as a parent and an organizer.

Fast forward six years and I have learned a lot about how to organize with kids! Even more important, my kids have learned a lot! In fact, my son, now 12, organized his closet on his own after a recent shopping trip. I didn't ask him to do it…he *wanted* to do it *and* he did it all by himself! All those years of going through his stuff together and involving him in the process of organizing paid off!

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Kids learn how to get organized just as they learn how to ride a bike or brush their teeth. And you, as their parent, are the best person to teach your child how to do it. With the tips, secrets and strategies presented in this workshop, you'll learn the process I've been using with my kids for years. You'll leave this workshop armed with a plan and a process to create organized spaces that will work well for you and your kids. You will also have strategies and ideas for teaching your child organizing skills and habits that will serve them well for the rest of their lives.

Our journey begins with Lesson 1. During this lesson you will make agreements with yourself that will serve you and your child on your organizing journey. You'll also learn how to set organizing goals so you maintain a long-term perspective, and so you and your child are on the same page when you begin your organizing projects. Next, you'll discover some common organizing obstacles and tips on detouring around them. Finally, we'll wrap up the lesson with your first action step—letting go of items your child no longer uses or loves.

Are you ready to get started? Let's do it.

AGREEMENTS

Before you embark on an organizing journey with your child, I'd like to encourage you to make the following agreements together. These agreements are designed to make the organizing process a successful and positive experience for you both.

Agreement #1: I will maintain a long-term perspective.

If you get nothing else out of this workshop, I hope you absorb this: A long term perspective is your greatest tool when it comes to organizing with your child.

For just a minute, think back to the last time you made a significant change in your life. Perhaps it was when you started a new diet and lost some weight. Maybe it was when you created a new exercise habit, or when you began your own organizing journey. Can you recall how it felt at the beginning? Did it require several starts and stops and ups and downs before you got into the groove of creating this change in your life?

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> A long-term perspective alleviates a lot of pressure. When my 10-year-old daughter and I sit down to organize her room and she hasn't quite mastered the art of letting go of stuffed animals, I don't overreact. I know we still have time to refine her letting go skills.

Change is a dynamic process and it isn't linear. We move forward, then we move back. But if you stick with your goal and tweak your approach, you will create change.

If organizing is something new for your child—if he isn't currently keeping his room picked up, or she has never had to choose which stuffed animals stay and which ones go—then this is a big change you're springing on your child. It's a great change, but it is a big one nonetheless. So give it time—for both of you. If you expect results overnight, you set yourself up for frustration and for giving up! But if you set a long-term goal, and break it down into bite-sized pieces, you set yourself—and your child—up for success.

I know one day my kids will pack up their cars and move out. I want to know that I spent the days until then enjoying them…not distracted by clutter, but fully engaged in their lives. I also want to know that when they move out, they will be leaving home with the skills necessary to live happy, healthy and productive lives. Organizing skills are one component of this overall goal.

Agreement #2: I will only ask my child to do that which I do.

If you've taken any of my other online workshops, then you know that I believe the best way to get others to jump on the organizing bandwagon is to lead by example. This holds true with kids, too. Don't ask your child to do something you won't do. If you struggle with letting go, but do it anyway, you have something valuable to teach your child. On the other hand, if you don't model this, you can't authentically ask your child to do it. So, declutter your own clothes before you declutter your child's closet. Make your own bed every day before asking your child to make his. You don't have to have all of your organizing projects done before you *start* organizing with your child, but you do need to be at least one step ahead, since that is the only way to lead.

This is a sample of *Organizing with Your Kids*—a self-paced workshop from simplify 101. To continue on with this workshop, visit www.simplify101.com.