



gracebrooke

If you arrived unannounced at Grace Brooke's home, you might not immediately know that she's a professional organizer. At first glance, her house will look about as orderly as any other young mother's with two small children. But if you stay for a while and follow Grace on her five-minute round-ups, you'll quickly realize that she can always find what she's looking for and everything – from the toys in the playroom to the files in the office to the cereal boxes in the pantry – is in its place.

“There's a difference between 'neat' and 'organized',” Grace says. “If you're neat, the house may be vacuumed and the kitchen may be clean ... but if you open a cupboard or a closet things fall out. Behind the scenes there's no order. When you're organized, there's a spot for everything.”

Grace has been called “a superb organizer whose attention to detail is excellent.” She conducts workshops and seminars for such organizations as the City of Santa Rosa (CA), Business Networking International, California Women of Agriculture, KZST radio, and Santa Rosa Charter School. Her writing on the subject has been featured in publications such as *Redbook* and *North Bay Biz*, and in her blog at [www.GraceBrooke.com](http://www.GraceBrooke.com).

### **Focusing on the most important things in life**

If you're imagining Grace as a Type A, crack-the-whip personality with an inflexible demeanor, you'll be disappointed. In fact, it's her caring nature that endears her to her clients. “I want to help people live a simple, fulfilling life that isn't complicated,” she says. “My business is really about helping them focus on the most important things in their life: time with their loved ones, the hobbies they enjoy, and taking good care of themselves.”

A graduate of San Francisco State University, Grace started her business in 2001 when the job title of “professional organizer” was still a relatively unknown occupation. “I didn't know you could make a business out of it,” she says. “But I always wanted to be an entrepreneur – and I realized I had a passion for organizing things and for helping people bring order to their lives and their businesses. So I put that passion to work.”

One of Grace's biggest challenges is educating people about what a professional organizer does and how she does it.

“My job isn't to force you to get rid of things you don't want to get rid of. My job is to give you ideas and help you understand the ways in which disorganization is affecting your life. For instance, you may have a piece of furniture that you love but you're not using; it's just taking up space and getting in the way. I can come up with an idea of how to make it functional. One of my clients had three cork trivets that she didn't know what to do with. I thought it would be fun to hang them on the wall of her office and use them as a memo board – so now she gets to enjoy them every day.”

## **Creativity, innovation and accountability**

Her creativity often comes into play at her own home as she balances managing a business and a household. One day her husband arrived with a new flat-screen television that – unfortunately – didn't fit in the family's existing entertainment center. Grace's solution: separate the three-piece set and transform it into a "bar-moire": a beverage center to hold party supplies, wine and liquor bottles, and glasses. She added small, square mirrors to the back, installed stemware racks, and a chalkboard sticker for drink recipes. That innovative approach to spatial management was featured in the January 2010 issue of *Redbook*.

You've heard of business and life coaches? Grace thinks of herself as an "accountability" coach who treats her clutter-laden clients with kindness and concern but is firm in her insistence that everything in our lives and businesses should have its function and its place.

She explains that clutter – on your desk or floor, in your briefcase or your closet, at home or the office – can literally drive you out of your mind. "Disorganization can block every facet of your life and make it difficult to see new ideas and opportunities. Clutter will deny you peace of mind, erode you spiritually, and make you forget what's really important."

It's one thing to wade through clutter in your home or garage; it's a much more serious issue for businesses that may be losing time and money because they're drowning in disorder. Besides zapping productivity, clutter and disorganization create an unprofessional image, heighten stress and increase our expenses as we waste money to go out and re-buy what we know we have but can't find.

## **A vision for how things feel, look and function**

Many of her clients are paralyzed by the boxes, office equipment and odds and ends that fill their work spaces. The first step, Grace says, is creating a vision for how they want their office to feel, look and function. Then it's a matter of systematically – and constructively – purging and relocating items to create the space for reference material, supplies, work stations and files. And it's just as important to plan for growth in the future if you don't want your problems to return.

"Clutter has a mind of its own and will come back to haunt you if you let it," Grace says. "By taking an active approach and scheduling time each week to deal with new materials that constantly flow into your life, you'll be able to stay organized. That means less frustration and more clarity, focus and productivity."

For clients with children, Grace uses special techniques such as color-coded systems and containers that even toddlers can use to organize their toys. "It's never too early to teach children to start organizing their belongings," she says. "The principle that there's a place for everything is something they can understand and have fun doing." She also works with schools to develop organizational and time-management programs that help children be more successful academically and socially.

Grace's credo, simply stated: Think clear, clean, minimize and downsize. "Getting organized doesn't have to be a dreaded task," she says. "Whether your family is stuck in clutter or you're a struggling student or a frustrated professional, it just takes a little energy, humor and creativity to see the solution inside the mayhem."

## **For more information:**

Phone: 707.321.4232

Email: [Grace@GraceBrooke.com](mailto:Grace@GraceBrooke.com)

Web: [www.GraceBrooke.com](http://www.GraceBrooke.com)