

## May 2009 Newsletter

Did you know the way you squeeze the toothpaste could be a direct reflection on how you organize? May is mind-month (says me!). It's a time to think about who you *are* as it relates to how you organize!

### The Mind is a Terrible Thing to Waste!

Ever wonder why you do certain things, or why you can't seem to do certain things? I am fascinated by the brain and how it works, and how it holds all (or most) of the answers to why we operate the way we do. You might have learned about left brain and right brain in psychology and you probably don't remember which side of the brain does what. For the purposes of this letter, I want to focus on the right brain and how tendencies toward this side do have a significant affect on how you organize (or why you don't)!

Are you an Elbie or an Arbie? **Are you more left-brained or right-brained?** According to the authors of *Organizing for the Creative Person* (Lehmkuhl & Lamping, 1993) most people tend toward one side vs. the other. In general, people, I would gather, don't really pay much attention to how the brain works let alone which side of the brain they tend toward.

**When it comes to organizing, learning more about whether you are an Elbie or Arbie, *might* help you to better understand why you operate the way you do.** Why is this important? Getting and staying organized is in your control. It is something of which you need to choose to be on top. And the more you know who you are, the easier it might be to stay on top. At the very least you'll put your mind at ease as you better understand why you operate the way you do.

**Why do you squeeze the tooth paste tube from the middle or disregard the cap as if it has no purpose? Have you ever wondered that?** You aren't a slob if you do that; but you might be what I like to call right-brain justified (RBJ). No, that isn't an excuse you can use with your partner to let them know you are justified in squeezing the tube that way. But your mind does dictate that you prefer to put toothpaste on your brush in this manner.

**We all have left and right brain tendencies - some are more dominant left (like many professional organizers), others more right.** And it is good to exercise both sides. It's good to call on or learn the skills that each side offers you because it gives you balance. And it is good, in order to better understand why you do what you do, to know which side you tend toward. Why do you pile and not file? Why do you start different projects before finishing one? Why do you have a difficult time managing time? Perhaps you have a garage that is filled with clutter instead of your car; maybe your office desk is filled with piles of paper instead of being clear and allowing you the space to do work. You might be an RBJ!

**All of this is not to say that RBJ people are messy, cluttered or disorganized.** Not all LBJs (left-brain justified) are always organized. Left brain tendencies just tend toward being more organized; they are more methodical and "well organized" in the standard sense. RBJs are creative people who like to improvise and like to start projects -- they also tend to accumulate clutter because taking time to file, for instance, takes away from their creative needs and global thinking. An RBJ might have a few projects going on at once or leave things to be filed in a pile for weeks on end. **The lower level tasks don't command an RBJ's attention like the big-picture, creative, goal-addressing ones do.**

**It's good to know your tendencies and why you work the way you do, so you can make the appropriate adjustments.** It's the best way to take better control of your life. And while this whole concept is layered, the bottom line is that understanding *you* more will allow you to truly reach your potential and the goals you set forth - whether it is in your home or in business.

## HOW TO... Win at the MIND GAME!

If you are a RBJ person there are adjustments you can make in order to exercise your LB more, thus allowing for more organized systems. It is almost like playing a game with your mind. To be organized it is about questioning what you do, why you do it and how you do it. Paying attention to this can help you in getting organized - and make your mind happier. Here are some tips to consider implementing.

- 1. "Don't put off for tomorrow what you can do today".** As an RBJ person you'll make all the excuses in the world to not do the more mundane things that LBJ people seemingly love to do. Before you leave work, put away the files you've used throughout the day; don't let them pile on the corner of your desk. An RBJ might envision this task as time consuming. In fact, 5 minutes is all it takes to get your area tidy and neat and ready for the next day of work.
- 2. Know what needs to be done now.** Rule of thumb says if it is an emergency, it finishes your present task, it can be done quickly (see #1 above), and if it won't disrupt or interrupt your current schedule, you should "do it now". Question your tasks. Challenge yourself to leave time at the end of the day or in the middle of a project, to do the things necessary (and even disliked) to keep the project on track and your space more organized.
- 3. Know what can be scheduled for later.** Rule of thumb says if it is not an emergency or it *will* interrupt your current schedule of important things, you should schedule it for later. I suggest you make note of things like this on a to-do list and actually schedule it in your date book to do at a later time. This will ease your mind and allow you to let go of that task and concentrate on more important things.
- 4. Use your time wisely.** Even the smallest amounts of time hold opportunities to accomplish things. RBJs aren't particularly aware of time, how long a project might take. They like to create projects, not necessarily finish them. When it is time to do a task that requires a lot of thought or decision-making, an RBJ tends to put it off, or worse, start something else. If an unwanted task arises, spend some time asking for help, delegating the work, or writing down what the next steps for the project are so you can schedule time to complete those tasks.
- 5. Know your energy cycle** - We all have things we need to do throughout the day. Some of the things are mundane and are things we dislike doing. We might even categorize them as difficult tasks vs easy tasks. Know your unique peaks and valleys of energy and choose your highest energy times to do the difficult, less-preferred things. Use your lower energy times to do easier, more-fun and preferred tasks. When you prioritize things, you'll tend to rank the more enjoyable things at a higher priority. Be aware of your tendency to do this and don't forget those less-desirable tasks. Often, they are important in keeping you on top of the project that you love to do, and allow you to complete it fully and successfully.
- 6. Concentrate on one aspect of a project at a time and estimate how long a task will take.** This makes it easier to schedule your tasks and budget your time. Longer slots of time should be used for bigger activities, shorter periods of time for smaller jobs.

### Quick Tip

Don't leave too many projects out in the open at once; your mind will only be more cluttered the more it sees papers and files out. Try to only keep in your view those things which you need to address most immediately. Leave the others on your "to-do" list!

*"The organized person is someone who has already done what you are thinking of doing" -- anonymous*