

## Step on top of it

...how frequently you will "reset" your system by putting everything back in place. Daily? Weekly? Monthly?"

## Identify your roles

...ing organized isn't so much about setting a schedule, it's about identifying all the various roles you have—parent, boss, wife. Look at what others you have to fulfill, and make sure all your roles get a bit of attention each week."

## Plan ahead

...ead of living day to day and reacting to everything, plan each day or week with a plan. Take an hour at the beginning of each week to look over your appointments and block out time for your own priorities. Make a list of several high-value tasks that you are committed to completing. This helps you stay focused."

## Don't be afraid to say no

...men in particular like to nurture and serve others. But you can get pushed into helping everyone yourself. Reclaim control over your time."

## Like a balance

...all about being organized enough—you don't want to be a superwoman. It's not about being the Steward, it's about living a life you like. The

whole point of being organized is freeing up time to do the things you enjoy. It's not the end goal!"

## Stick with it

"There is no magic wand. To prosperify organize your closet, your inbox, your mind takes ongoing commitment."

## GET YOUR FINANCES IN ORDER

**Minal Jain** runs Leverage Education Services, which offers financial literacy courses to adults, teens and children. She offers her top tips on sorting out your finances... and sticking with it.

### Take stock of your assets

"Take stock of all of the investments you've made in the past few years. People tend to lose track of old insurance funds or IRAs. It's also easy to forget about savings and shares you may have lying around back home."

### Budget

"At the end of each month, take a few hours to go through your credit card bills, bank statements and household bills. Write down all your expenses. Compare this to a list of your total income each month. This makes it easy to see what you are spending money on and identify where you can cut corners."

## Invest

"You should be investing at least 10 percent of your salary every month. Even if it's just in a fixed term deposit account, at least you are making 2-3 percent interest every year instead of your money sitting idle. Take baby steps—start by investing \$1,000 a month, and slowly build up a portfolio."

## Get smart

"Any money you save should be invested. So many people are afraid of the stock market, but you have to demystify it. Despite the current economic crisis, you have to recognize that the market always follows cycles. Everything that goes up must come down and eventually rise again."

## Buy your home

"Many people rent in Hong Kong, but rent money is dead money. Consider taking out a mortgage and buying an apartment. That way you are accumulating an asset, and even if you are only in Hong Kong for a couple of years, you will take something away rather than pour millions of dollars down the drain."

## Clear credit card debt

"Credit card debt usually attracts very high interest. It is convenient to use credit cards, but you should set up an auto-pay system, so that payments are deducted from your savings account. Some people only pay off the minimum each month, and so the debt continues to pile up. If you owe money on several cards, you should also try and consolidate your debt. Once you have a clear picture of how much you owe, roll all of your credit card debts into a single low-interest loan."

## Cut down on cards

"Many people have a handful of credit cards and store cards in their wallet which only increases the temptation to spend beyond their means. A good experiment is to hide your cards and use cash for a week. Identify your expenses—transport, morning coffee, lunch, newspapers. Draw out that amount at the beginning of week and see if you can stick to your budget."

## Eliminate unnecessary expenses

"Look at all of the monthly direct debits coming out of your accounts. Brand-name gym memberships, magazine subscriptions, store installment packages. Cut back on all unnecessary expenses."

## It's not a bargain if you don't need it

"A lot of us get lured in by sales—but before you buy that jacket that's on special, stop and ask yourself whether you actually need it, whether you'll wear it. Hong Kong is so brand-conscious, but does it really matter how many Louis Vuitton or Gucci bags you own? Instead, invest in self-esteem and your education."

## Don't spend before you earn it

"Easy credit means people have fallen into the trap of rewarding themselves before they bank their paycheck. People feel entitled to splurge on a designer jacket, a day at spa, an expensive stereo system. But whenever you live beyond your means it always leads to unhappiness."

## Focus on the positives

"Little drops make an ocean—by cutting debt, saving and investing you will be able to afford a down payment on a house, take a family holiday or build a nest egg for your children's education. Focus on the positives."

## Be prepared

"Tax Reserve Certificates allow you to set aside a few thousand dollars toward your tax bill every month and earn higher interest rates than regular savings accounts. At the end of the financial year, you won't be peepabating when you receive your tax bill."

## Link your accounts

"Some banks provide linked mortgages and savings accounts—you receive same rate of interest on your savings that you are paying on your mortgage."

