

A common-sense, easy-to-read book offering a myriad of practical, real-world solutions to organizing one's everyday life, business, household, or all of the above. The 'Control Panel' offers the techniques, how-to's, and strategies to get it done in today's crazy, mixed-up, topsy-turvy world. An excellent guide for families, as well as businesses wanting to find more meaning and joy in what they do each and every day.

The Joy of Being A Control Freak, the 80/20 Way to a Happy, Healthy & Organized Life

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The JOY of Being a Control Freak



**The 80/20 Way to a Happy,
Healthy & Organized Life**

Mary Berg

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INTRODUCTION

After eight years of Professionally Organizing and working with many different people on many different projects for many different reasons—truth-be-told—I had become somewhat frustrated and a bit disillusioned. On one hand, most people want to be—know that they desperately *need* to be—more organized. On the other hand, they have convinced themselves that their lives are just too busy and simply want someone else to get them organized, believing that in itself will magically transform whatever it is they want transformed.

Is this a conscious decision? Most times, no it isn't. Just an unfortunate mindset of the times—simply hit the *easy button* and poof, it's fixed.

Much of my frustration stemmed from not being able to better communicate to clients the basic underlying concepts of why, when and where to organize whatever it is being organized. Frustration at seeing clients mired in the stinging emotions of disorganization; the shame they feel of letting their surroundings and their lives devolve into various stages of pandemonium. Then finally admitting to the problem, dealing with the embarrassment of having someone else step into their messy world, so afraid they will be seen as a bad person for living in such turmoil and commotion.

I cannot tell you how many times a client has said to me, *I bet you've never seen anything like this before*, only for me to respond, *well yes, actually your situation is quite similar to many of my other clients*.

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Even after assuring folks that their particular *mess* is very organize-able, tears and sad laments are often forthcoming; the disarray that has taken years to deteriorate into, seems at this point of reconning, so overwhelming that they just don't see a way out.

My inclination to teach clients about the fantastic benefits of being organized and of being in control of what one *can* be in control of, was many times just falling on deaf-ears. Getting and keeping the client's attention to impart some organizing principles was a real challenge.

I have worked many-a-project on my own because the client needed to be elsewhere—which is fine, depending on the project. However, this getting-and-keeping-the-client's-attention dilemma really hit home after the second time I had reorganized a client's office. As much as I had—during the first go-around—communicated and explained to him (as he ran in and out of the office) the organizing systems I was setting up to get and keep him organized, it obviously didn't sink in. The client's office had become a shambles again within just a few months of the initial organizing efforts.

The filing plan we had agreed to—actual using a filing cabinet rather than stacking papers and folders on the floor throughout his entire office—was not adhered to; the Communication Center to control the paper flurry, was ignored; and again his desk was strewn with not only a mishmash of his business papers, but a lot of other miscellany just accumulating because it was a convenient place to plop it down.

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So, I slowly started to realize that it may take putting-to-paper some of these basic concepts—in plain words and with as many examples and explanations as possible—to impart and pass along the many and wondrous JOYS of being a CONTROL FREAK!

Okay, okay. Before all of the men readers start to hyperventilate and sputter about how we women are obsessed with **controlling** everything and everyone in every-way-shape-and-form, listen up

There is no such thing as total control over anything or anyone, even—and perhaps especially—ourselves. I do not profess to have that kind of control, nor do I want to have that kind of control. So, get off your high-horse, and read on.

In life, the 80/20 Rule prevails—like it or not, that's just the way it is. Eighty percent of what we do each and every day, is in our control. Twenty Percent, (to be honest, that's a tad high, it's actually more like just 10%, but for convention's sake we'll stick with the 20%), is *not* in our control.*

So what is my obsession then, if I'm conceding up front that there is no such thing as absolute control? I'll tell you what my obsession is

CONTROLLING THE 80% THAT IS IN OUR POWER TO CONTROL, SO THAT WHEN THAT PESKY, UN-CONTROLABLE 20% COMES ALONG, WE CAN MEET THOSE UNKNOWNNS AND UN-EXPECTEDS STRAIGHT ON, MAKE THE BEST DECISIONS, AND

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END UP WITH THE ABSOLUTE BEST POSSIBLE RESULT.

In a way, this is even having some control over the uncontrollables.

Well, you say you're pretty good at thinking on your feet and dealing with whatever comes your way, whenever it comes your way. Alright, perhaps you are—that's great. Do you find yourself though, becoming a human reactor just jumping to the demands of all of those unexpecteds, to the sad neglect of something more important?

Life seems to pummel and discombobulate us much-too-much in this day and age—considering we have every convenience imaginable to make our lives better, easier, more fulfilling. We still seem to be missing something. Yes we are—we're missing a lot.

We're missing the **JOY of TIME**. Time to spend with the partners, the parents, the progeny, the pets and ourselves.

We're missing the **JOY of ACCOMPLISHMENT**. How many goals are left unmet; how many projects are left nearly done, half-done, or never even begun?

We're missing the **JOY of ENJOYMENT**. How many fun events and celebrations seem to become drudgery and just plain exhausting by the time we're ready to sit back, relax and, supposedly enjoy?

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Yes, there is great JOY in CONTROL. Knowing that what you intend to get done today, gets done; that you will meet those deadlines, get to your destination on time, make those phone calls, stick to that good-health routine, and still have time at the end of the day to kick back and say, *yes, it's been a good day!*

CONTROL, it ***is*** yours for the TAKING!

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*The 80% I CAN Control

- ✓ My TIME/ My DAY—24/7/365:
 - ◇ Arise in morning
 - ◇ Retire at night
 - ◇ Work hours
 - ◇ Family time
 - ◇ Hobby time
 - ◇ Activities—church, community, political
 - ◇ Recreation/leisure time
 - ◇ Daily food intake
 - ◇ Exercise regimen
- ✓ My occupation
- ✓ My health (behavioral)
- ✓ Where I live
- ✓ Who I live with
- ✓ House I live in
- ✓ My outlook on life & attitude
- ✓ Education
- ✓ My personal safety
- ✓ Where I travel
- ✓ My priorities
- ✓ Medications/drugs I take
- ✓ My vices
- ✓ Who I associate with
- ✓ Who I DON'T associate with
- ✓ Who I vote for to represent me
- ✓ _____
- ✓ _____
- ✓ _____

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The 20% I CAN NOT Control

- ✓ The Weather
- ✓ The Laws of Physics
- ✓ The Laws of Mathematics
- ✓ Innate human behavior
- ✓ My DNA code
- ✓ Any other human being—influence another, YES,
(but only if the critiquer is credible)—but control
another person, NO!
- ✓ Inalienable Human Rights
- ✓ Non-behavioral-related illness
- ✓ What politicians do and say after they are elected

ADDENDUM I

Mary B's Examples of Plate-Spinning (Multi-Tasking)

First of all, Mary B's definition of **MULTI-TASKING**:

Because the brain cannot actually think of two different things at one time—as proven over and over again with countless brain physiology studies—Multi-Tasking is NOT trying to DO more than one thing simultaneously. It is focusing on one task, getting it going—or in motion—and then it is shifting your focus to the next task and doing what needs to be done to get the next task in motion. It is simply having several processes/projects/tasks in motion—or going on—at any one time. Again, FOCUS is the key; knowing when to open up the lens shutter to wide-angle to get the big picture, deciding what needs to be done, and getting those tasks in motion—then adjusting one's focus to start the next task in motion.

Examples:

☺ Make phone calls and send off e-mails immediately, putting the ball into someone else's court and keeping the plate spinning. In the mean-time, other tasks are attended to while waiting for answers/information to come back from those calls and e-mails.

☺ Establish some non-verbal cues between yourself and your husband and kids; and in business, your employees, employers or co-workers:

For instance:

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- ✓ Color-tag the file folders in the Communication Center that have information to be attended to more quickly than usual.
- ✓ When the top of the washing machine is flipped open, there are clothes to be transferred to dryer; as well, dryer door ajar, clothes need to be taken out and folded.
- ✓ Items on or near a stairway are to be carried up to second floor or down to basement.
- ✓ Bags or items by back door labeled "G/A" (give away) are put into the vehicle to be dropped off at the local charity.
- ✓ When passing along—or requesting—info from the boss, a co-worker or employees, place in a file folder consistently labeled *pending*, or *need ASAP*, or other verbiage to indicate that action is needed to keep the process moving along smoothly.
- ✓ Place Master List/To-Do List in an obvious place to be seen by all who need to work on the tasks.
- ✓ Place grocery list in a conspicuous spot in the kitchen so that items can easily be added, as the need arises; this also makes it obvious when someone has taken the list to do the grocery shopping, preventing duplicate purchases.

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There are many, many other non-verbal cues or little prods, that can be established and routine-ized to keep the plates a-spinning. This seems to work especially well with men, who often misconstrue some of our verbal suggestions as nagging. So once the non-verbal cues are set-up and understood, you 'need say no more'.

☺ Another technique that works well with the men (WARNING: men, don't read this section, this is a little secret we'd rather you not be privy to), is to start a project yourself. If hubby just can't seem to find time to fix something that most-likely is within his realm or domain—usually requiring power tools, hammer and nails, the level, tape measure, and/or 2-cylinder machinery—then *you* get out the tool box, the drop-cloth and start to give it a go. After seeing this, hubby will of course insist he take over, because he can certainly do a better job. When we step into their area of expertise, well, that's when the men put their foot down—and fortunately, get it done.

☺ Jump-Start It (Chapter Ten). Do a bit of a project/task/chore one day and so it's partly done when it will need to be completed the next day. 80% of the job is the first step, so start that plate spinning and it's almost done. I often start writing articles or communiqués on the computer one day and give it a file name and save it, so the next day I simply pull up the document and have an opening thought already written, making it much easier to continue and complete the process.

☺ Party-Prep can never start too early. When there's an upcoming event, start the To-Do Master List several

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days, if not several weeks ahead of time, and have the list accessible to cross-off and add-to, as the party-day/event approaches. Have a staging area for items that will be used for the upcoming gathering, so that there is no hunt-and-search mission at the last minute for any of the items.

☞ Routine-ize It, (Chapter Seven). Whatever and whenever possible, get it into a ROUTINE that essentially keeps the plate spinning to the point of doing something without even being aware of it. I oftentimes will be a mile down the road and it dawns on me that I didn't *remember* putting on my seat belt—well, every time, it is indeed latched; it is one of the actions that is so routine, it is on auto-pilot. As well, I do certain things or put something in its proper place so automatically that I don't even realize that it has been done—a pleasant surprise, always.

☞ Because I eat a salad or some sort of vegetable dish just about every day—and don't relish the tedious task of cutting up those veggies every day—I prepare enough at a time for at least 2 days. Granted, veggies are best when freshly cut and eaten, but this works best for me because they are all ready to put into a salad and I'm not as apt to eat something else because it would take too long to prepare the much-better-for-me-vegetables.

☞ Keep the daily/weekly/monthly pill container in-sight and within arm's reach so as not to miss a day of vitamins and med's.

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Add many of your own plate-spinning activities, and you'll be surprised at how well it works once you get those plates a-spinning!

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