

The Assignment: Mommy Blog Post

I wrote this post about organizational skills for a blog for creative moms. Other posts had established that I'm actively working on a screenplay and that "Clio" is my daughter's pseudonym.

Be Prepared

Most of us moms were never in the boy scouts, but their motto holds true. Preparation is the difference between cruising through the day and finding yourself constructing an emergency diaper out of a washcloth and duct tape. (Granted my inner MacGyver hears "duct tape" and starts hatching a plan, but even she has to acknowledge that "fun" and "diaper emergency" are never the same thing.)

I don't know about you, but I've spent most of the last year and a half feeling like I'm a step or two behind sanity. There are so many things that I mean to do that fall through the cracks because I'm just not the together person I used to be. And the pattern is really frustrating: I remember to call a friend three hours after her bedtime every night for two weeks in a row. Or I think about Clio's spare change of clothes sitting upstairs on the banister once I'm a few miles from home and it's too late to turn back. That sort of stuff. It makes me feel like a real loser, to be honest.

Getting Things Done (a.k.a. GTD, to us groupies) is supposed to take care of this, but my life now has these strange pockets where I don't have access to my To Do list. These pockets always existed—I've never been able to add things to my To Do list while driving, for example—but sometimes life with Clio feels like nothing but these strange pockets strung together. And if mental notes didn't cut it before, they really don't now. I can't make it up three flights of stairs with three grocery bags, a toddler, and a mental note to call the pediatrician's office when Clio goes down for her nap.

And so I'm trying a new wildly simple system, sort of a mini-GTD:

- Write down whatever I can, as soon as I can. Whenever something preventable goes wonky, I write down either the problem or the solution, if it's obvious. If my iPod Touch is handy (and Clio won't see it and freak out), I can type it into my To Do list. If not, I jot it down longhand on my script page du jour. Pre-Clio, I would have loathed to sully my work with notes to "buy whole milk" or what have you, but I no longer have time for a strict separation of church and state here. And I know I'll look at those pages soon.

Diehard GTD fans will notice that you're not supposed to put items in your Inbox in the form of problems, like "all the crap in my gym bag doesn't fit in the lockers." But this is just a placeholder for now. The idea is to write something down so I don't forget until the next time I'm on my way to the gym, cursing at that overstuffed bag again.

- Then I don't worry about it.
- When I come across the note again in a more sane moment, I enter it into the To Do list as-is or make it an actual actionable item ("weed through gym bag and lighten it up"). And suddenly I'm back in GTD Land—happy, organized GTD Land.