

I need help keeping it together!



I'm sure I wrote it down: Do you have problems staying on top of things?
PIC: GETTY

Missed emails, overlapping meetings, daunting to-do lists... it's time to call in a professional organiser. Self-confessed scatterbrain **Helen Croydon** seeks advice

MY NEW Year's resolution was to be more organised. I have more than 10,000 emails in my inbox and no filing system. Last year I missed taking part in the London Marathon because I didn't see the email asking me to confirm my place. And I'm always the last person to know the details of social events.

Forget a personal trainer, this January I recruited a personal organiser. Such professionals are in high demand, offering one-to-one coaching to career high-flyers, entrepreneurs or busy mums on how to maximise efficiency. There's even a society of professional organisers who now have 4,000 registered coaches on their books, an increase of more than 700 on last year.

'Most of my clients are über-successful on the outside but inwardly on the point of collapse,' says Patty Cruz-Fouchard of Organised & Simple, who is helping me. 'The reason we feel we don't have time is because our attention is taken up by social media and messenger apps. Initially these were tools to

make working easier but it's led to us becoming overwhelmed.'

Perhaps this could explain why JK Rowling says she is so disorganised or why former PM David Cameron once left his eight-year-old daughter in a pub.

My half-day consultation with Patty starts with a questionnaire about work responsibilities and a quiz to establish whether I am a right or left hemisphere thinker. Then she visits my workspace (at home) and, to my horror, inspects my non-existent filing system and the chaos that is both my life and my laptop.

Quick fix tip
Avoid confusion and overlap, says Patty, by listing your work responsibilities. Create folders for your main one, then do the same for email and your to-do list.

Getting started on a solution, she helps me define my key work roles. I'm primarily a journalist but I'm also an author, media trainer and TV commentator, run a dating website, have a rental property and do voluntary work.

Patty suggests I draw up a weekly quota of hours to dedicate to each role. It shouldn't be rigid but having guidance will help me segregate and manage my time.

Then she suggests I create folders for each responsibility on my computer, in my email and my bookmarks. Immediately



Woman with a plan: Patty Cruz-Fouchard

I feel less overwhelmed with tasks.

Finally, we come to planning. I'm good at writing things in an electronic calendar but have no way to distinguish between an appointment I need to physically go to

and mere noteworthy days, such as birthdays or rail strikes. With that in mind, we get colour-coding: red for deadlines, blue for appointments and yellow for noteworthy dates. Patty suggests that every Monday I glance at the next two weeks ahead and prioritise a to-do list based on what's coming up.

Three weeks into the new organised me and I'm a stickler for segregating my time: one hour on this, then 30 minutes on that. This is more productive than my former frenzied attempts to juggle every single thing on my to-do list at once.

Happily, there are now ten lonely emails in my inbox; the rest are in folders. Whether I can find them at a later date is yet to be tested.

Coaching sessions start at £150, [facebook.com/OrganisedSimple](https://www.facebook.com/OrganisedSimple)

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