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[Providing Customized Solutions for Life Situations™](#)

[Get it Together! Keep it Together! Let Linda Help!™](#)

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Linda's Organizing Tip for May 2009:

Ten Minutes at a Time

At any given time, I have about 20 projects going at once. Some are BIG, some are Small, some are Urgent and Important, some are Important, but not Urgent. And admittedly, some are a probably neither all that Urgent nor Important, but just things I would like to do. In addition to the everyday things that are expected such as cooking, cleaning and general home care, getting even one project completed can be a significant challenge, let alone a whole variety of projects.

I was recently lamenting over this mountainous hurdle with my colleague and fellow organizer Ann Michael Henry of [Mise En Place](#), who said that she advises clients to tackle their big projects 10 Minutes at a time. Rather than approach the whole project at once (ie: weeding the entire garden), work on it for 10 minutes and attempt to get a specific section of it done, even if it is only 1/10th of the garden. She stressed the importance of allowing oneself to feel proud and accomplished when the 10 minutes are done. After the initial 10 are up, one can *decide* to go another 10 or go on to something else. I thought this was a very helpful frame, as it releases one from the pressures of having to do the whole thing in one sitting, which is pretty impossible for me with a busy family of 5 (yet, I continuously expect myself to be able to do so).

I tried her idea this weekend, and worked on several projects for 10-30 minutes each. In this way, I was able to finish a framing project I had been working on for months, decide about some excess furniture that had accumulated and was no longer needed, rearrange the remaining furniture and prepare for a Mother's Day dinner at our house. I used her frame of doing it in small chunks and remembered to tell myself that whatever I accomplished in each 10 minutes was great progress and that I could go on to something else that needed my attention, if I chose to.

Even writing this tip is an example of five 10 minute segments of time. Three took place while my daughter had OT this morning and the last two are happening while she is napping this afternoon.

My sister, Sue, has given me permission to share that she has accomplished the cleaning out of her entire home in exactly this manner, over the course of many months. She had never really done much purging before, mostly accumulating and by her own description, she was afraid to get rid of things but was smothering living with them. Several changes in her life and attitude (see last month's tip [Thinking About Change? Change Your Thinking!](#))

resulted in her being able to begin to let things go. She easily got overwhelmed when she thought of the enormity of the task before her, but breaking things down into smaller chunks, doing it frequently, and only spending a little bit of time, each time was the key for her.

Judith Kolberg, a very well known organizer, owner of [Fileheads](#) and author of [Conquering Chronic Disorganization](#) and [ADD-Friendly ways to Organize Your Life](#), suggests a similar visual-tactile adaptation of this idea. She encourages overwhelmed clients to hold up a paper towel tube to their eye and focus it on one spot in the room and begin there. She says to only organize the space the falls within the small circle of the tube before beginning the next space. I have used this technique myself and with clients and it also works well.

My 10 minute window is running out for this project, and I need to move on to the next, but as usual for help with this or any other organizing task, simply call Linda!

***These tips are for sharing!
Please forward to others interested in organizing ideas.***

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