

## Backsliding



**Have you ever noticed that sometimes you take a few steps backward after making progress getting organized?** Clutter returns, systems are abandoned, and you find yourself feeling discouraged? Don't despair! Reverting to old habits is normal, even the most conscientious of us do it. As professional organizer Terry Prince ([www.terryprince.com](http://www.terryprince.com)) puts it, "Backsliding, it's inevitable!"

**Back sliding happens for a variety of reasons:**

- **Change isn't easy.** If you are working on "getting more organized" – remember that change is a process, and that often we take steps backward after having taken some encouraging steps forward. Maybe you haven't had enough time to truly cultivate the necessary new habits, maybe you've taken on too much, or maybe your system needs to be tweaked. Backsliding is normal, and change doesn't happen in a straight line.
- **Life Happens! Life events of any kind (small or large, positive or negative) can throw us off course** and interrupt our best intentions to maintain order. Terry Prince has a "backsliding predictor checklist" of such things including: holidays and big family events, trips/vacations, work overload, relationship issues, medical problems, family crises, financial stress, home improvements, moving, and bereavement. It is easy to see how one of more of these things could influence our new-found attempts to get more organized, and could impact our well-established routines, as well.

**Don't be discouraged!** Know that backsliding is a normal part of the getting and staying organized process, and **try these ways to move forward:**

- **Recognize that you have gotten off course, and take note of what contributed to this. Then be compassionate with yourself** about it all. Be careful not to plague yourself with guilt, "shoulds" or self-blame.
- **Take any small steps that you can to get yourself back on track – even one small step will help.** That's how change happens. Sometimes, setting a timer for a short amount of time is a good way to get yourself going. For more advice about the process of change, check out the article on my Advice Page entitled: **Tips for Making Change.**
- **Ask for help from those around you** - relatives, friends, professionals. They can help you get things moving forward again.
- **Plan ahead for those predictable times when backsliding can occur** – like an upcoming holiday, trip, tax season, or a major event. Perhaps there are things that you can get ready in



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advance, things you can simplify, or things you can delegate or let go. Create lists that you can re-use for a similar event/time-of-year in the future.

- **Ideally, over time, create a checklist of things you need to do daily, weekly and monthly to keep your organizational system going.** Also, ideally, designate times in your calendar when you will do these activities. At stressful times, or times when you've gotten off track, it's helpful to be able to look at this kind of list or schedule.



**Backsliding is normal and can even be expected; don't let it throw you.** Beware of thinking of it as a sign of failure. Try to stay calm and positive, continue to visualize your goals, and trust that you will be able to get yourself back on track.