Space to Breathe in Your Digital Life

However you feel about it, technology is here to stay. It is helpful to us in many ways - and in many ways it can support us in becoming more organized. It reduces paper and clutter, and can assist us in organizing our schedules, contact info, and to-do's. It can help with managing projects and in transmitting, accessing, and keeping track of information more efficiently.

On the other hand, many complain that dealing with technology has complicated their lives, that it confuses and frustrates them, causes stress, and costs them much time and expense. It has overwhelmed them with information and with expectations from others . . . 24/7.

So, what is our "right relationship" to all this technology? As we create more space to breathe in our homes and offices, is there a way we can create more space to breathe in our digital lives? Yes, there is.

First, we have to adjust our attitudes:

- **As technology is here to stay, and creating change at a faster rate than ever before, we need to find a way to accept it,** and join the movement. (Breathing helps.)
- **We need to not let fear, or lack of knowledge get in our way.** It helps to adopt a brave attitude, get the help we need, and take the time to educate ourselves. For some it will be learning the lingo, for others it will be trying a new app, program, or update. Any small step is good - moving us forward in this arena.

Then, we need to think about what support and assistance is available to us in managing our digital lives. In fact, it takes a village to have a computer! Here's how to create your village:

- **Get help from those around you who are more tech savvy -** or savvy in different ways than you are. They can be friends, family, co-workers - and don't forget the kids! Be creative, you may be able to barter for this assistance.

- **For those times when you need the advice of an expert, find a tech consultant you trust.**
- **Keep an ongoing list of tech problems you are having and things you want to learn.** This will help you make the best use of your time getting help from others.
- **Don't be afraid to search the Internet for answers to your tech questions.** Many others have wondered about the same things! I can't guarantee the search will return a solution on your first try, but it often leads you in the right direction.

Once you have your good attitude and the support you need, here are other steps to help bring more space to breathe into your digital life.

- **Keep your computer desktop as clear as possible.** Don't use it to store documents. Let it reflect back to you peace and order.
- **Keep your computer files/documents organized.** Create a meaningful system and structure for organizing them, one that allows for easy retrieval. Naming your documents carefully with clear, concise, and *consistent* descriptions will also help identify and locate them.
- **Keep your email inbox up to date. Create categories (folders/labels) that allow you to save emails after they've been read.** Then they won't clog up your inbox, and you'll easily be able to find them when needed. **Ideally attend to emails each day:** responding, deleting, unsubscribing (if safe), and saving/filing, as needed.
- **Backup, backup, backup . . . !** You will sleep better at night if you know that all your documents (as well as your pictures, videos, music, and more) are properly backed up. In the least, have one backup system that is off-site/in the cloud.
- **Keep your usernames and password organized and easily retrievable.**

Here are some habits to cultivate that will help bring space to breathe into your digital life:

- **If need be, make calendar appointments designating a time to attend to tech tasks that require regular attention** (e.g. reading and weeding email, entering contacts, decluttering your desktop, bookmarks, and documents . . .)
- **Regulate time spent on your devices:** Some people will need to make sure they take breaks from electronic

devices - and not get lost on the information superhighway. If needed, use a timer to limit time spent.

- **Be mindful of what you copy, save, and bookmark** - there really is such a thing as "digital clutter"!
- **Take control of your cables, chargers, and power cords.** Label all components when you first open the box. Choose a convenient, consistent place to charge each device.
- **To avoid missed communications and bad feelings, tell others how you prefer to be contacted** - and how often you check in with different devices.

Try a few of these suggestions, and hopefully they will help to make your digital life more manageable and peaceful. Pick ones that make sense to you and can fit into your lifestyle and schedule. Don't feel pressured by any tech trends, however. In fact, allow yourself to be a hybrid! If a paper calendar works for you right now and you are happy with it, by all means use it. There are plenty of other tech-related things you can try and benefit from over time.

And speaking of benefit . . . as "Space to Breathe," I would be remiss to not underscore: **For your well-being, consider the value of creating "unplugged" time in your schedule on a regular basis.**

Good luck with navigating the information superhighway, and with finding space to breathe in your digital life.