

# An Interview with Eileen Koff, C.P.O.

by Charlene Burton

*Taking it "To The Next Level": Transforming your life through organization.*



I remember taking a long ride in a limo with a renowned matrimonial attorney. I decided to seize the opportunity and glean some wisdom from this wealthy, powerful, successful, perfectly groomed mother of two. I asked her to select one thing that she could attribute her success to. She thought very carefully as I awaited this miraculous secret that would open untold doors for me. She looked up and said, "I lead a well organized life." That was it? How anticlimactic! None the less, I stored those words in the back of my mind until I could someday unlock their magic. Someday would come eight years later, thanks to [www.threevillagepeople.com](http://www.threevillagepeople.com)

Editing the newsletter for [Threevillagepeople.com](http://Threevillagepeople.com) has given me a wonderful opportunity to get to know local people that would have otherwise possibly never crossed my path. I must say, that I am intrigued and interested in all the people I have met thus far, and look forward to those I will meet in the future.

One of the first people that I connected with was Eileen Koff, a professional organizer, who graciously submitted articles that were wonderful additions to the newsletter. Straightforward, palatable advice about being organized, something that I have to say is alien to me. Ironically, in a past life, I was a manager at a bank and also at a restaurant; regaled for my organizational abilities, but when it comes to my personal life, it was an entirely different story. No matter how hard I tried, I simply couldn't get my act together. I read books and articles, instituted elaborate resolutions, but still I'd be rushing around looking for my keys, late for an appointment I had forgotten about, with no clue of the address. I was an organizational nightmare.

By the time I had read several articles by Eileen Koff, I was so intrigued, I felt compelled to interview her. Who was this wizard who could take chaos and miraculously create order with such ease? More importantly, what could she possibly say to me that would change my intrinsically scattered, messy mind? I was skeptical, but I thought that perhaps I could learn about her services, write about them, and help someone who was not as organizationally challenged as myself. I was in for a surprise.

I walked into Eileen's lovely and comfortable home looking for a quick road to "order", but I quickly learned that that is simply not what her business, "To the Next Level", is about. "Desperate people call, overwhelmed" truly needing help. Every case is different. Eileen goes in with what's called "the eyes of a stranger" with no emotional attachment, able to assess the situation and find real solutions. Sometimes people are situationally disorganized, going through a transition or stressful period of their lives such as changing jobs, divorce, marriage, etc. I could definitely relate to this, still acclimating to being divorced. Others are chronically disorganized. OK, I could relate to this too. I started to realize that a professional organizer really needs to get to know their client before they can dig in to help. So the beginning of this journey starts with an assessment which takes

about two hours. Two hours to talk about yourself, figure out your learning style and what you want to accomplish. This session not only helps the organizer, but for her clients Eileen says "learning about yourself is your biggest asset." What are your values and priorities? Are you sentimental? All these things need to be taken into consideration. This is not a one size fits all proposition. Unearthing what is important to you, what you're comfortable with, and what's standing in your way, are all tools that enable you and your organizer to drastically improve how you live.

So where do we go from here? After the initial assessment, Eileen has a sense of her client and their needs.

She spends very focused time helping them sort out whatever issue she has come in to resolve, whether it be a garage, years of paperwork, time management, or an entire house. "Clutter is postponed decisions" so having someone guiding you, cheering you on through out the process is invaluable.

"Organization is "the process that allows you to meet your goals and fulfill your purpose." Clutter stops people from being effective and meeting their full potential. "Empowering clients to find their purpose" is Eileen's passion, her gift, her calling. I spent two hours with this amazing, spiritual, intelligent woman. I gained so much from my meeting with her, I think that if people truly understood what this professional organizer does, they would not hesitate to take advantage of her expertise.

I will gladly share with you all the wisdom that I walked away with that is truly transforming my life, and continues to each day. I reflect back on our talk often and it works it's magic for me daily, calming me and helping me to find order in my life and in my mind.

1. Write a personal mission statement. What's important to you? Your work, your family, charity, your art? Then look at your schedule, does it reflect what is important to you or are you expending a lot of unnecessary energy on things that are actually low on your list? ( I know I spend WAY too much time looking for my keys:)

2. Now look through your clutter. Are you hanging on to things that aren't truly important to you? Let them go. This can be a metaphor for our emotional life as well.

3. Don't feel overwhelmed by a big job. Take it in small steps. I was a little skeptical when

Eileen said "you can accomplish a lot in fifteen minutes." Now, whenever I have a free fifteen minutes I pick a small area or task and go like gangbusters completing it. You really can accomplish a lot in fifteen minutes when you have purpose, focus and attention. All gifts that Eileen shares with you.

4. Here is another one I was skeptical of. I told her I had a paper problem and she suggested I try the Freedom Filer. She seemed so confident in a product that really didn't look like much and cost \$40. But after meeting with her I trusted her advice. Sure enough, two years of paperwork that has been accumulating on my bedroom floor, in spite of my desperate efforts to make them disappear are now gone! More magic! AND it has stayed that way for a month so far. Every time paperwork comes in now from school, insurance and all the other countless sources that paper seems to descend upon us, I am actually happy to run up and file them away in my color coded easy to follow self purging system. Truly amazing!

5. Go step by step whether it's a junk drawer, closet or whole house the procedure is the same. Think of the word SPACE

S ort

P urge

A ssign a home

C ontainerize

E equalize (maintain)

According to Eileen, most people do C,S a little P, no E, and rarely A  
Think about it, it was true for me. That missing A solved my continual problem with lost keys. they needed to be assigned a home!!!

6. "Organization is no longer a luxury." In our face paced world, being organized helps us to be more effective, comfortable and ultimately at ease.

7. Being organized helps you throughout your life in so many different ways. "Crisis' happen all the time, but being organized helps you to get through it and rebound faster." I found this to be so true in my own life. When my best friend suddenly passed away and I wanted to write her eulogy I luckily had three appropriate outfits all set from undergarments to purse and could focus on paying tribute to her. I didn't have to run to the store for stockings instead of having a good long cry, and reminiscing of our sweet childhood together.

From my brief, very pleasant, personal experience, a professional organizer does so much more than teach you to be neat and effective. They really are empowering people that help you to take back control of your life. In this totally out of control world we live in, a little control and peace is priceless. Thank you Eileen for that gift.

Learn more about Eileen Koff (<http://www.tothenextlevel.net/about.html>)

Member of the National Association of Professional Organizers ([www.NAPO.net](http://www.NAPO.net))