

REDUCING STRESS

Professional organizer smooths out bumps of holiday rush

By Diana Kuyper
SPECIAL TO THE NEWS SUN

Thanksgiving is behind us. Now there is no choice but to face the holidays head-on.

That's actually easier than you might think, according to Linda Goldman, a professional organizer based in Highland Park.

"This is the most stressful time of the year because there are so many things going on and most people are still facing the majority of their holiday shopping, cooking, baking and entertaining," said Goldman. "The best way to ensure you get everything done is by writing down

everything you need to do. I call it the master list."

She swears by it and even though we're beyond Thanksgiving it's not too late to create the master list and benefit from it, she said.

Creating master list

Create the master list by first listing general categories that may include buying gifts, wrapping gifts, mailing gifts, buying and sending out cards, decorating the house and putting up the Christmas tree, organizing a holiday party and preparing the family Christmas meal. Below each category, list the tasks you need to do for each item.

"For example, if you are hosting a

party, you need to buy invitations, send them out, prepare the menu, shop for food, prepare food, shop for and put up decorations," she said. "Then put a date by each item by working backwards. In other words, list the date of the event and work backward to figure out specifically when you will do each task."

Making a list will often trigger tasks that otherwise might not surface until the last minute, she said. "Consider the invitations—will you design them yourself, buy them, who will be on guest list, when should they be sent? Date every task on your master list. Then follow it."

Most people who create a master list feel some immediate stress relief.

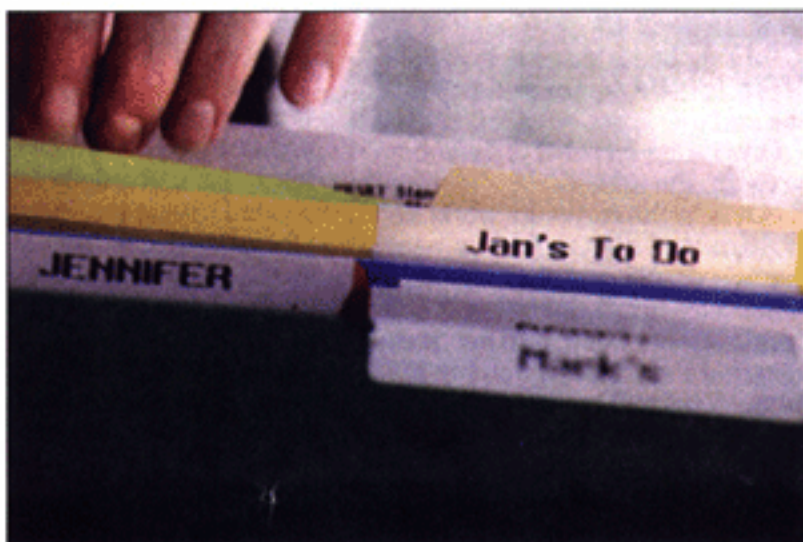
But for others seeing all of the tasks in black and white is overwhelming.

"The farther out you do, the less help you need. But if you are close to the holidays you will probably have to give something up or have to delegate more tasks.

"Maybe you like to buy all the gifts, but this year you will have to delegate some of that specific task to your husband. Or maybe dropping the photo card this year will be a big stress reliever.

"Do the list as soon as possible—ideally, it should have been done about a month ago. But even though Christmas is only a few weeks away,

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Linda Goldman helped Jan Swimmer organize papers for herself and her children in separate folders.



Linda Goldman (left) of Highland Park helps Jan Swimmer of Long Grove organize her paperwork. Goldman is owner of Altogether Organized and consults clients in organizing space, paper, time and projects.

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THOMAS DELANY, JR.
STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER