

The Captain's Log (or: My Brain)

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How often do you write vital information down on pieces of paper, only to not be able to find them when you need the info? How much time do you waste hunting for information you know you have SOMEwhere.....? Have you ever wished you could remember the details of that quote you asked for, or those details someone told you 6 months ago? Let me share about one of my favorite ways of overcoming this problem, something that was a vital step for me and prevented me regularly losing my mind back in the days where I was plagued by chaos. I call it "The Captain's Log" because of the article I read that first inspired the idea, but I've also been know to refer to it as my "Random Access Memory" or simply "My Brain!" :-)

Think for a moment about a large oceangoing vessel. The person in charge of this vessel is the Captain, and the Captain always has a Captain's Log, which is, of course, a book in which every detail of the voyage is recorded - heading, speed, location, problems encountered, interesting or important events and so on and so forth. Whenever the Captain is not on deck (after all, the poor man can't run the ship himself 24/7!), the First Mate takes over, and also keeps the log. If any question ever arises about anything that occurred on a journey, the log is referred to.

Now, there's a lot of analogy here that could be applied to running a home, but I won't belabor that point for now. Suffice it to say that I was inspired to think how useful a Captain's Log could be in a home! No more random pieces of paper, no more lost information.....

So, I purchased a spiral bound notebook (A5 size, which is to say, half a normal page size), with a brightly colored cover. The reason for the bright cover is that it makes it easy to spot if you happen to put it down somewhere, and when one log is full, it is shelved, and the next one has a different colored cover. I was often heard to say to my kids "Kids, have you seen my brain? It's got a pink cover....."

In this book, I wrote down EVERYTHING:

Phone numbers someone gave me, recipes I was told, phone messages, notes while talking to someone over the phone about something, library books I wanted to look up, to-do lists, shopping lists, where to find X place of interest, professionals I had dealt with or who had been recommended to me, phone messages, children's measurements, etc, etc, ad infinitum. I would often date an entry, usually I ruled off after it. This way, I did not feel guilty for wasting space like I did when I tried to use a diary to record things - no more blank, unused space because I didn't write anything on a given day.

In my more organised moments, I might transfer some of that info to it's "real home" - phone numbers to address books, recipes to recipe books, whatever. But it didn't matter if I didn't do that right away, because meantime the info was safe. When the book was full, I would place it on a certain shelf, and keep it for 12 months or so. It was amazing the number of times I would recall speaking to someone about something important on the phone last year, and want that info - all I had to do was look back through the relevant log, and there were the details - who, their phone number, and basically what was said. After 12 months, I would take one last browse through the log

for any info I wanted to extract, then toss it out.

The notebook didn't have to be perfect - I could scribble and cross out - it didn't matter. It didn't have to be alphabetised, categorised - just USED! And because I kept it simple, I DID use it! I'm sure you can see why I called it my Random Access Memory (after the computer term) - because I didn't have to rely on my actual brain to remember things, and I could randomly access any required information when needed.

I've moved on to more sophisticated organisational methods since, though for at least 5 years, my R.A.M was the only thing that kept me sane! I've got better at using a diary and calendar, I set reminders on my phone etc. But, you know, I miss my Captain's Log, so yesterday I bought a new, bright purple notebook. There's always lots of stuff I need to write down that isn't necessarily best placed in my diary! How about you? Could you benefit from having all that random information in one, accessible, easy to find spot?

Start a Captain's Log today!

Love

Cynthia

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