

# ORGANIZE

REAL LIFE. REAL SOLUTIONS.

## SHERRI SHEPHERD

THE VIEW'S NEWEST CO-HOST REVEALS HOW CLUTTER WAS CONSUMING HER LIFE—AND GIVES US A TOUR OF HER INCREDIBLY ORGANIZED MANHATTAN APARTMENT P.28

## PROCRASTINATION:

OUR LIFE COACH DOROTHY BREININGER EXPLAINS WHY IT CAN BE GOOD P.59

## HOW TO HIRE PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZER

WHAT TO A  
WHAT TO EXPECT

## THE FLYLADY

SHARES HER DA  
COMMANDMENTS

04 | MARCH/APRIL 2008  
US \$4.99 / CANADA \$5.99



PLUS: \* HELPING THE CHILD WITH ADHD \* FIND TIME FOR YOU

# sheri SHEPHERD'S NEW (UNCLUTTERED) VIEW

... COURTESY OF A PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZER,  
A POSITIVE ATTITUDE AND A FRESH START.

TEXT BY MELISSA STANTON PHOTOGRAPHY BY IAN CHRISTMANN





Wooden hangers help give a crisp, orderly look to Sherri's closet.

**T**o hear Sherri Shepherd tell it, and to look at the media attention she has received of late, the past few years have been filled with a series of ups and downs.

After struggling with infertility, Shepherd gave birth in 2005 to a son. But baby Jeffrey arrived a frightening 15 weeks premature, and while she was caring for her fragile infant, Shepherd discovered that her husband, actor Jeff Tarpley, was having an affair. (Although the pair did attempt to reconcile, they are divorcing.)

During this time the actress and stand-up comic, whose credits include roles in the film *Beauty Shop* and the sitcom *Less Than Perfect*, was gaining national exposure as a guest host on the daytime TV talk show *The View*. And late last summer, she was awarded a coveted, permanent seat on the Barbara Walters-led program.

But the good news meant that, for a while, Shepherd would have to be in New York while her toddler was cared for by his dad and a nanny in California, where the child's medical therapies could continue uninterrupted and

the warmer climate is better for his health. Since then, the 40-year-old performer has been both praised and pilloried for her work on *The View*. Fans love her bubbly personality, and *Entertainment Weekly* named her a breakout star of 2007. Critics have mocked comments she's made about evolution, world history and geography.

To handle whatever's thrown her way, Shepherd relies on her strong faith (raised a Jehovah's Witness, she is now a born-again Christian), loyal girlfriends and an arsenal of newly learned organizational skills, which were instilled in her by Jodie Watson, a professional organizer from Sherman Oaks, Calif. Working together, the two women have successfully sorted through the disorder and physical clutter that was also part of Shepherd's life.

*Organize* spent an afternoon with Shepherd and Watson at the star's Upper West Side apartment, which Watson had helped unpack and set up. According to Shepherd, hiring a professional organizer—and becoming organized herself—has resulted in, she says, “countless blessings” coming her way. ►

**“WHEN YOU LET GO OF WHAT YOU HAVE BUT DON'T NEED, GOD CAN COME IN AND BLESS YOU. BUT WHEN YOU HOLD ON TO EVERYTHING, THERE'S NO ROOM FOR NEW BLESSINGS.” — JODIE WATSON TO SHERRI SHEPHERD**

#### THE LINEN AND BATH CLOSET

Professional organizer Jodie Watson repurposed a single-rod hall closet into a spacious linen closet by investing in two modular shelving units. (“Because the apartment is a rental, I selected storage that can be easily removed,” she says.) Shepherd initially objected to the use, noting that a closet near her bedroom was “the linen closet, so we should use it as the linen closet.” She changed her mind upon realizing that closet was a bit too near a window, especially when, she says, “I’m coming out of the shower butt-naked trying to get a towel!” Watson installed removable shelf dividers to help Shepherd keep her sheets and towels neatly stacked. Rather than scatter the toiletries throughout the shelves, items are grouped by type and placed in labeled containers. “When you keep the items in a clear or vented bin, you know where things are, and where they should be returned, and you can see when you’re running low and need to buy more,” says Watson. “By using a container, the location you store it in is for that bin. It’s not for squeezing other items into the same space.”



**1** To easily vary her hairstyle, Shepherd owns several wigs, each of which Watson sealed in a zip-top plastic bag and sorted by theme (work wigs, fun wigs) into appropriately labeled file boxes.

**2** Small toiletries are kept in stackable, labeled drawers (soap, dental, moisturizers), which are easier to access than stacked, shoebox-style bins would be.

**3** Watson's search for the perfect bin to hold lotions and hair products was dictated by the tallest bottle. The solution: these plastic food storage containers.

**4** First aid items and medications are kept in "grab and go" handled bins, which enables the entire supply to be carried wherever it's needed (and moved out of reach when Shepherd's toddler is in town). Watson has placed several smaller boxes within each bin for sorting small contents.

The wicker bins contain Sherri's purses and off-season clothes. (A step stool kept in the closet is used for reaching the higher shelves.)



WHAT A WARDROBE! Each day at work, costumers at *The View* provide Sherri Shepherd with five outfits to choose from. After the show, she changes back into her own clothes.

# ORGANIZE VISITS WITH ... SHERRI SHEPHERD

**WHERE:** Sherri Shepherd's apartment **WHO:** Shepherd, *Organize* editor-in-chief Joyce Dorny, deputy editor Melissa Stanton and professional organizer Jodie Watson

## **Organize: Why did you hire a professional organizer?**

**Sherri Shepherd:** Because my entire life was a disaster. I had so much junk I couldn't think straight. There was no room in my house. My husband and I were sleeping on a little bit of the bed because clothing was everywhere. I had mass amounts of paper. I couldn't find anything. When I started missing meetings and auditions, I knew my life was totally out of control.

## **Organize: When was this?**

**Shepherd:** Spring 2005. I was always a very junky, cluttered person, but when I was pregnant it just came to a head. I had done in-vitro and I was on bed rest, so I couldn't do a lot around the house. Because Jeffrey was in the hospital for three months after he was born [in April], I had all the baby things I bought or people gave me just spread all over the place. On every chair, every floor there were boxes I hadn't unpacked—and I had lived in the house for five years!

## **Organize: This was your husband's stuff and your stuff?**

**Shepherd:** It was mostly mine, but his was added to it. It was causing a problem in the marriage, too, because he's not junky like that. But we didn't even have a place to put the baby when he came home from the hospital.

## **Organize: So that's when you called Jodie?**

**Shepherd:** Yes. Other organizers had come in over the years, but whatever they'd done didn't stick. I was talking to a girlfriend from my church, and she said, "You've got to call

Jodie." So I did, and she came right away and we talked. She said, "Let me clean up the table." Suddenly she went swish, swish, swish, and I felt like, "Wow, I have a table!" We had a beautiful pine table we never ate at because it was covered with bills and papers. And, *oh my gosh*, Jodie found so much money when we organized. I mean thousands of dollars! Checks had come in that I never cashed. I had given a candle party, and I sold \$500 worth of candles. I still had all those uncashed checks. It was mind-blowing when Jodie came in.

## **Organize: Jodie, what was your reaction when you first walked into Sherri's house?**

**Watson:** When we had spoken on the phone, I could hear the desperation in her voice. Whenever I come into a space, no matter what condition it's in, I can see what it can be like. She had a beautifully furnished home. I could see that she was going to get peace. I could see that the solutions could come.

**Shepherd:** Everyday, there were bags full of stuff for Goodwill and the Salvation Army.

## **Organize: Jodie, was Sherri there when you were doing this?**

**Watson:** Oh yes. We did "Yes, No, Maybe" as we sorted what to save or not, and she went through it really fast.

**Shepherd:** I thought Jodie was going to do it all by herself. Like when you watch *Oprah* or those makeover shows. The person leaves, the crew comes in, you come home, it's all done. I told her, "Get rid of whatever looks like junk."

But she said, "No, you have to be here with me." **Watson:** Organizing is more than just clearing up the space. That's why I try to work with my ►

**"I COULDN'T HAVE DONE WHAT JODIE DID BY ORGANIZING EVERYTHING. WITHOUT HER, I WOULD HAVE BEEN LIVING OUT OF BOXES. BUT SO FAR, I'VE BEEN ABLE TO MAINTAIN WHAT SHE'S DONE."**

— SHERRI SHEPHERD

### **THE CLOTHES CLOSET**

With three walls for hanging clothes, Shepherd's walk-in closet has about 25 feet of horizontal storage. Watson has made sure that every inch of vertical space is used as well by placing wicker bins on two levels of upper shelving and tall shoe-shelves on the floor. ("I had always kept my shoes in the boxes they came in, but then I couldn't see what I had," says Shepherd.) Portable dividers keep sweaters and other folded items from tipping onto one another. Boot inserts (not shown) enable Shepherd's dress boots to stand upright and maintain their shape. Another smart solution: Watson gave Shepherd two hampers, one for dry cleaning, the other for regular laundry.



#### THE OFFICE SUPPLY CLOSET

Since the second bedroom in Shepherd's apartment belongs to her son, she keeps her desk and computer in her bedroom—just steps from this shelved closet, which Watson organized with item-specific bins. The drawers contain office supplies as well as headshots and clippings from Shepherd's career. (In fact, having given away most of her excess possessions, additional career keepsakes are the only items Shepherd has placed in off-site storage.) Since the entertainer self-markets a DVD of her stand-up comedy—*No Refund, No Exchange*, available at [sherrishepherd.com](http://sherrishepherd.com)—she keeps shipping materials handy.



clients. I teach them ways of doing things, so they can create new habits. Or else the minute I'm gone, it's going to be back to where it was. I want my clients to learn how to make me obsolete.

#### Organize: How long did all this take?

**Shepherd:** About four weeks. We would have done more, but the hospital called and said Jeffrey was ready to come home. At that point I just wanted to stop and get my baby.

#### Organize: So did you?

**Shepherd:** No. Jodie said, "No." I was so upset.

**Watson:** As we organized, I kept saying, "We're not going to worry about any papers right now. We'll put them in a bin and get to them all at once." We had four bins of papers, and we were literally on the last bin when Sherri got the call.

**Shepherd:** It was so hard to stay and do that last bin, but I'm glad we did. Once the baby came home, I wasn't going to do anything. And because he came home with oxygen and a heart monitor and had fragile lungs, Jeffrey couldn't be anywhere that was all junky and dirty and dusty. All that time I had been feeling guilty, because I kept thinking, "This house is a total dust magnet. He can't be here." But when he did come home, after we had organized, it was so nice to be able to sit in a chair and rock him and to be able to bathe him in the sink without first moving a ton of dishes. Once Jodie got me all organized, I felt very peaceful.

#### Organize: When Jodie left, did you keep the place uncluttered?

**Shepherd:** I think so, yes, but then I moved into another house because I was going through the divorce. Practically everything stayed in boxes at that house

for a year. When I got the job on *The View*, my girlfriends came to help me pack. But I was now downsizing from a four-bedroom house in L.A. to a two-bedroom Manhattan apartment and couldn't take everything with me. So I called Jodie. We had just two weeks. She unpacked and organized me in order to repack me for the move.

**Watson:** I knew that she was going to live out of the boxes for a while, so I organized the contents of the boxes.

**Shepherd:** She had boxes labeled Evening Wear, Winter Pants, Summer Pants, Sandals, Handbags, Facial Products.

#### Organize: Sherri, Jodie told us you were very good at purging your possessions. She said you got rid of a lot of stuff.

**Shepherd:** At first I didn't want to let anything go. Jodie would hold up something and I'd say, "But I had that in fourth grade, and I want to save it for my granddaughter." Or I'd go, "I'm not a size six, but I once was and I'm going to wear that again." Then we'd see my size 16 clothes, and I'd explain, "If I gain weight again, I'll need them." I had a reason for holding on to everything. So Jodie finally said to me, "Listen. Nothing is going to come in. No blessings are going to come in. You need to let go. There are people who can benefit from having these things you don't need." I didn't even know I had much of what I had. Some of the clothes still had tags on them. Then I thought about how there was surely a girl somewhere who really is a size 16 who needed my clothes.

**Watson:** Sherri also gave a lot of clothing and housewares to friends and family. In the garage we set up an area for them to come and take what they wanted.

**Shepherd:** They thought they were at the mall. It was like Christmas for them. In the end there was maybe one candle left. ▶

**"BEFORE BUYING ANY CONTAINERS, I SORT THE ITEMS THAT NEED STORAGE AND PURGE WHAT'S NOT NEEDED. THEN, WHEN I SHOP, I LOOK THROUGHOUT THE STORE FOR A SOLUTION, AND NOT JUST IN, SAY, THE BATHROOM SECTION BECAUSE I'M ORGANIZING THE BATHROOM."**

— JODIE WATSON

#### THE FOYER

Although Shepherd brought some of her own furnishings from Los Angeles, including the decorative, stacked boxes seen here, the wicker bench she and organizer Jodie Watson are sitting on came with the apartment. Seeing a potential storage spot beneath the seat, Watson picked-up three perfectly fitting wicker bins. (Everything Watson used in Shepherd's apartment came from Bed, Bath and Beyond or The Container Store.) The goddess watching over the women from a tapestry by artist Lisa Carrier is Sherri! "My husband had given it to me for my birthday," says Shepherd. "It was his fantasy of what he wanted me to look like."



**ORDER RESTORED**

"Professional organizers take a lot of the 'overwhelm' away," says Watson, with Shepherd. "Clients feel, 'What a relief. It's done. All I have to do is maintain it.' And maintaining is a lot easier than digging out from under a pile and figuring out how to set things up."



#### THE BATHROOM VANITY

Shepherd's bathroom has a two-sink vanity and a medicine cabinet but, "No drawers! Donald Trump didn't give a woman a bathroom drawer?" jokes Shepherd about the real estate magnate, who built the apartment complex she lives in. To compensate, Watson has filled almost every inch of Shepherd's under-sink storage space with stackable drawers and baskets. So Shepherd can do all of her primping in one spot, Watson bought two Umbra spindle jewelry boxes (pictured), each of which has three levels of storage. By swiveling the box open, Shepherd can select from a small bin with gold jewelry, another with silver, others with bangles, gems, etc. When done, the container closes up as a decorative box. At first sight, Shepherd didn't like the acrylic necklace holder Watson had selected (seen at rear), but once she placed her jewelry inside, she realized the case lets her see and enjoy her many pendants when she isn't wearing them. "They've become like pieces of art," observes Shepherd.

#### Organize: How did you feel seeing your belongings disappear like that?

**Shepherd:** It felt good. They were so happy. Now when my friends visit me, they're wearing my stuff!

**Watson:** By doing what she did, Sherri brought her life up to date to where she was. She let go of the things that weren't needed. We even went through her work keepsakes and made decisions about what had to be kept. Now there's room for the next phase of her life. She has room for new blessings.

**Shepherd:** I got rid of so much stuff, but so much has come to me. With my baby, I had so many bins of premie clothes. I wanted to keep them to remember how small he was. Jodie said, "You don't need all of it. Keep three or four items, and put them in a shadow box." So I was able to give the clothes to a hospital and to a mother who had premie twins and needed those clothes. I was able to bless her.

#### Organize: Do you miss your things?

**Shepherd:** No, I can't even remember what I had! I don't regret anything I gave away. I wish I could have given away even more. It was a blessing to do so. ♦

Melissa Stanton's book, *The Stay-at-Home Survival Guide*, will be published in May by Seal Press. Her website is [stayathomesurvivalguide.com](http://stayathomesurvivalguide.com).

## JODIE WATSON'S ORGANIZING SOLUTIONS FOR SHERRI SHEPHERD'S HOME—AND YOURS!

### CREATE CLEARLY DEFINED SYSTEMS

To maintain great organization, everything needs to have a specific home of its own. So instead of tossing all of your toiletries into a cabinet together, divide them into categories, such as dental, hair, soap, lotions, etc.

### KEEP YOUR LARGE SURFACES CLEAR

Put items away after you use them, so floors, beds, counters and tabletops can remain clutter-free.

### MAINTAIN YOUR ORGANIZATIONAL FLOW

Integrate new items as soon as they come into your home by determining where, exactly, that item will be placed. Regularly reevaluate what you own. Toss, donate or give to friends items you haven't used, have replaced or no longer want or need.

Professional organizer and event planner Jodie Watson is based in Sherman Oaks, Calif. Her website is [supremeorganization.com](http://supremeorganization.com).

For information about the products used in Sherri Shepherd's apartment, see *Where to Find It* on page 63.



**PERFECT PARTNERS:**  
“Because I didn’t know what I had, I kept buying the same things over and over again,” says Shepherd, about her life before Watson’s organizing help. “I now know I have four unopened bottles of the same makeup remover and dozens of never used Sharpies.”