

EPISODE 523

[INTRODUCTION]

[0:00:35.7]

FT: Welcome to So Money everyone! Happy January 18th, happy birthday to my brother, turning 26 today, he's an old man. Not really, I'm an old woman. That's what that means. I'm 11 years older than Todd. There you go. If you ever wondered what my age was, you can do the math.

By the way, tonight, just FYI, if you're in the city, in New York City, and you have a chance to do nothing between the hours of 6 PM and 8 PM, come visit me. I'll be at the Rebecca Minkoff store in Soho, and she and I will be doing a discussion together with shoppers around our best tips around starting a business, career, negotiation, money, and for those of you who do not know who Rebecca Minkoff is, she is a huge fashion power house.

In fact, she was a guest on So Money in 2016. She's all over the place. I mean, her stuff is just synonymous with cool, hip, fun, millennial fashion. In fact, I think she's a cohost now of Project Runway Fashion. She is a big deal. I will be with her, there will be some champagne, there will be some discounted shopping, so if you are in the city and you can stop by, we'd love to see you.

Today's show is dedicated to all those type A's out there, all those attentive people like me. How organized are you? I could spend hours at the container store. I love creating a place and a space for everything. My mind, maybe you relate to this. My mind works best when the space I'm in is calm and organized.

In college, I couldn't actually start writing a paper or doing homework until my desk was clean, and even my roommate's side of the room was clean, and I would make her bed. Sometimes it kept me up late, but I guess it's just who I am.

As we head into the New Year, I know a lot of us have this goal to make our lives more streamlined, more functional. To that end, I've invited Barbara Reich, The Queen of Clean, and

she is the founder of a firm that specializes in the organization of people, their lives, and physical space.

Her company is called Resourceful Consultants, and whether you're a powerful executive or a busy parent, her advice can help us find more harmony in our spaces, our homes, our offices, even our phones. Yeah. My iPhone could use some decluttering. Probably yours too.

Along the way, her tips can help us improve time management and save money. A little bit more about Barbara. In 2014, she co-founded Never Caught Up, which focuses on work-life integration, women empowerment and wellness, she's also the author of *Secrets of an Organized Mom*. She's got twins.

With Barbara, we talk about how to organize your finances, what can you keep, what can you shred, whether being organized is in our DNA, she's got some very strong opinions about that. The financial benefits of having an organized home, office, even an iPhone, how that can actually parlay into a So Money life. Here is Barbara Reich.

[INTERVIEW]

[0:03:38.2]

FT: Barbara Reich, welcome to So Money. I can't wait to talk all things organization, great to have you.

[0:03:45.0]

BR: Thanks, I'm so happy to be with you today.

[0:03:46.7]

FT: I'm a pretty organized person, I'd like to think. Do you think that people are just born to the world with the DNA for wanting to be organized and having an affinity for organization, and some are just complete messes?

[0:04:05.6]

BR: I have to say, I actually do believe that, and when I'm hiring new associates, I basically have them follow me for the day and I see what they do. They might not fold how I fold, but I can tell that they're inherently neat and able to organize other people based on how they fold.

[0:04:20.0]

FT: It is something inherent, and yes, folding is a great place to kind of judge people on. There's so much clutter in our lives. Obviously, our homes are filled to the rooftops but also our phones and our digital handheld devices are also cluttered with apps and emails, and so we're going to talk a lot about how to streamline all those areas of our lives where we feel where there's overwhelm.

First, I'm going to talk a little bit about your background. How do you become an expert on organization? We're really interested in organization right now as a culture, as a global culture. How did you find your footing?

[0:05:00.1]

BR: It's interesting, because when I was graduating from college, or when I was a child, professional organizing wasn't a thing that you sort of knew about as a possible profession. As you were saying, like are people born with the DNA or not, I was born with the DNA. I didn't like to have friends sleep over at my house as a child because they would move things.

In my early 20's when I worked as a management consultant, my associates would come in the office and they would sort of move my stapler from a perfect straight line to an angle, and without even realizing it, I would move it back. I'm just sort of — I'm wired that way.

What had happened was, I had my twins, and I would go on play dates, and while the other mothers were talking about sleep and food, I tend to be sort of black and white. I was like, "Read the book on sleep and do what they say, and your kids will sleep." I would organize the

living room, or I would organize the play room while we were sitting there, and if you're the person that does that, you become very popular in terms of being invited in lots of places.

[0:06:02.7]

FT: Right. It's true, it's like that episode of *Friends*, because Monica is like the neat freak, and she was like hiding in a bathroom one time, and Chandler comes in and he's like, "Okay, you can come out now, but wait a minute, did you clean the bathroom?"

[0:06:16.4]

BR: Right, I will go to a restaurant, and if the toilet paper is not faced the proper way, I will redo it. You just can't help yourself if you're born like this.

[0:06:25.2]

FT: I tend to think that if you walk into someone's home and it's a mess, or you open up a closet and it's a mess, I wonder if that usually is a hint as to how they manage their finances as well? Do you find that a lack of organization in one area usually means a lack of organization in a lot of areas when it comes to individuals?

[0:06:47.5]

BR: Absolutely. It's all related.

[0:06:51.1]

FT: What does that stem from?

[0:06:54.0]

BR: I even find people who, dealing with a lot of research now on how being organized can help you lose weight, and so when your kitchen is disorganized, it impacts all areas of your life.

When your home is disorganized, it impacts all areas of your life. There are some people that are better than others that sort of pull it off at the last minute, but it's at a great cost in terms of personal stress and chaos.

[0:07:20.3]

FT: Right, and time and energy, I totally get that. That's why people like you are so gainfully employed, and even though I enjoy organization, and I enjoy finding a place for everything. I need the time to do it so, I've hired professional help in my life, and as we're doing this podcast I've got a team working in my son's room. Fixing up his room, totally redoing it as he's transitioning from his nursery to his toddler room, and his nursery is going to have to go to his sister. Sorry, Evan. It's the circle of life.

[0:07:55.7]

BR: We lost a home office when we had kids, so it happens.

[0:07:59.2]

FT: I'm all about Max — especially in New York. I know you live in New York. Every corner of my house has a purpose. There's no space that goes unused. I love compartmentalizing things, and Elfa shelves, and Container Store, and all of that good stuff. It's a huge industry right? Do you think we've become a sucker to it though, a little bit, like all these storage facilities? It's a billion dollar industry of things that we're just not letting go of.

[0:08:30.7]

BR: Well, I would answer that a few ways. First of all, Marie Kondo would say, "Don't go to the Container Store, and don't go to Bed Bath and Beyond, and don't buy any containers, and use what you have on hand." I disagree with that. I feel like if you want the inside of your cabinets and your drawers to look as nice as the rest of your house, you need to invest a little bit.

It doesn't have to be expensive, but when you walk in to a clothing store, for example, you will not notice the hangers, the hangers are invisible. Why? Because they're all the same. I believe, in the same way, that all of your containers and bins should be the same. It doesn't matter if you get them at the dollar store or whether you buy something more expensive.

There is a place for that. The other thing you touched upon was these storage facilities, which there are times and places when having a storage facility makes sense. For example, if you have one child, and you're planning on having another child in three or four years, and you don't need the changing table or the glider, yeah, maybe you might want to put that in storage.

But people often times use those storage facilities for things that they don't want to make a decision about. What ends up happening is they will pay for that storage facility for years, until finally they go back and realize there's not a single thing in there that they want, and they throw it all away and realize they spent a lot of money for nothing.

[0:09:48.3]

FT: Truly. We've done the math ourselves. We have a small storage room in our apartment downstairs, and I got rid of it because — we had two, I got rid of one. My feeling was like, I go in there once a year, you look at the stuff, and perhaps it's stuff that you anticipate needing down the road in the future. I don't know when, but I think we emotionally hang on to things because we envision the life that we will have in two years, or the needs that we'll have in six months.

My feeling is that, in the meantime, if I've spent say \$75 a month keeping that storage room available to myself, and all I really use is like a \$30 fill in the blank in the next two years, you can do the math. It's better for me to just give up the storage facility, donate whatever's in there, and then buy what I need on an as-needed basis, or rent what I need on as-needed basis.

[0:10:46.1]

BR: Right. Because there is — you can do, very clearly in black and white, the cost benefit analysis of keeping something versus paying to store it. The thing that people don't realize is there's also a psychic cost to keeping it. There's a psychological element of like, in the back of

your head you have the storage unit, it's one more thing you have to think about that you have to pay for. It's that, also, that makes it often not as much of a win as people think it will be.

[0:11:11.4]

FT: Right, it's the headspace. I also have learned that when you have more stuff than you need, it creates the illusion that you need more room. You buy the bigger house, you get the bigger car, you get the bigger storage plan for whatever, your phone, physical storage. It becomes this kind of vicious cycle.

[0:11:32.6]

BR: Right. The more things you have, the more time you have to spend taking care of those things. To your point, it does become a vicious cycle, which is why I advocate streamlining.

[0:11:45.4]

FT: Let's talk about that. We've talked about the problem, now let's get to some solutions if you have a lot of clutter. Let's talk first about physical clutter, then we'll talk about digital clutter. Physical clutter – knick-knacks, toys, heirlooms, financial documents even. I feel like people really hold on to certain things because they think they may need it in an emergency down the road, which sometimes is true, but a lot of times we keep statements for bills that really, we could just get online. We can go green and solve that problem. Tell us about your philosophy. Is there like a three-step strategy to figuring out what stays and what goes?

[0:12:22.4]

BR: Well, absolutely. The first thing is that when you're purging, there's probably 10 things you can throw away so easily without thinking about it that have no emotional repercussions. Like, if you went into your bathroom, there are tons of toiletries, and cosmetics, and medications that are past their expiration date. Those can go without a thought. There's those financial statements, to your point, that are more than seven years old that can be shredded. There are

all the socks without mates, which those mates are never showing up. Those can go in the garbage.

[0:12:54.1]

FT: I'm always hopeful they'll show up though. Gosh, I have a whole box of single socks.

[0:12:59.2]

BR: Okay, you have to promise me that when you go home tonight, you're going to throw those away, and I'm going to give you a tip. Particularly for your children. If you buy them all the same sock, then that never happens ever again. You don't have to match socks anymore. That's one way of dealing with it.

Anyway, you look at your things, and one of the things you mentioned was heirlooms. People get very stuck on heirlooms, I actually did a segment on the *Today* show about this, but other people's memories aren't your responsibilities. What ends up happening, often times, is there's — let's say a bowl from your great aunt, and it's gotten passed down, and everybody's giving this a level of import that it doesn't deserve, because your aunt bought it at a flea market and never liked it herself.

You have to be very careful about the things you're saving. Whether you're doing it because you like it, or because there's a certain level of guilt that is part of that.

[0:13:50.2]

FT: Can I just interject for one second, because I think maybe other people can relate to this, but after getting married, having a child, we've gotten a lot of cards over the years, and birthdays, and holidays. When do I throw those out? Some of these cards are beautiful, they are obviously from momentous occasions, our wedding, I have a box of cards from our wedding, from people who gave us gifts. Do I just pick the three that I love — at what point do I burn those?

[0:14:20.7]

BR: Here's what I would suggest with that. Because I'll work with people, and they have something like, the box of their wedding reply cards. The people didn't write anything, they just wrote, we will attend. I don't know why people are holding on to that, but when you look at cards, look at whether the person wrote their own sentiment or whether they just sign the Hallmark sentiment.

If somebody took the time to write something meaningful to you, and it's somebody who is meaningful in your life, then you save it. Otherwise, they go in the garbage. You have two young children. The grandparents, the aunts and uncles, they send a card, you might display them for three days and then garbage.

[0:14:58.3]

FT: Okay, I feel guilty about that.

[0:14:59.6]

BR: Don't feel guilty. I will accept all the bad karma associated with you throwing that away so that you can throw it away.

[0:15:06.5]

FT: My mother-in-law might judge me though. She comes over my house and my cards are on display for like, the month that she sent it to me. That's another show.

[0:15:15.0]

BR: Yeah, mother-in-laws are a tricky animal, and I realize that I will hopefully be a mother-in-law one day. A month is excessive, and I was — somebody wrote in to me recently about how for like, 15 years her mother in law has gotten her gifts every year that she hates. She displays

them, which just continues to cycle of her mother-in-law buying her more things she hates. You really just have to get rid of that.

[0:15:43.5]

FT: Alright. What about financial documents? You mentioned after seven years, and that would probably relate to your tax returns, but even three years, I think, is safe to purge your tax returns, and of course you're shredding everything, and the reason for the three-year mark is because the IRS technically doesn't do audits after three years, that window closes. But that said, the IRS also will throw in a caveat and say, if it turns out they audit you and you lied about your income and it was a big lie, then they can and will request your paperwork for six years, going back six years. If you know you're a fraud, keep your paperwork for six years.

[0:16:27.2]

BR: If you're innocent, you're okay.

[0:16:28.4]

FT: Right. That's taxes. But what about utility statements, and tax bills, and things like that, that I mean, a lot of this stuff is available online, but is it ever smart to have the hard copy as well?

[0:16:41.3]

BR: To my mind, the answer is no, and this is an answer that's changed over time, because it used to be that you couldn't get those things electronically. It also relates to having a digital file system that enables you to find things when you need them.

All of that stuff, if you trust your system and you trust that you'll be able to find them, are not necessary to have in a hard copy. I also — with everything that people are asking me about whether they should save or not save, I always ask them that question. Where else does this information exist, and how could you get it if you needed it? A lot of the information would be very easy to get if you didn't save a hard copy or even a digital copy.

[0:17:27.9]

FT: Right. That, of course, entails having an organized system for passwords and you, know, making sure, yeah.

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BR: I really like, I use this one called One Password, where literally you remember one password, and that's a place where you can store all of that information and, you know, especially with cyber security being foremost on many people's minds, you don't want to use the same password for everything.

That's a way to keep track of your passwords, and there's many other ones. I don't recommend having your passwords written on a piece of paper, because you risk losing that or somebody finding that. You do need a system for that so that you can protect your information.

[0:18:15.2]

FT: I will, shamefully, will admit that years ago I used to keep a file on my computer called passwords.

[0:18:20.6]

BR: I did too. Don't worry about it, I'm in the same boat.

[0:18:24.5]

FT: Thankfully, no one ever stole my laptop. No one — maybe even if it had gotten stolen it would have been safe, but it did not get in the wrong hands.

[0:18:34.2]

BR: Right.

[0:18:35.6]

FT: Tell me a little bit about your background, Barbara. We know that you sort of found yourself in this role inherently, this is kind of what you've always been good at, but when it comes to, let's talk about money. What is your financial philosophy, and how has your work shaped that, perhaps?

[0:18:56.7]

BR: You know, it's very interesting, because you sent out a very thorough and organized packet to me several weeks ago. It made me really think about some of these things. I do remember, my parents were divorced when I was young, and my mother had gone from really being taken care of by her father, and she had worked as a teacher for a few years, but really then, was taking care of by my father.

He was a person who was very traditional and didn't want her to work outside the home, and since she wasn't earning a lot of money, it wasn't a difficult decision that they made. When they got divorced, she really had no financial independence. She had no credit cards in her name. I do remember one day, it's one of the most poignant memories that I have from my childhood of my mother, shortly after the divorce, you know, a major appliance broke and she was like, "Oh my god, I can't believe everything's going to start breaking now."

I watched her then pick herself up, she took the Series 7 exam, she became a broker, and she became financially independent, and in hindsight, as we've talked about it as an adult or as adults, she said that if she hadn't gotten a job then, when we went to college, she would have had to give up our house, and she would have had some very negative things happen to her in terms of her financial health.

The message to me was always be financially independent. It doesn't matter how successful your partner is, but you should always have money of your own.

[0:20:30.5]

FT: Yes, has that always — has entrepreneurship always been something that you've gravitated towards? Did you ever have a nine-to-five job?

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BR: I did, I worked as a management consultant for many years, and you know, I'm very good at these professions where you get paid to tell people what to do. But I did, of course management consulting is definitely not a nine-to-five job. It's — it can be a very tough schedule.

I worked at Crestwaterhouse, and now it's called PricewaterhouseCooper's, I think, and then the Hay group. I used to — I dealt with executive compensation, and designing incentive plans, and performance management for employees, and designing those plans for large organizations, and I loved it. The thing that made me the most successful as a consultant was not my creative and original ideas, it was organizational skills.

[0:21:24.5]

FT: Yes, it's not something that should be taken for granted, that's definitely — if that is something that is in you, you need to exploit that.

[0:21:33.2]

BR: Right. It was funny, my first client came to me because somebody, I had gone out on my own, and I was working as a management consultant on my own, and I had several clients. I got a call from one of my former colleagues who said, "Barbara, somebody called me, and they want to pay someone to setup their home office. I gave them your number, don't kill me."

I sort of thumpered my way through the first one, learned a lot, told a couple of more people that I had done this, and one person said to me, "You know what? You have twins, I've been in your house. I want you to setup my house like your house." Then she told five people, and before you knew it, it was a full-time job for me.

[0:22:16.4]

FT: Your book, *Secrets of an Organized Mom* is dedicated to parents, I'm sure taking a lot from your own life as you've talked now about having twins. What are the challenges specific to parents and organization? I think speaking personally, it's easy to feel overwhelmed, because there's an industry telling you that you need all this stuff. You really don't. How do you help parents?

[0:22:44.1]

FT: It's funny. You know, you talk about this whole industry of things they tell you you need. There was a study I recently saw from UCLA. They have this Center for Families and Family Living. They said that for each child you add to the household, the number of possessions increases by 30% in the pre-school years alone.

So it's interesting, how do I help parents? I really come in and I help them purge, and sometimes it's easier to purge things when someone's standing over you telling you that you really don't need it, and then I find a place in the house for everything and I label it. So that way, everybody in the house can be accountable for putting things away, and there's no more decision making about where things go, and I like to tell people that there's really two pieces to this.

There's developing the infrastructure, so okay, do you have the right files? Do you have the right bins? Do you have the right hangers? Do you have the right places to put things? But once I've done that, the piece that is almost more critical is the process. So what's the process by which things get to the places that you have for them?

So it's funny, yesterday I was working with a client on something as seemingly as simple as mail, and she was saying like, "I open the mail, but then it just sits here," and it's really just going through the process of saying, "Okay, so you have these magazines or these periodicals that came in the mail, let's put these on the bottom of the steps, and when you go upstairs the next time, you're going to walk them up and leave them on your night table, because that's where

you're going to read them. These bills are going to also go on the bottom of the steps, and when you walk upstairs, they're going to go in your inbox, and they're going to get paid every Sunday."

So it's really a matter of figuring out the process, also, and there's lots of common sense things that aren't common sense to people who don't spend any time thinking about it, which is if you apply sunblock in the kitchen as you are walking out the door, it's not going to help you to have the sunblock in the bathroom somewhere else.

[0:24:47.6]

FT: I think you can be so helpful with couples too, because in any relationship, nobody wants to hear from their significant other that they're a rat pack. Sorry, what's the word? Pack rat? I just said it in three different ways, pack rat. My mother has somehow managed not to kill my dad over all these years. I mean, he literally keeps boxes for electronics he bought 15 years ago. He'll keep cords for things that I don't even know where they connect to.

They are thinking of downsizing, and it's really worrisome, and she's anticipating fighting, because he just won't understand why some things need to go, and so having a third party come in, like you, to speak and be the voice of reason in objective ways, I think, could save some marriages along the way too. Do you ever think of yourself as a marriage therapist, because I think that's what you are, too.

[0:25:45.7]

BR: Yeah. I mean, it's definitely a big part of what I play, and in fact, I was working with a family, they had moved into a townhouse in Brooklyn, and we actually designated an area and we called it the marriage saver area, because her husband is a piler, and so in designing the kitchen, we designed a place where we actually put an outlet inside this cabinet, and it is designed for him to pile his stuff in so she doesn't see it.

[0:26:12.3]

FT: Brilliant. We had mentioned earlier that you also had some advice around digital clutter and how we can streamline emails and files on our computers. How do we begin to attack this big part of our lives?

[0:26:26.6]

BR: Years ago, I used to talk to people about touching each piece of paper once and making a decision in doing something, and I really tell people to do the same thing with email, and there's a lot of data about multi-tasking, and it's all very negative, but that would be a whole separate podcast that we could do on that, but with your emails, you have to have a digital filing system that makes sense.

So you have to go through the process of moving things to those digital files. Also, when you open an email, you should not think about it, close it, open it up again, think about it. You open the email, you respond and file, respond and delete, or if you really have to print it out and put it in a paper file — and there's other things you can do as well. I always tell people it's a simple behavioral change.

But if you change the subject lines of your emails, you will save yourself a myriad of time and energy, because what happens is you start an email chain talking about the podcast Thursday at 11:00, and you end up talking about dinner for four people a month out, and 16 things in between, and you'll never find the emails related to those 16 things, which may be important, if you don't change the subject line. If the subject line still says podcast 11:00 Thursday.

[0:27:52.2]

FT: Right. One thing I had recently to help, I was actually running out of space. Literally. Gmail was like, "You're about to get booted if you don't clear some emails out." I went and I searched by keyword things like Pottery Barn, West Elm, American Express.

[0:28:11.9]

BR: Oh, you've got to unsubscribe to all of that.

[0:28:14.0]

FT: Well, I do unsubscribe, but they filter, and I should say, I've unsubscribed for as many of these places that I can think of, but it's just that sometimes I subscribe because I go back on the site and I am reordering, so they get my email and the cycle continues, but the more popular retailers and financial services companies that I work with, Chase, after I make sure these emails aren't too important, I just search for them by keyword, and then I can filter it that way and then just delete everything at once. I can one click delete hundreds of emails categorically, and it took a while, it was one thing to do while you're watching Netflix, like trying to multitask, because it could take a while.

[0:29:02.1]

BR: It's a great way of doing it. Another thing, and I wish I remembered the name of the gentleman who first coined this term, but he talked about declaring email bankruptcy. So then, in the same way you declare bankruptcy when you can't manage your financial obligations, you can declare email bankruptcy when you can no longer manage your email obligations, and basically you just start at a certain date. You can take them all, and if you don't want to delete them, put them in a file saying, "email from this day date to this date," and start fresh. Just start over, and believe me, if anything is truly important, the person will email you again.

[0:29:40.4]

FT: Right, absolutely. Let's talk about financial failure, Barbara. Had you ever had a cataclysmic event with your money?

[0:29:50.0]

BR: I have to say that I've been lucky not to have had one yet. So that doesn't mean I won't have one, but I can't really, I haven't had that happen to me knock on whatever, I don't have wood close to me. I'll knock on my computer, but not yet.

[0:30:05.5]

FT: Good. No hard lessons learned, even just like, “Oops, didn’t know that,” and then cost me a few bucks or something that you learned about recently that’s helps you to save more?

[0:30:17.9]

BR: Well, I will tell you one thing that happened to me. My twins are going to be 17 in January, so four years ago I was planning their B’nai Mitzvah in the process of finishing up my book, working full-time, there was a lot going on at once, and I was redecorating my son’s room to give them a more teenage room. My sons cared about nothing but the softness of the carpet. So they have given me a price for the carpet, which I thought was outrageous.

But I was like, “You know he’s such a good kid, and he really doesn’t ask for anything, I’m going to do this.” Well, when the carpet was installed, it turned out that the amount that I thought was crazy was the deposit. It was my own fault, because it was something that fell through the cracks and I am not used to that happening to me. But I will say, there is a God, because a couple of weeks later, we were as part of that whole redecoration we were changing the carpet on the landing of the steps.

They were cutting it in his room on his new carpet, because there was no furniture in the room, and they cut through the carpet, the brand new very expensive carpet, and they called me and they said they were going to replace it with no additional charge, they could do this. I was like, “How about this. You give me 50% off and we’ll call it a day,” because where they cut was going to be under where his bed was, and so I was able to save a little bit.

[0:31:37.3]

FT: Brilliant, good negotiating.

[0:31:39.4]

BR: But it was one of those things where, literally my heart sunk, and I just felt so disgusting, because it was so much more money than I ever in my wildest, I thought the deposit was a ridiculous amount of money. But the carpet was very soft.

[0:31:58.9]

FT: Well, that's good. I'm glad your sons can be with the carpet. That's so cute, they didn't want anything but soft carpeting, which is important. I'm redoing my son's room right now, and when you're buying things online — I don't have time to go in stores and touch everything. So I am working with someone who's more experienced, and knows what materials actually feel like, and can say, "Okay, this is going to be kind of a rougher rug, or a thin rug." So it's good to triple check those things.

[0:32:25.4]

BR: Buy with somebody who knows.

[0:32:27.6]

FT: Yeah, because especially if you're going to be sitting on the rug a lot, you want them to be comfortable. But I'm glad you got that 50% off deal. That was a brilliant negotiation, Barbara.

[0:32:36.7]

BR: Thank you.

[0:32:38.7]

FT: What's a financial habit that you have that helps you streamline your finances?

[0:32:43.9]

BR: So for my business, I use QuickBooks. I am very rigid in many areas of my life, and I think that being rigid is not a great thing, but it's a very positive thing when you're an organizer. I'm very routinized. I come home and I immediately put into QuickBooks. I create the invoice for the client that I send out at the end of the month, and I religiously will plug in the information with the description of what I did and the number of hours, and I like to periodically, every week or so I look at my accounts receivable reports, I look at how much I've made for the year, I really stay on top of it, because it's interesting and important to me.

[0:33:23.4]

FT: Someone once told me that they like to keep their house messy, because it illustrates just how full and busy and boisterous their life is. What do you think about that philosophy?

[0:33:36.2]

BR: Well, it's become a badge of honor in our society to say like, when someone says, "How are you?" "Oh, I'm really busy."

[0:33:43.9]

FT: Oh you're a hot mess, yeah or I'm really busy.

[0:33:45.6]

BR: Yeah, and I think that the chaos can be very stressful on a family, and if you think about if you're starting your day as an adult, and you realize you have an important meeting, the shirt you're going to wear had a stain on it, so now you are running late because you are trying to find a different shirt that matches something else, but then that shirt is in the cleaner, and then you're proofreading the document you're going to present while you're on the subway going to the meeting, and you realize there's a mistake.

Versus if you picked out your clothes the night before, you read your report the night before, you had it in your briefcase ready to go, you had breakfast set up on the table, because what

happens to a lot of people is they can somehow manage that, but then there's the wild card. Like you get a call from your child's school that your child's tooth got knocked out in the dodgeball game or something like that, and then it's chaos.

I think that those people, they might squeak through by the skin of their teeth, and they might have some good stories to tell about it, but in the end it's not a healthy way to live. Also, I do a lot of lecturing on organizing for academic success, and I work with children and families on this, and it's not the kids that are the smartest that are the most successful on high school, because there's simply not enough hours in the day. It's the kids that are the most organized.

[0:35:07.1]

FT: I agree with that, yeah.

[0:35:08.0]

BR: And as a parent like you have to set the example.

[0:35:12.3]

FT: It's such an important skill to enforce to your children, even just like, I remember growing up, we always had to make our bed, or to put the dishes away, we always had responsibilities, and there was a routine to being in the home. There were expectations, and there were things that we had to get done before we go to bed, and that I think spilled over into how we kept our homework in shape, and our school issues, and then, of course, in our personal relationships.

So I think it can start at home, and it can start young, and certainly there are going to be kids that will rise to the occasion. Others we'll have to nudge more along the way, but I think it's not just a matter of, like you said, keeping things organized and clean for the sake of being organized and clean. These are life lessons. I think when you flex those muscles, it can mean happiness, and clarity, and so many other aspects of your lives.

Your finances, your relationships, your relationship with yourself, so I think you are doing really big important work, Barbara, and maybe it starts with telling someone where to put their heirlooms, but really, you're helping them out in their lives in big ways.

[0:36:20.4]

BR: Thank you. Yeah, I hope that I do that, and the feedback that I get suggests that it does make a very big difference for people.

[0:36:28.3]

FT: Okay Barbara, let's do some So Money fill in the blanks, where I start a sentence and then you finish it. First thing that comes to mind. Maybe I'll throw in an organization mad lib. If I won the lottery, the first thing I would do is _____.

[0:36:44.1]

BR: I would hire a driver.

[0:36:47.0]

FT: Yeah, especially in New York City, who wants to drive?

[0:36:50.5]

BR: Yeah, exactly.

[0:36:52.2]

FT: One thing that I spend on that makes my life easier or better is _____.

[0:36:56.1]

BR: Someone who cooks.

[0:36:57.9]

FT: Yeah.

[0:36:59.8]

BR: In 22 years of marriage, my husband will tell you I have cooked less than 10 meals, and if you keep the bar low, no one will expect it from you.

[0:37:07.7]

FT: Nope, and why should you have to cook these days? I mean, I have actually started to use services like HelloFresh and Plated, that they bring you the ingredients and then with the recipes, you just spend like 20 minutes putting it together, and I actually like that as I am nesting right now with my second child. Yeah, I know.

[0:37:26.1]

BR: Yeah, and there's so many ways to not have to do that, and I am not good at it and I don't enjoy it, so I have to use it.

[0:37:31.8]

FT: There you go, moving on, one thing I splurge on that I can't do without is _____.

[0:37:38.6]

BR: Clothing.

[0:37:40.0]

FT: Really? What's your — like work clothes, like what's you're at leisure, what's your style?

[0:37:45.6]

BR: I don't to at leisure. I don't buy a lot, but I buy good things. So I would rather have expensive classic clothing that I can wear for years than have lots of random things, and it's funny, my daughter, who is turning 17, she had an internship this summer, and she went out afterwards and she bought herself a pair of Channel ballet flats, and there was a part of me that was a little horrified, but there was another part of me that said you know what?

You saw how hard she worked to get those, and I would rather that she bought something that's classic that won't go out of style than spend it on a lot of junk.

[0:38:27.1]

FT: Exactly. I have a pair of black Channel flats that I got last year. I've worn them almost every day, and I'm not wearing them right now because my feet are swollen.

[0:38:38.8]

BR: When are you due?

[0:38:39.0]

FT: And I don't want to ruin them.

[0:38:40.6]

BR: When are you due?

[0:38:41.4]

FT: I'm due in March, early March.

[0:38:43.2]

BR: Okay, so yeah, you're getting into the home stretch.

[0:38:45.3]

FT: I am wearing compression socks, anything I can do to help with the expansion, but I have in the process of owning this one pair of expensive shoes gotten rid of so many other \$30, \$40 flats that, obviously, are worth \$30, and they don't last very long. They go with everything, and when I put them on I feel like I am dressed up, even though I am wearing jeans. So I am a big fan of that and I do remember how much I paid, so I am taking very good care of them.

[0:39:17.5]

BR: Right, exactly. You do. Like, I visited things a couple of times before I bought them.

[0:39:23.7]

FT: Yeah, me too. I went in the store to try them on, I asked people who owned them, I did research, because also, it's not like a bag, where you can place it on a surface. These are your shoes, which you could — in New York, it's like tires on cars. You just have to anticipate a lot of wear and tear. So I am very careful about that, I don't want to buy something expensive and then have them get chewed up on the streets.

[0:39:52.1]

BR: Right, exactly.

[0:39:54.2]

FT: We could do a whole show on Channel flats, apparently.

[0:39:56.3]

BR: Apparently, yes.

[0:39:57.6]

FT: Okay, answer this for me, and I don't ask guests this, but because you're the organization queen, the one area of my life that I am not that organized in, admittedly, is ____.

[0:40:09.4]

BR: An area of my life that I am not that organized in...

[0:40:14.1]

FT: There has to be something, and it could just be relative.

[0:40:16.1]

BR: I told you that my Achilles heel is really the cooking, but I am a big fan of putting things on autopilot, so we have monthly menus, so it just keeps recirculating. What am I not organized in? Oh, I will tell you something in my house that's not organized. I've given up. My daughter — I am just not interested in make-up, and it's just not my thing, and my daughter has her bathroom drawers, I just don't open them anymore, because there's so many.

And actually, here's a good one, and this is more appropriate for your podcast. I'm going to say that three or four years ago, I delegated all of the financial statements, everything to my husband, and there were certain things that I had in binders, and it was all very beautiful, and then once I got the annual statement, all the monthly statements right away, and about a year or so after I had delegated that to him, I opened up the cabinet and I almost fell on the floor.

Because it was just piles of paper, and I couldn't speak, and he said, "Look, I have a system." I go, "No, you have no system. Your system is no system." I said, "What is this?" and over the summer I fixed it, but yeah, it was tragic.

[0:41:32.6]

FT: Tragic. Well, that's why you can only do so much. You should hire some help and outsource the things that you don't have a system for, don't care to create a system around, someone else can do it for you, and save you time and hassle and fights along the way.

[0:41:46.4]

BR: Exactly.

[0:41:47.8]

FT: When I was growing up, the one thing I wish I had learned about money is _____.

[0:41:52.0]

BR: Money doesn't make you happy, but it can definitely give you peace of mind.

[0:41:57.7]

FT: That is true, and also maybe things don't buy you happiness, but experiences do, and that's something that we can all keep in mind as we head into the New Year and look at ways to make our money go the extra mile and make us feel good. Barbara, thank you so much for this advice. It's so timely, too. I know a lot of us are looking to get our finances and our lives streamlined, and in better shape, and organized.

We really appreciate you and your time, and everybody check out your book for moms, and the book is called *Secrets of an Organized Mom*, and your website is resourcefulconsultants.com. Barbara, Happy New Year.

[0:42:37.7]

BR: Thank you, and thanks for having me today.

[END]