

TIPS & TRICKS OF A BUSY, BETTER ORGANIZED MOM



by Jennifer Tankersley
of ListPlanIt.com

About the Author



Jennifer Tankersley, aka the List Mama, has been making lists since she learned to write.

As the founder and chief list maker at ListPlanIt.com, she has created hundreds of pages in the form of lists, checklists, inventories, worksheets, schedules, timelines, and to dos. All of which are geared toward helping others live a more organized life.

She is not only the creator of [ListPlanIt](http://ListPlanIt.com), but also its #1 user! Married and mother to 3, Jennifer resides in Maine, where she runs her online business from home. It's clear to see the need for lists in her life.

Feel Free to Share This Report As-Is With Others!

Pass this report on to friends, family or anyone else you feel would benefit from the information within.

OR (and this is even better)...

Sign up for our affiliate program!

Affiliates receive a copy of this exact report branded with their own affiliate links to pass around. When those who read your report, click on your link and make a purchase from List Plan It, you'll earn a commission on their purchase.

[Click here to learn more and signup as an affiliate!](#)

Please note you do **NOT** have the right to edit this report in any way or claim any type of authorship. You may pass it on as-is or sign up to promote it as an affiliate. Thank you for your cooperation and in making List Plan It a useful resource for everyone!

Tips and Tricks of a Busy, Better Organized Mom

Are you a busy working mother?

I know what mother isn't busy and working? 😊

Do you make lists only to either lose them or unintentionally leave things off of them, only to have chaos erupt when your children's schedules collide?

Learn how a busy, work at home mom and homeschooler became much better at keeping track of her life, her husband's and her children's schedules, all while also turning it into a home based business.

This transcript will give you all her tips and tricks to keeping your sanity, while making your home life a much better place to be. If you'd like to listen to the podcast audio you can do that here:

<http://workathomehomeschoolingmom.com/2010/08/organization-and-planning-tips-for-busy-at-home-moms/>

Insights into How to Be Better Organized as a Busy At-Home Mom

Shannon: Hi this is Shannon from Living Life at Home and today I have a special guest for us. Jennifer Tarkersley from listplanit.com is here to share with us how we can be better organized as busy at home Moms. Jennifer knows what she is talking about because she is one busy at home mom also. She has three kids. Jennifer, thank you for being with us and please share a little bit more about your family with us.

Jennifer: Hello it's very nice to be on your program. I appreciate that. I am a Mom of three and they are all just about to be in elementary school at the same elementary school together. I'm very excited about that. It will be our first year for that. They are nine, seven and five and they definitely keep me on my toes. We live out in the country so we don't have a lot of friends for the kids to just run next door to visit. We have lots of woods so that seems to be my children's playground.

Shannon: That would be my kids. My kids love to go play in the woods.

Jennifer: Yes, yes and my boy is always bringing me some token. Today already I have had a snake and a frog brought to my door.

Shannon: Excellent. That's a good day.

Jennifer: It is. It is a lot of fun. He enjoys it, so I enjoy it. That makes the difference. That, and of course I can't forget my husband who also keeps me busy. He was in the Navy for eight years and now he still works for the Navy but as a civilian and is also a reservist. He, in his job, currently travels for about one week every month.

Shannon: Wow

Jennifer: Now I'm tired.

Shannon: Just saying it, huh?

Jennifer: Just talking about.

Shannon: Please thank your husband for his service for us. That's an important thing and for you for all the sacrifices, I know that you've probably had to make during that period of time. That's something that we cannot take for granted. Thank you.

So let's talk just a little bit about [List Plan It](#). What is List Plan It and how did it get started. How did you get on this path?

Jennifer: Alright, I, in fact, a lot of people say to me “gosh you must be so organized” and in fact I've never been an organizer I'm not a professional organizer but what I am is a list maker and lists have always been an important part of my life. I've always been very goal oriented and lists are a way for me to put my goals down.



What happened was it was the week between Christmas and New Years, a few years ago, lets see it's been three and half years ago now, and I was getting ready for bed and feeling pretty crazy because as you know Christmas just does that to you.

It's wonderful but hectic and then of course New Years is, you know, you're thinking about your goals for the next year and how you can improve your life and your productivity and everything else. I was plotting out what lists I would make for the next day and for the near future and I just thought how nice it would be if I could just have the lists already organized for me and just print it out and fill in what I needed to fill in. The structure of that page would just already be set.

Cause half of making a list is putting it in a way that is easy to understand, that's efficient, that helps you. I used to have plenty of notebooks, where I would list all these things on them. Then finding it later, or deciphering what I had, or it just being all over the page often times it was not really very helpful.



A light bulb sort of when off in my head and I thought if I could use that, I bet that a lot of people would also really like something like that. I sat right down, it was like 10:30 at night, I sat right down and I just started listing pages that I've used myself, that I've created for myself in all my moves, my menu planning, my holiday or

birthday planning for my kids or my own financial, I've always done the finances for my family. I just started listing out what pages that I would use and I was so excited. I mean when you venture on something that you feel passionate about, the rest comes pretty easy. Not easy, but it comes pretty naturally.

Jennifer: I got on the computer. I had little experience on the computer besides just browsing the Internet. I was good at that. ☺ I didn't know anything about creating a website or anything like that. I'd never had my own business, of any sort, never Mary Kay, you know that was a dream of mine, but I'd never experienced that. The next day I got busy. I just started researching what I needed to do and I started creating pages and by May 9 of that following year, so it took me about 5 months.

Shannon: 5 months

Jennifer: [List Plan It](#) was launched. It looked a lot different at that point than it does now. That was the first version and last year listplanit went through a redesign, an update. It looks a lot different this year or since then. I started with, List Plan It started with, about 200 lists and now we're over 500.

Shannon: Wow!

Jennifer: It's been growing.

Shannon: It's amazing how those ideas just start and then just kind of flow from there. Actually you know you said the end, after Christmas so that's really 4 1/2 months, less than 4 1/2 months.

Jennifer: Right

Shannon: That's nice.

Jennifer: Yeah, it happened, I mean honestly I had already been kind of looking around for something and I had been doing some research, so I guess it had nothing to do with a website, so I guess that's different. In some ways I was mentally prepared.

Shannon: You were ready.

Jennifer: I was absolutely ready and then when the idea hit me, it just hit me like a ton of bricks and it's me. Not only did I create it but I use my pages all the time. It's perfect because it's for me.

I'm putting my printer through a vigorous work out weekly. That was one thing that always, I cannot stand waste. It drives me crazy and that was one of the things that went into the idea of a membership site. I love that you can pick the pages that you want and not get anything you didn't you want.

Shannon: Right

Jennifer: The pages are, you know I like pretty things, but in this case I'm also a very practical person. My List Plan It pages use the least amount of ink as possible because there are certain pages I may print everyday and I don't want that to be a hindrance to me to think well this is using way to much ink and I can't print that. That defeats the purpose.

Shannon: Right. You know, that's something that I really like about your site, I spend lots and lots of time planning. Checklists are the only way I get things done. Your comment about having notebooks and writing things down and having lists, I do that all the time. Every year I'm looking at planners, and I'm looking at how I'm gonna keep my time organized for the next year or whatever it is and I've looked at all different types of planners, I've looked at different types of home organization binder packets and so forth but it's hard to find something that fits.

Now You Can Easily Organize Your Kids!



In my case, as a work at home, home schooling Mom, you know, sometimes it will be stuff that's for at home Moms that kids are off to school, but don't work or things that are for just home stuff but doesn't factor in that you also work, the blend of stuff, and being able to pick and choose. I know I was on your site last week and was so excited when I

found your clothing inventory sheets.

Jennifer: Oh

Shannon: I'm like, oh, I've been meaning to do that.

Jennifer: Those are some of my favorites too, yeah.

Shannon: Here it was you had already listed down for girls, the different items of clothes and three columns for the different sizes and how many you would need verses how many you had and I'm like, I can print this off and give this to my daughter.

Jennifer: There you go.

Shannon: I don't have to create it.

Jennifer: I love that too. I've had several members tell me that they've printed pages like [packing lists](#) for their kids, maybe they've typed in some things for their kids and they just printed it off and said here you go. Go pack your stuff. I love that.

Shannon: Yeah

Jennifer: Anytime you can make it easier for your kids to pitch in.

Shannon: I know that when I was doing my membership to your site one of the things that I found, was that I started to get the print only membership and then realized, no I want the download membership, cause then I can type in them and I can put my own information on there too.

Jennifer: Right. The download membership is by far the most popular and I would say at least half of our print members upgrade. Being able to put your information in and then store it on your computer and then to be able to print it when you need it, it's already done for you.

Shannon: Yeah. So let's talk a little bit about how you use your stuff, ok? So you've already said that you're a big planner and you plan things out. You obviously are juggling your work with this business and with your family. You have kids who are in school and you have a husband that travels and does work with the military. What is your process for planning out your time and your world? I know what my process is and I'll probably share that after you share yours, but what is your process. How do you plan that all out?

Jennifer: I find that with each season, I have to come up with a slightly alerted process. Let's say before school ended I was actually working out of the home and also working from home and children in school. I had a preschooler and so I felt like that process was one way. Now that I'm no longer working out of the home and listplanit is now full time for me, but then I have family full time as well. Then this summer I actually could say I could definitely have used some advice from some home school moms. I could roll with that because I haven't been used to that for a little while.

I mostly begin my process on the weekend. It sort of depends on what's happening for my family. My family is very active. We are very busy on the weekends but I try to squeeze in some planning time, if I can just squeeze in an hour of planning time and prepare for the week coming up for my family and my business. I have a set group of pages that I will either, keep a batch of them or I print them as needed.

I think as Moms, we're so tuned into the needs of our family that if we have commotion, I don't know, but this is how I work anyway. If I have commotion, any kind of commotion I can't fully focus, I cannot. Because their needs are always on my brain and if I hear them talking about, you know, needing a snack or fighting or whatever, it's really hard for me to focus.

So if I can get away for an hour, even if it's to my bedroom, shutting the door and locking it, then I work on my week ahead, reviewing the months to make sure I'm fulfilling everything that needs to be done. If I have appointments or have things I need to prepare for then I try to do that too. Its one thing to have them on your calendar it's another thing to actually kind of plan up to that time. If I've got something that I need to write, then I need to schedule in writing time. Otherwise it's not going to happen.

Shannon: This one I also understand.

Jennifer: Yes, Schedule, schedule, schedule that is just all I know to do. I mean on my calendars. Before the summer I was doing an every pay period, my husband is paid every two weeks. I was doing an every pay period menu plan, but this summer I find that it's working better if I do weekly menus because I have kids around for lunch so I need to keep those things stocked up. So yeah, you know birthdays, just reviewing all those things that need my attention.

Shannon: Right. Well you know it's interesting to hear you talk about that because you said right at the beginning that every season you come up with something new and I have found almost the same thing.

Jennifer: Yeah?

Shannon: Not just the physical season but also the seasons of our lives. Where, like you said, you were working out of the home, you were working in the home plus you had family, plus all of this other stuff that you had.

Jennifer: Yeah right.

Shannon: I've experienced the same thing. It depends on the type of work that I've done and I'm doing during that season and how I plan my time for that. What projects I'm working on. You said you keep a monthly calendar and then you plan your week ahead. I do the same thing. I have a monthly calendar or a [yearly calendar](#) that I have my month at a glance on.

Jennifer: Yeah

Shannon: Then I have a calendar that on Sunday I sit down and I map out for each time slot through the week. It's a vertical calendar that has Monday through the weekend horizontally across the page.

Jennifer: Yeah

Shannon: So that I can block off time slots and see them visually. I don't know about you, but for me if I get overbooked, there's too much going on, then the household's cranky, I'm really cranky. It gives me kind of a visual to see and then every night I sit down and in my notebook, I write down what the schedule and the plan is for the next day. So that if there's a certain thing I need to do the next day, then I write it down so I don't forget. So for like last night I sat down and said ok, I spent the weekend in the hospital so I am giving the kids the week off from school work because I need a little extra rest.

Jennifer: Yes

Shannon: I wrote down I need to make sure I prep the kids for the phone call that you and I were gonna have. Then you know this is what I need, when I need to start dinner and what dinner is going to be. That's really helped me stay focused because I end up with all these to do lists and they get a little overwhelming.

Jennifer: Yeah

Shannon: If I'm like ok, I look at this big long to do list, but if I break it down into chunks, like you were talking about, you have your month and your week and so forth it helps me, I can focus on this one little list right at the moment.

Jennifer: Right, exactly. I think that that's where we make mistakes with to do lists. We just write all these tasks down and instead I think we should be writing more of the steps to completing the tasks. You know what I mean because the end result is so big. I am planning to have a yard sale.

Shannon: Oh, my, gosh! That's a big project.

Jennifer: I know, and if I just had yard sale on that weekend in August, it's such a big step and it's overwhelming, so I plot the steps, to accomplishing those to dos. It makes it a little bit more manageable sounding.

Shannon: It does. For me, with all the interruptions during the day, because like you said, you hear the kids talking, and their needs are always on your mind. Even though you may be working or doing something in the house, you've always got one ear peeled for what's going on and where everybody's at. That helps me, cause then if I get distracted I know I can come back, oh I crossed that one off, ok I'm done with that, now what was I supposed to do next.

Jennifer: Right

What About Menu Planning?

Shannon: It's interesting that you said that you were doing every pay period menu plans and now your doing weekly. I know personally I'm still struggling with that. I made the realization that I used to be one of those, ok you have pretty much set meals and I knew what they were in my head. I had never written them down and I knew what those ingredients were and I just kept those in the house, but then everyday it was oh, what are we gonna eat today, you know?



We were talking about three meals and two snacks and so forth and I would keep all that in my head and I realized that that was just too much energy being drawn from my brain. So I started making [menu plans](#), but I was writing them in my notebooks. Then I finally realized this year, ok I'm a little dense. I've been married for 16 years, my oldest daughter is 13, that maybe, you know, I should standardize those menus a little bit so that I'm not constantly making the same menus.

Jennifer: Right

Shannon: Then I can just kinda pull a menu out. You know, make them up, make out the shopping list for that and then that should be what our menu is.

Jennifer: Great

Shannon: I was like, duh. What I found interesting is that it was such a relief to me when I started doing more of that. I'm not all the way there yet, but that's one less thing for me to have to think about and plan and use my energy on. I can just say, you know, okay let me look at the sheet and this is what we're supposed to be having or okay I need to get groceries, this is the list for this period.

Jennifer: Right

Shannon: But it took me awhile to get there and I made a lot of lists of meals that we cook and combinations of meals up to there.

Jennifer: Yes

Shannon: This was before I discovered your site and it's like oh no I might have been able to use some of your planning sheets.

Jennifer: Oh. One of my favorite pages is in the meal planning section. It's called my 21 meals.

I read somewhere that most home cooks have a repertoire of about 21 meals that they cook for their family regularly. I mean, that's an average of course. Some are more and some are less. I love that and after I figured that out I wrote down those meals that I make most often and then meal planning got to be a lot easier for me because I felt like I was only sitting and thinking. I would make a meal plan; I almost never go to the grocery store without a shopping list. I mean unless it's like I'm out of milk and I need a jug of milk. I would sit there and think what can I make, and when I realized I could just use this one page for the reference. I've also been married for 16 years and when we first got married, I had never cooked before, honestly never.

Shannon: Wow!

Jennifer: Cooking was so new to me and I just was constantly making new things. Well everything was new to me.

Jennifer: In these years I've kinda, you know, you find your groove. You find what your family likes. Yeah I've definitely narrowed it down. Not to say that I never make anything new but that has been a huge help.

Jennifer: Okay. Wow

Shannon: Because I can't use existing meal plans, you know like the ones you can get from like Dine without Whine and some of those because the mix of food wasn't just right. Our grocery budget is relatively small for the size of our family.

Jennifer: Yep

Shannon: So I needed to be able to balance that or balance with you know how we save money through how we shop and what we have available. It was a lot of list making and a lot of planning that went into that. It's amazing.

I know that if someone's knew to really laying that out, it is a process. Oh, how much easier life is once the process is all done?

Jennifer: Yeah very good. That's fantastic. I have to agree. I mean, maybe, you know, like I said I've been a list maker for a long time but laying that stuff out and then knowing when I go to the store, before I had kids there was a time that I would go to the store without a list and I'm not even sure, and would just buy random things.

Shannon: Um hum

Jennifer: Then trying to compile that into meals, no wonder I used to every night just couldn't figure out what I was going make, but you know once you get your menu plans going, and then you buy the ingredients according to that, that just helps.

Shannon: It does.

Jennifer: It helps a lot. It also, I mean, another thing that I read and I totally believe it, is every time you go to the store you end up coming away, about on an average of \$10.00 more than you intended to spend or needed to spend.

I mean because you walk through the isles and oh you know I'm getting low on this. You might need that right now.

Shannon: Right

Jennifer: You're just stocking the pantry full of stuff that you're not gonna end up using anytime soon.

Shannon: Right and you end up throwing things out because you didn't end up using them.

Jennifer: Right. Exactly

Shannon: My kids talk about my compost pile in the refrigerator. Woops bought too much.

Jennifer: That's funny.

Shannon: It's like good intentions and then you know the plan changes or whatever it happens to be. The other thing I found is it's much easier to stay on budget which is incredibly important for us with the meal plans.

Jennifer: Yep

Shannon: Then we can also plan a little bit more ahead if there are good prices and I have a little extra money to stock pile some of those canned or pantry staples.

Jennifer: Right, right. Yeah

Shannon: Something that I can put into the freezer. The other thing that we did and I don't know if you ever do any of this, it would be interesting to hear.

Jennifer: Yeah?

Shannon: In July and December you know you get that extra pay period.

Jennifer: Yep

Shannon: My teenage daughter and I we went and we did a double grocery run and then made up a bunch of meals and doubled them and put them in the freezer and in 2 hours had like 14 meals prepared in the freezer.

Jennifer: Okay

Shannon: The only way that that could happen was by the fact that I had thought about it ahead of time and I had planned it out ahead of time. It was simpler because then you know, oh were making lasagna, we already knew what the ingredients we need for lasagna we just multiplied it by 2 or 3 and then when we're making lasagna we made them all up, assembly lined at the same time.

Jennifer: Very nice.

Shannon: We could do it in 2 hours because we were doing it all at once. Then, for the nights where the plan is shot, you know, something happens or you feel sick or tired or just going to the hospital, you know, you could pull something out of the freezer and throw that into the oven or cook it up whatever way it needs to.

Jennifer: Right. Oh, my, gosh, yes.

Shannon: Do you ever do any freezer cooking or bulk cooking like that?

Jennifer: I have always admired people that do, but honestly I really don't buy in bulk and I don't buy ahead. I'm not a stocker upper.

Shannon: Okay

Jennifer: We only have the refrigerator freezer. We've never owned a deep freeze so. Do you have a deep freeze?

Shannon: We do but when we originally started doing that then we only had the smaller one.

Jennifer: Yeah. Okay. I was just gonna say I don't know of people who do stocking up. Maybe we could do it.

My freezer usually tends to be pretty full after I've done grocery shopping so it would be hard. I would have to get a deep freeze.

Shannon: Yeah. I don't like the chest ones. I have one of the upright ones that look like a refrigerator.

Jennifer: Oh that's great. Yeah, I admire that. I've always really liked the idea of make ahead cooking. I just haven't invested in the freezer to have room for those meals. I like the idea.

Shannon: I know that there are some people who do it very on a consistent basis and stuff.

Jennifer: Yeah.

Shannon: I'm just not able to do that. That's beyond me and my style. I just do it periodically you know.

Jennifer: Right, right.

Shannon: It's a nice thing to be able to plan ahead and have that stuff there but then when I don't it's like okay well we'll just go with the flow.

Jennifer: Yeah.

Are There Lists for Housekeeping?

Shannon: When I first got married my mother in law introduced me to this concept of, lists for managing her home. She still has lists for managing her home. I'm bad, I don't do this but it was a novel concept. Where all the different tasks for each season and everything she needed to do each week, and each day to keep her house nice and neat. Of course that's probably why her house is nice and neat and mine isn't, but how do you manage keeping track of everything that you've go to do in running the house?



Jennifer: I would like to repeat my little disclaimer from the beginning. I said I have never been an organizer or a professional organizer. That really, I mean, you know I like organization to a certain extent and I really love using lists as work sheets to kinda work things

out in my brain. I definitely use them to set goals but, you know I don't have a set standard, especially cleaning, because I like to keep things just, comfortable, you know?

Jennifer: I have, List Plan It has quite a lot of [cleaning lists](#), spring cleaning lists and I do use in the spring because I do believe in giving my house a really good thorough cleaning now and again. You know as far as a day to day, I'm kind of a, how it feels. You know it feels like the bathrooms really need a good cleaning today, in fact I've cleaned 2 bathrooms today.

Shannon: Good for you.

Jennifer: Thank you. Yeah, so I just, you know.

Shannon: Actually that gives me hope because you know there's this comfort, maybe I read this on your site that, did I get this off your site, that there's this concept of thinking that other peoples houses are cleaner than yours?
Is that off your site?

Jennifer: Yes that's mine.

Shannon: I love that because, oh, my, gosh.

Jennifer: Yeah, exactly.

Shannon: Having people over, I grew up with a certain standard where every thing had to be a certain way and every thing had to be spic and span clean and of course we live in our house twenty four seven.

Jennifer: Yes absolutely.

Shannon: I work here, we live here, the kids are always here and you know there's no such thing as the dishes are completely always done.

Jennifer: Yeah

Shannon: There's no such thing as the floor is always clean. In fact, my son swept the floor just before we got on this call and I can guarantee when we get off the call there will be something on the floor.

Jennifer: Yeah

Shannon: It's not because we didn't try.

Jennifer: No, no I get that. Really, at one point after I started listplanit and part of it I guess is feeling like, you know, I think, in my blog I list tips and advice and I feel like I come across in a certain way. I sometimes feel like that I want people to know that I am a real person and I know people who are very neat and very clean.

Jennifer: Everything is always clean but that's not me. I see that they spend a lot of time and energy on that and that is not where I want to spend my time and energy. I mean it's not like I want a messy house and I will keep it to a certain standard but I can not.

Shannon: You can not do everything.

Jennifer: I see how much time they spend on it and they love it and that's good. That's great but, I have other priorities I guess.

Shannon: Yes

Jennifer: It's finding where you are but then not feeling guilty about that. I had a lot of guilt about that. I mean I would like to be, in fact, I had this alternate idea of what kind of housekeeper I would be growing up. I don't know why because my room was always pretty messy growing up. I'm an oldest child and I really just thought I was very particular. I've had to come to grips. Sometimes when you grow up you realize your not really who you think you are, you're something else and that's ok.

Shannon: Right.

Jennifer: That is alright.

Shannon: This is really sad, last year, I mean we had been married 15 years, last year I finally got to the point where I realized my husband's standards are not my Dad's standards.

Jennifer: Okay

Shannon: That's okay.

Jennifer: Yeah, yeah

Shannon: I was feeling upset and anxious and all these emotions, guilt, over the fact that I couldn't keep my house to my Dad's standards. The reality is my husband doesn't expect the house to meet my Dad's standards.

Jennifer: There we go. And you only figured that out last year.

Shannon: I only figured it out; after 15 years, I finally figured that out. And it's like oh, you know, we just need to concentrate on Greg's standards and keeping my husband happy.

Are There Chore Lists?

Shannon: My kids are a little bit older than yours. How do you do your chores? Do your kids have chores?



Jennifer: They do, they do have some chores. This summer it's been nice to have them around. I've had a few more expectations on them.

During the school years it's, and maybe it's my mentality because I know plenty of parents who have more chores than what I give to my children. They're away from 8 to 4 basically.

Shannon: Yeah, that's a long time.

Jennifer: Right and so I wanna make sure they have plenty of time to get into the woods and spend time with Mom and Dad; you know me and my husband.

Shannon: Yeah

Jennifer: They definitely have chores. We have a dog so they're in charge of feeding and watering Baron. They're learning to fold laundry and they each put away their own clothes. We've been rotating; you know I want them to have a better start. I think I mirror a lot of my Mother's housekeeping style today, because my Mother was not a very particular housekeeper. Honestly, she didn't try to teach us much. I'm not sure why.

It is hard, I will say it takes a lot of patience to teach children how to clean, how to cook, all of those things so I think that's what happened. She really just thought it was easier to do it herself and so she did.

Then when I got married at 21 I didn't know how to do anything for myself. I am determined that my children will have a better start in their adult life than what I had. Yeah so right now we're kinda alternating chores. I wanna give them a good exposure to everything that they're gonna need to do and we're just kind of rotating. We're on a rotation.

Shannon: That's a neat way to do it. I know that my kids get tired of doing the same thing so they ask me "Can we switch [chores](#)" and then we redo it.

Jennifer: Yeah

Shannon: It's interesting that you said you know that your Mom thought it was easier to do it herself than train and that there is a lot of patience involved. That is definitely the case. It does take time and energy to teach our kids to do these things. One of things I know, I was trained a great deal in business stuff. My parents had their own business so we grew up in that. The home stuff we knew we had to help with all the chores and knew how to do all that and to cook and so forth. We knew how to do the tasks, but managing the tasks was something that I really didn't feel prepared for coming into my marriage. I knew how to do it for myself but trying to do it, you know managing a whole household. Managing a household is like managing a business I've come to the conclusion of.

Jennifer: It is.

Shannon: That's something that I've learned in the last year or so.

Jennifer: Yeah

We Can Help You Organize Your Business Too

Shannon: You know I feel a little dense that it's taken me that long to learn these things. Thinking of it, you know we have all these different areas to manage the business of a house and the business of a family. I'm learning to systemize.



Jennifer: Okay

Shannon: To write out, like you said the tasks that need to be done so that they can just be checked off. I'm doing that now with my business too, it's just that I wanted to grow in my business but I can't grow my business when it's all in my head.

Jennifer: Yeah

Shannon: I've realized that I need to write out you know processes and systemize things so then I can have other people do things for me. That's been an interesting thing. You know like even just for this podcast, I had this list of the steps, from figure out to what we want to cover, schedule guests all the way down to loading them up on my website and promoting it.

Jennifer: Yeah

Shannon: This list of tasks, oh yeah it's so much nicer to be able to print off and check off this list of tasks.

Jennifer: Right. Yeah have the steps right in front of you.

Shannon: Right, than it is to keep it all in my head. It seems to be very freeing. That's just something I've noticed.

Jennifer: Yes. That is, that is. I mean just to get the menu and to create the grocery list from the menu and I always take the grocery list with me for back up. Once I write it down there's a connection.

Shannon: Yes

Jennifer: There's something about seeing it on the paper, having it in your mind, then actually seeing it on the paper. I almost never even need my grocery list.

Shannon: Once you've written it yeah.

Jennifer: Because you know I'm sick if I get home and I realize I forgot something. That's why we put it down on paper because, the connection that your brain needs in order to really remember that.

Shannon: Yeah and organize your thoughts. I had to laugh at the grocery list thing because you cannot believe how many times I have gone to the grocery store with either keeping it in my head, not having it all written down. Come home and realize I bought everything but what I went to the grocery store for.

Jennifer: Oh yeah.

Shannon: It's like "ah man now I gotta go back to the grocery store." You know you said anxiety you know and I didn't even realize that I was having that. It just seems that I was always trying to keep things in my head and then all the sudden I'm just a lot more relaxed about things, knowing that it's already on the piece of paper.

Jennifer: Yeah

Shannon: I didn't even realize the carrying around of all this extra stuff that I didn't need to be carrying around.

Jennifer: Right

Can You Keep Me on Track With My Goals?



Shannon: It's interesting. Now you said you were goal oriented and I'm also very very goal oriented. One of the things I found interesting on your listplanit site is that you have a goals by area of your life. I have never seen that before. I personally do that but I have never seen a worksheet for that

before. So I thought that was interesting. Can you tell us a little bit about what that is and how that came to be?

Jennifer: Well yes I can. Although I will tell you that's a fairly new page. I had seen it somewhere, where was I? I wish that I could give the right credit here. I had been visiting someplace, I'm always looking around the Internet for some good inspiration and I remember somebody had 12 areas, something like that. They didn't call it areas of life but guiding principals, I don't know, something, so like I said I wish I could give the proper credit here.

So, I saw those 12 areas as not all that would be applicable for Moms and I thought, what would I choose if I were to, I don't know, like break things down? I thought that was a really good way of breaking things down to get a really realistic idea of what's going in all the different aspects of a person's life. I created that page for that but honestly I have not used it. I mean there are so many pages on listplanit that I actually don't use regularly or haven't used yet because sometimes they're suggestions from other people. This one, I think, is a brilliant idea I just haven't used it yet.

Shannon: It was for me. When I was switching from one employment or task to another and I was at a point where I had been the primary wage earner in our family for a couple of years. That was, really had to be, not because it's what I wanted, it just had to be the focus of where I was at. I was very, very out of balance.

Jennifer: Okay

Shannon: Obviously my relationships had suffered from that and so I did it to redefine what I considered success. For those couple of years success was making sure that the money was coming in. The bills were paid.

Jennifer: Yeah. Feeding your family, it keeps the numbers in your head.

Shannon: Coming out of that, you know that success for me wasn't that. I realized I needed to look at my definition of success as a Mom, as a wife, as a business person, you know, what is success for the perspective of health and fitness. Really write down what my vision of that would be. What would be success for me for my house and of course I'm still not there.

It was an interesting process and since then I look at each year, I do a goal process for my goals for the year and then I continually break this down. What are my goals for the year, what are the goals for the month, you know, what do I need to do to accomplish those. I always think I have more time than I do.

Jennifer: Right

Shannon: Then I also have to look at goals from the aspect of the fact that how important are they to me right now. I can look at my goals, business goals, and I can put them as a major priority but the reality is, that I've determined that spending from 10 to 3 every day with my kids is a bigger priority for me.

Jennifer: Absolutely

Shannon: Then business [goals](#) have to fit around that and I have to scale them.

Jennifer: Yep

Shannon: Looking at all the different areas of life and how to fit in cause sometimes it's too easy with goal setting to focus on just one area of our lives and set goals for that area and then that's what you're going after and let the other things disintegrate. We're much more complex than that.

Jennifer: Oh absolutely. Moms have so much going on. There are so many sides of us.

Shannon: I think we need to recognize that. Each area of our life is a critical part of being a whole person and goal setting in that area. That was just kind of something that I wanted to throw out there because when I saw that on your site I was like oh that's perfect. Not everybody has that access or even thinks about it. You know when we're trained for goal setting we're usually trained to do it any particular way, usually related to business or financial.

Jennifer: Yeah true. That's another thing that I guess that made me passionate about the set up of listplanit with its membership site. I felt like in some of the pages you might see 3 or 4 different versions. I have, just grocery lists alone I have 6 or 7 different kinds. What I know for a fact is, I like to shop by category but I've heard time and again from people who like to shop by aisle. There's so many different ways that people can go about things. Definitely not everything is one size fits all. Not to say that everything on listplanit is complete, I wish that I could tailor it to every single personality and type out their style.

It's definitely nice to find and as far as my members are concerned I get a lot of requests to alter some of the pages. I've heard people say this is so close to perfect for me and if I just could have it this way. That's my favorite part, the creating part of listplanit. Altering the pages and getting new ideas. I just had an organizer contact me, I can't believe I've never had this before because I've moved too many times, but having an inventory of boxes in the moving section and a kind of list that tells you the content of each box and things like that. That is, again everybody's got different ideas and different styles but that's, I don't know that's what makes it fun for me is hearing from the members and learning about them and trying to figure out how I can make pages that might apply to a good section.

Shannon: Yeah. Well I like that. I've moved quite a bit also. I like that idea of a box inventory. That's kinda cool.

Jennifer: Yeah. You'll see that soon.

Shannon: So we can make special requests. Okay this is good to know.

Jennifer: Yes, yes you can.

Shannon: Okay well I know we're running out of time here and that you've got little ones who are done with their movie. I had to laugh when you emailed me just before the call that you were getting the kids ready to come in and watch a movie. I had to laugh because that's so what I do, I set up my kids. I go out just before I'm gonna be on a call, "okay Mommy's gonna be on a call now, this is what the expectations are."

Jennifer: Exactly

Shannon: It's gotten to the point now where my son says we've just been trained.

Jennifer: That's right. That's good, that's the goal. We are training them to know how to behave and to know when's the right time to play and when it's the right time to be still.

Shannon: Yeah

Jennifer: That's our job right?

Shannon: That is and right now I can see my two youngest out there playing in the grass and having a good time.

So How Do You Stay Organized?

So I want to ask you one more question before we go and this is purely because I'm looking at my desk and I have stacks of papers and notebooks and things all around me. How do you keep your lists and worksheets organized?



Jennifer: Well I do have 2 main things that I use, 2 main tools, I do use three ring binders.

Jennifer: I have 3 [binders](#) that I use most often. One is for home management pages, a lot of contact information that I keep in there. Things that I need to reference often. Even a lot of, you know, I have my website page that I keep all my user names, passwords and things like that on. I also have a finance binder where I keep all my fund pages in. What I do and it took me a long time but the 26 pay period of the year really, really was hard for me to wrap my head around.

Shannon: You too. Oh good.

Jennifer: It really was but what I have done is I figured up how much I spend on certain things like the home and that includes my mortgage and utilities and auto. I tried to figure up how much I spend a year on those things and then I divided it by 26.

So every single pay period I take that amount and I put it into a fund which is basically, all in my checking account but I have a fund page. I keep track of how much is in that fund.

Shannon: In that area.

Jennifer: Yeah exactly.

Shannon: So you allocate it out.

Jennifer: Yes, exactly right. That has really helped me. I was really upset about those 2 extra pay checks. I know I shouldn't have been but you know most people could not understand about what I was talking about as far as why that should be a problem but we went from 2 pay periods a month to having those 2 extra pay periods and that really threw things off.

Shannon: We went through that this last year and oh my goodness to have to change that. Mentally how we dealt with it.

Jennifer: Yeah because it does make a difference right?

Shannon: It does.

Jennifer: It does absolutely. I've finally gotten to a point where I'm comfortable with how it's going. Then I have a meal planning binder that I keep in the kitchen. I love Allrecipes. I print out their recipes that I use often from Allrecipes.com. I keep my 21 meals page in there and some other different meal planning pages in there. Actually, I have a business, I forgot about that, I have a business binder that I use quite frequently too, with my blog post planning pages and I have a weekly newsletter, called the list, and so I often write out my ideas and posts before I actually create them online.

Shannon: Do you ever take your lists and so forth to the kid's activities and work on them there?

Jennifer: Oh yeah. Oh absolutely. In fact I have one binder I didn't even include in that. Before I, well I have a laptop now but I just call this binder, I'm a big fan of it. It's made by Mead and it's called a note binder and I love it because it's got the 3 rings and then it's got a cloth spine. You can just flip the top over around to the back so you can treat it like you would a spiral notebook.

Jennifer: Where it's not all sprawled out on your lap. You can just flip it all around so that you can work on just that one page. I absolutely love that binder. I keep it in a bag by the door and I pretty much take it out every time I go. You never know when an idea's gonna hit you or I'll have time to write. I take that with me wherever. I'm also a big fan of clipboards. I have many clipboards that I use around the house. First of all my children all use clipboards too because they love drawing so we almost always have clipboards that we're taking with us to the car. I have a clipboard by my bed. I have one master clipboard that I keep anything that's current. My daughter's birthday is in less than 2 weeks and so I have a lot of her birthday planning pages on there. A lot of times I'll have this week's menu plan. I think I'm losing it.

Shannon: One more thing on the clipboard side that had me giggling just a little bit because I don't know if you've been to Wal-Mart yet for their back to school sales that have started here. My kids all like different colors which happen to be the different colors that they have for school supplies.

Jennifer: Oh great

Shannon: Yeah it works great because we color code them and it works really well. Yellow means Kate and orange or red means Josh and blue means Zach. It works awesome.

Jennifer: Very good.

Shannon: They have clipboards in the different colors.

Jennifer: Yeah, it's nice.

Shannon: My kids were like "Can I have a clipboard, can I have a clipboard" cause we have clipboards. I bought each one of them their own clipboards and I said okay, and they're only \$3.00.

Shannon: I said okay. I came home and they were so excited to have their own clipboards. I said okay now if this breaks I'm not buying another one.

Jennifer: Yes. Yeah, I know.

Shannon: It was absolutely fascinating because immediately “Mom can I have paper” cause I control the paper.

Jennifer: Oh me too.

Shannon: My 8 year old son has latched onto his clipboard with paper and he has been designing and drawing. Everyday at the end of the day he curls up with this clipboard and he has been using it like crazy. My older son, he’s into making computer games and so he’s got game stuff sketched out on his.

Jennifer: Oh wow!

Shannon: The power of a clipboard.

Jennifer: Yeah. I mean who knew. I had an old clipboard from my college days. You may have read that on my [clipboard article](#). I have a whole article devoted to clipboards because I just have fallen so in love with them. I dug that out of my old college stuff and actually that poor clipboard has seen the end of its life. I have had many replacements and I haven’t been to Wal-Mart lately. Last year I was there when they had clipboards for like fifty cents. I think it might have been after the back to school or something. I bought like 6 clipboards for fifty cents.

Shannon: Oh you can’t beat that.

Jennifer: Listplanit colors. I’m set on clipboards for a little while. My kids, I have a teenager from the neighborhood come to my house a couple mornings a week so I can get some things done. He takes my kids for a walk. They take their clipboards with them and he plops them down and they take drawing breaks.

Shannon: Oh that’s neat. That’s a really neat idea.

Jennifer: Yeah and so they just draw something they see or something you know or just whatever comes to them at that moment.

Then they get up and they walk to another spot and plop down and add to it or start a new one or whatever.

Shannon: Well Jen it has been so great talking to you. I could probably sit here and pick your brain for another hour. We might have to have you back sometime.

Jennifer: Oh I would love too. It's been a pleasure.

Shannon: So let's go ahead and wrap this up. For those of you who haven't checked out Jen's website its [List Plan It.com](http://ListPlanIt.com) and she's got all kinds of different articles and of course lists there. I would recommend going and checking that out. I am a member, a download member so that I can tweak mine. Jen it's just been really a great pleasure talking with you. Thank you for sharing your household with us. I appreciate it.

Jennifer: Thank you and I appreciate you understanding that, you know we're all real people here.

Shannon: We are. Everyone this is Shannon from Living Life at Home being real, as Jen would say. Have a wonderful and blessed week.

ListPlanIt.com has many tools and resources available for not only work-at-home parents, but also non-working parents and work-out-of-the-home parents including those to help with Business Planning, Meal Planning, Home Management, Family Matters, Time Management and more. Come check out all of our lists and start putting your world in order today!

I'd love to hear from you. Come by the blog and comment on [this post](#) with your tips & tricks for keeping your sanity during the busy upcoming holiday season, as well as keeping organized now that school has started back up with all the craziness that brings!

See you there,

List Mama

Jennifer Tankersley

ListPlanIt.com