

Ep 217: Organization with Shira Gill



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With Your Host

Brooke Castillo

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Welcome to *The Life Coach School Podcast*, where it's all about real clients, real problems, and real coaching. And now your host, Master Coach Instructor, Brooke Castillo.

Brooke: Well hello, my friends. Welcome back to the podcast. I am super excited to have Shira back so we can talk about organization and why it matters, and why you should put some of your time and energy into it, not just so you'll have a clean house, but for so many other reasons. So welcome back, Shira.

Shira: Thank you, happy to be back.

Brooke: Yay. So last week's episode, which I hope you've already listened to; if you haven't, I want you to go back and listen to. We talk about small vital changes, and I have seen this happen more and more with my clients, where they make one small change in their life and it sets off a cascade of changes. And the reason why is every action you take in your life requires you to think a thought so all new actions require new thoughts. So even if it's just a small change you're making, you are literally having to change your brain in order to effect change in your life. And so many of us look at our problems as so big and insurmountable that we don't just take one step at a time. So we asked you last week to go to Shira's website and get her freebie on just doing your sock drawer. So I hope that you've all done it. I hope those of you who are even embarrassed about it did it, I hope all you dudes, especially, did it, and took out the gum wrappers. And you know, it's so fascinating to think about all of you like, that may have a totally cluttered house, that everything may be still a total mess, but you have that sock drawer. And it's sparkling and it's clean, and it's organized, and you have kind of a new mindset that was required in order to create that. So we're happy to have you back, we're going to talk now about the general idea of organization and then we're also going to invite you to join us in Shira's program, and she's going to tell you a little bit about her program and I'm going to tell you why I think it matters and why every single one of you should join us in going through her process. So let's start by just talking about organization in general. If you have a client that says to you, "It

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doesn't matter if my house is organized or unorganized, I just want to clean. I just someone to come in here and clean it." What do you say to them? What are your thoughts on that?

Shira: Okay, so my thoughts are that cleaning and even tidying is putting a Band-Aid on a bigger issue. And so that's what most people do is like, they're hosting, they're having a friend over, they kind of screw year around and tidy and do a quick, superficial clean so they don't have to feel shame about their environment. What I like to do is get to the root of the problem, and I think with organization, there's generally two major components. One is volume of stuff, so most people have far more than they need, and far more than they can manage. And then the second is systematizing. And so, organization literally just means having a concrete system to put things into order. So if you think about a home filled with hundreds, possibly thousands of things, in order to be organized, all of those things need a system. And so when you think about the work, the energy, the time, the commitment that is necessary to properly organize hundreds or thousands of things, in my mind, it makes me think that we should all immediately get rid of half of our possessions.

Brooke: Right, seriously. That's what I want to do.

Shira: Right.

Brooke: I'd rather throw it all away than organize it.

Shira: Yes. Well, I think when you get into reality about how much it actually takes to manage all of your stuff, suddenly you may not want as much stuff to manage. So for me, the first step is always kind of looking at your belongings with fresh eyes and really thinking through the volume and taking an inventory of what you own. And really wanting to get down to what's useful and functional and beautiful.

Brooke: Yeah, so wait, let me interrupt you here because I think that you'd made a really good point and I just want to circle back to it for a minute. I think that one of the reasons why organization matters so much, especially

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in my home, is everything has a place in my house. So Shira told me - and we will talk about this on her upcoming program, but Shira told me that every hanger in my closet - I have this amazing walk-in closet since I moved to Dallas. They make closets like bigger than houses in California. And she said that like, all my hangers should be the same color and the same design and everything like that, and I was like, "Does it matter?" And she's like, "Yes, throw all your hangers away, it doesn't matter." Very like, bossy with me about it. So I did everything she said. Chris has all black hangers, I have all white hangers. But here's something that's super interesting about that is every single item in my closet has its own hanger. So when I go to buy something new, something has to go. And I think having organization and having everything in your home have a place is very preventative in terms of overconsumption. I think...

Shira: Totally.

Brooke: You know, if I have to get rid of something before I buy something, and I know that everything has to have a place, it really makes you question buying things. Because what am I going to get rid of? Where will I put this? Will it have a useful place for me? So organization isn't just about like, prettiness and cleanliness. It's really about managing consumption, which for me, when I work with clients, consumption of stuff is such a huge way of buffering, and when I talk about buffering, you guys, I mean a way of avoiding emotion. So just going out and buying stuff mindlessly is a huge problem. And by keeping your home organized, I think it's very preventative. Do you agree with that?

Shira: I mean, I couldn't agree more, and I'll say, you know, many of my clients, we actually start off by putting them on a shopping cleanse because they have so much more than they can manage, and yet they're still shopping. And so I feel like instead of making organization kind of a Sisyphean task where we're always pushing the rock up the hill, one thing immediately you can do for yourself is just press pause on the spending and just work with decluttering and organizing what you currently own. And a lot of people are kind of stunned when they do that exercise, even just for

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two weeks of not buying anything, how often we want to buffer with shopping, and online, you know, the click that gives you the dopamine hit. The I'm bored, I'm restless, all of those things, I think it's so common and we have so much pressure in our society to constantly be consuming. It's kind of a constant noise. So I think just by giving yourself the chance to slow that down and really sit with what do I actually own? Before I buy new shoes, let me look at the 47 pairs that I have.

Brooke: So true.

Shira: Right? And just starting to take stock of what you own and most people have not only everything they need but much, much more than they need.

Brooke: Yeah because think about it, like, my house is pretty minimalist in my opinion, and when you look at a room that has six items, and you have to organize that room, it's very easy to organize a room with six items. When you go into a room and it has 300 items, like literally, people will have - like, half of them being clutter and trash, literally in their homes, then it's very difficult to organize. So we moved into this house - in California we had a much smaller house. We moved into a much bigger house that has cupboards for - I don't - like, bodies. It's got cupboards everywhere. And you know, we have one of those islands and it has cupboards, and we have so many empty cupboards in our house, and it's interesting to feel that emptiness, if you know what I'm saying. Like, there's this like, primitive desire, I think, or maybe it's more of a modern desire to like, fill that space up with stuff. And it's so interesting, like, Chris and I, like, we don't want to put anything in there but it feels weird that it's empty.

Shira: Yes, and people ask me that like, if we ever end up with an empty drawer, my clients will say, "What do I do with the drawer?" And I'm like, "Just let the drawer be. Like, just feel what it is to have spaciousness." And I know in my own life I've noticed - so I get the same dopamine hit from decluttering as I do from shopping. So I am always scanning like nothing is safe in our house. My husband like, hides his stuff. But what I have found, I've really tapped into this recently is the less stuff I have, the more

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abundant I feel. And I think like, for me, you know, my values - I love traveling, I love taking weekends away with my family, I love hosting and entertaining, and by having a very streamlined, organized home, it enables me to do all of those things. Like, my home actually supports all of my values in this beautiful way. And so, I think you know, when people question why is it so important to get organized, I would say you know, efficiency, productivity, clarity, control, quality of life. Like, you know, every day - I ask some of my new clients like, "Can you have a party or host guests without scrambling to clean up? Do your clothes actually fit in your closet without..."

Brooke: Do those clothes fit on your body?

Shira: Right. Let's start with that. Exactly. So like, you know, without looking could you or your family member easily locate important documents and bills. So these are the things that I actually - I just had this little anecdote that I can share. So recently, me and my family were going to Mexico, and we needed the passports. And I always keep our passports in our safe deposit box, and so the day before we were traveling, I said to my husband, "Hey, can you go make sure we get the passports for our travel tomorrow?" So he went and he came back and he said they're not there. And I had this - I mean, literally panic, right? Because we were supposed to leave at 8am the next morning. So we tore the entire house upside down. Like, every drawer, every bin, every basket, and I finally said to him, "I'm the most organized person, it has to be in the safe deposit box, you got to go back." So he went, and the passports ended up being wedged in the back of the safe deposit box. But what this story is all to exemplify this is the panic that I felt and the inefficiency of having to literally tear my entire house apart to find a couple of passports is what people are living with on a micro level every day when they can't find their keys or they've misplaced something, or they need a form for their kid's school and they can't find it. It's like a constant state of stress and panic.

Brooke: Yeah, and here's the other thing I want to tell you guys that you may not think about, but is really important. My office is very pristine, and

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I'm on video all the time so I like it like that, but right now, we're about to do like, five days' worth of in-person training. So I have like, things on my desk that I'm going to take with me to this training. And I have to tell you, the stimulus that it's creating is unbelievable. And here's what I think is happening. Every time you look at something, your brain like, needs to register it. At least this is what it feels like to me. I'll be so curious to hear what you think about this. So like, I'm like, box, book, glass, you know, microphone, pen, scissors, lamp. Like, every single time I look at it, it's like, registering what everything is. And when I have nothing on my desk, it's just like, keyboard, mouse. That's it. And then the rest of my brain is free to think other things.

Shira: Yes.

Brooke: I feel like sometimes all of the visual interpretation is cluttering up the space in my brain to be able to literally think clearly. And sometimes I'll go into someone's office or I'll go to someone's home and I feel like my brain is trying to catch up like, hang on, I'm almost done looking at the room. Hang on, wait, hold, there's other things we have to see. And so you either have to completely turn that part of your brain off, which makes you, I think, less conscious of what's going on in the present moment, or you have to allow all that stimulus in. And especially in an office where you're trying to work, I find myself much less like, open and free when there's a bunch of stuff on my desk. What do you think?

Shira: Yes. I mean, I couldn't agree more. I think clutter bombards our minds with excessive stimuli, right? So it causes our senses to work overtime on stimuli that aren't necessary or important. So I think when you can sit down at a clean desk with a computer and a pen, it's like there's nothing to process. So you can focus only at the task at hand. And I think likewise, when you come home from a busy day, I mean, I think part of what prompted me in my own personal life to streamline my own house and organize it was that whenever I went on vacation, I found I was so relaxed, and I kind of started paying attention to like, what is that that when we go on vacation we're in our hotel room, or resort, and there's no stimuli from all

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the clutter. There's a bed and maybe like, a few pretty items. And so, I kind of had this revelation, I had it early on in college when I had a really limited budget. I remember I stayed at the W Hotel and I just was like, "I'm so happy here, I just want my house, my little apartment building to feel like this." And so, I kind of took notes, and I had such a limited budget, but what I realized is it doesn't cost any money to strip away clutter.

Brooke: Right.

Shira: Right? It's like, this thing that we can all have access to.

Brooke: It's an instant upgrade and it's free.

Shira: Yes, instant, free upgrade. And so, I went back to my, you know, little rinky-dinky room with the twin bed, and I got rid of everything and I got a pair of white sheets and I think I got an orchid because it seemed very hotel-like to me. And so, people would come over, like my friends - you know, we were in our 20s and they were like, "What is going on? Why is your room like a hotel? I feel like I'm at a hotel." And I was like, "Exactly."

Brooke: Perfect.

Shira: Yes, perfect. And now when people come to my home, like, women have said, "I feel like I'm at a spa when I go to your house."

Brooke: Yes, I love it.

Shira: And it's exactly how I feel like - I mean, I think you should think of the example for you that's aspirational, but I think it almost always involves decluttering and getting rid of all of that stimuli.

Brooke: Yes. My work is really about awareness and about having space to look at what you're thinking. I don't think there's any more important activity than thinking about what you think about. And the reason why is because your thoughts create your feelings, actions, and results. And that's all that there ever is in your creation of your life. And if you think about how important it is to pay attention to your mind and the thoughts that you're

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creating, and you know that clutter and lots of things in your life that don't matter to you are taking up your brain space, it almost becomes like, imperative that you look around your house and make these decisions. Because you will have so much more access to your own brain and your own creativity and your own space and energy. Like, I like to think of my brain as having certain brain energy. What do I want my brain to be doing? Do I want it to be naming the 7000 things in my room? Or do I want it to be thinking about something I want to create for a contribution? So especially those of you who are creators that want to create something of value to the world, I think you can't just go, "Oh, I'm just messy. I'm just an artist." That's what a lot of my clients say. "I'm just an artist, I'm super messy." I think it does have an impact. I think is it - it's a discipline that matters on such a deeper level than just having a clean house. So here's my thoughts. Let's just briefly talk about the whole home because I'd like to get your impression, and then we'll talk about the closet. I think the most important room for me anyway, to have really organized and clean is the closet, and we'll come back to that one. I think the next one for me, especially because I've always struggled with the overeating issue, is to have the closet and the pantry and the refrigerator. I'm obsessed with have a refrigerator that's clean and that has really beautiful food in it and really like, organized food in it. Now, it doesn't have to be exciting and tasty and all of that, but it has to be organized and clean. I like glass containers where I can see the food, I like my pantry to be super organized, and the other room that I think is so important - so closet, kitchen, the other one for me and what I like to look at for everybody is the garage.

Shira: How interesting.

Brooke: Because...

Shira: I want to know why.

Brooke: I think the garage is where everyone puts what they don't want to deal with, which of course is everything that I'm most fascinated with when it comes to coaching people. Like, what's the stuff you don't want anyone to see? Everyone puts it in the garage.

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Shira: Interesting.

Brooke: Here's the thing about the garage for most of us is we drive in there, you see what's in there for most of us, or it's so bad you can't even use it for what it's created for because there's so much stuff in there.

Shira: Totally. I mean, it's funny - well, so I don't have a garage. I'm in the Bay area where many people have, you know, these little craftsmen bungalows that are 100 years old. So I guess my equivalent is the basement because that's - I think like, basements are where it's like a stuff graveyard. And so, I often say to people like, "What if we just torched your garage? What would you miss? If literally like, I lit it on fire, what would you miss from your garage?" And nine times out of 10, people can't even think of one thing.

Brooke: Right. But there might be something in there.

Shira: There might be. And it might be really important.

Brooke: I haven't been in there for 30 years, but I'm sure there's something super important.

Shira: Right. Yeah, so I mean, I think for me, I would say just to weigh in on the rooms is the entry. So I think - I mean, most of my clients have families, dogs, kids, and there's this constant flow in the house, out of the house. And so, with that comes a trail of stuff, right? Like the backpacks and the jackets and the library books, and what I find is that most people don't have even the most simple system to deal with corralling that stuff. And so - and even like, mail and bills, so when I'm doing a whole house, I often - that's one of the first things I want to approach is just looking at - just like if you go into like, a classroom, there's always a hook and a cubby for each kid. And it's kind of this intuitive - you walk into the room, okay, my backpack goes here, my coat goes here. Maybe there's a cubby for shoes. Done. Right? It doesn't even need to be talked about because it's so simple and intuitive. So I like to think about a home in the same way. Like, let's set it up so anyone who walks into your house can see where do I put my bag,

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where might I put my coat. You don't have to communicate with them, that's how kind of integrated the organization is.

Brooke: It's so good.

Shira: Yeah, so fun. So I think - and I do see like, one of the biggest pain points is the piles of mail and bills and magazines that seem to collect all over the house, especially kitchen counters and those flat surfaces. So one like, itty bitty tip that everyone can just put into practice immediately is centralize one place only in your home for mail and magazines and bills. One place, and consistently put it there every single day.

Brooke: Do you know where that is in my house?

Shira: Where?

Brooke: Garbage can. I'm not kidding.

Shira: Amazing.

Brooke: I'm not even kidding you. Like, our countertops are all pristine. Like, if there's something on the counter, like, everybody's like, "What is that doing there?" Like...

Shira: I mean, that's amazing.

Brooke: It sounds like a neurotic way, but it's just kind of like, something needs to be done with that, that is not where things go.

Shira: Yeah.

Brooke: We do. We open our mail right over the garbage can, there's no reason for us to keep really, anything. And we do have with this cool like, office, like right off of the kitchen, which kind of made me nervous. I'm like, I could see how this could be just a paper collecting area. But we keep the counter in there totally clean too. So it just doesn't happen. There's no reason to keep that piece of paper.

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Shira: I mean, nine times out of 10, there isn't. But I do think - I mean, I think you're very aspirational. I think the average family is going to have a few pieces of paper that they have to manage. And so I think just by making one solid place to corral that, usually in kind of an intuitive place by the entry like a bin or a basket or a wall-mounted pocket, and just get everyone in the family onboard with like, we walk in with our stuff, we immediately recycle everything we can, anything that requires our attention goes in this one designated place.

Brooke: Yeah, love it. And it's all like, active stuff that needs attention right away. It's not stuff that's been there since last tax season or something.

Shira: No, no, no.

Brooke: So here's the deal. I mean, we could so talk about this all day, and here's what we're going to do. I want to let you guys know that everyone in our community at The Life Coach School is like, obsessed with Shira and her website and her pictures and how beautiful everything is, and we all want to hire her. But up until now, she's only done like, in-person stuff where you basically hire her and she comes to your house and like, literally coaches you through the process of decluttering and organizing and people pay her the big bucks to do that and she's worth every penny. But she's so far away, I'm like, obsessed with her doing an online program that we can all participate in. And I talked her into doing it, and I'm super excited that she did because she does everything top of the line. And so, she has created a program - and we were trying to figure out where we should start - where she should start. I like to say we but I've done nothing. And we were starting and I'm hoping that by the time she's done, we will have a program - we - she'll have a program that I can take through every part of the house. So she has started with the closet, and we want to invite all of you guys to join.

Shira: Yes. I'm super excited about it. You did have to talk me into it and then once I got onboard and fired up, now I'm obsessed with it.

Brooke: Yes.

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Shira: So I think what's great about the program is that we used the closet as a vehicle for teaching the skill of how to edit, how to organize, and how to style anything. So at the end of the program, if you follow everything, you will have a beautiful, curated, lovely, clutter-free closet, but more importantly, you will gain a whole new set of skills. So you'll be able to know how to approach editing, how to approach organizing, how to style anything in your home. And I think also we talked about the closet is so interesting because I think especially for women, the closet kind of exemplifies the relationship you have with yourself and your own self-care. And so, I think by putting a lot of energy and intent into how you set up and streamline and style your closet, I really do think it's a form of self-care and you'll start to see that you start dressing better, you'll start taking better care of your clothes and your things, and I think it will also help redefine your style and how you want to show up in the world.

Brooke: It's so true. It's so true. And the program - how long does it take to get through the program?

Shira: So it's a six-week program. I've made it into really bite-sized approachable pieces, and then I'm also going to offer as part of the program, life coaching with me. So if you get stuck on anything, I'll be there cheering you on and coaching you through any obstacles.

Brooke: I love it. I love it. And one of the things that she's done with this program - first of all, you have to know that everything she does is top, top, top of the line and beautiful. So her videos are gorgeous, and one of the things that she did as an instructional piece is she created videos for us, and going through one of her client's closets. So you get to see the before and the after and the process and all of that as part of the instructional videos, which I think it's worth it just to be able to see that. But also, just to see her approach to organizing and styling and creating beauty, and I call it deleting, editing, getting rid of stuff. And being able to ask you questions and go into the Facebook group. And what I want to do is see all the pictures of everyone's before and after. That's what I get most obsessed with, and for me, this is what it will do for me. I feel like I'm very clean and

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organized, but I think it's something that has to be maintained, right? It's not like you clean your house and then you're done. I think going - I was just looking at my sock drawer again, and I'm like, it's time to go again. Here we go again, right? It's like, never done. So I'm super excited about that. What else do they need to know?

Shira: Well, just on that, I do include in the program a lot of tips for maintenance. So once you get through, you know, life isn't static. So there's always going to be motion and things coming in and going out, so I have a big section on maintenance and little things that you can do that make a big difference every day. But in terms of the program, you just will want to head to my website, you can sign up, all the information is there. It's shiragill.com.

Brooke: Make sure you do your sock drawer first.

Shira: Yes. Yes, start with the sock drawer.

Brooke: Yeah, I think that should be a prerequisite. Do the sock drawer and then make sure you sign up for the closet makeover program. It's all virtual, you can do it from home, you will be actively going through your closet with us, we will be sharing pictures and progress for sure. I can't wait. I'm so excited that you did this for us.

Shira: Yay. Thank you. I can't wait. I want to see all the before and afters too.

Brooke: Yes, and thank you so much for coming on the podcast. I know that I'm going to have you back on and we're going to geek out about other rooms for sure. And listen, some of you may have questions about organization, you may want help with how to get started, all the overwhelm, all of this is what - this is like, Shira's jam. And so you want to go to her site, and they can get in contact with you from your site too if they want to send you an email or something?

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Shira: Absolutely, yeah. My email's just shira@shiragill.com, and the website's shiragill.com. So either way.

Brooke: I love it. Alright my friends, come on over to the site, let's get our closets all organized, let's go through the whole process. You won't just end up with a beautiful closet, but you will learn a brand-new skill of how to approach organizing anything, including your mind, of course. Alright my friends, have a beautiful week, I love you all so much. I'll talk to you soon. Bye. Bye, Shira.

Shira: Bye, thank you.

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