

Transcript for The Who's Dat Phat Girl Podcast - With Brooke Hoover
SEASON 2 - EPISODE #24- FALL CLEANING

Hey y'all, I'm Brooke Hoover. A Louisiana native, actor, writer and comedian. I've lost 100 pounds through diet and exercise or shall I say "lifestyle changes". My twenty-year and counting health journey has taught me that just like taking a diet pill for weight loss, body positivity doesn't magically happen overnight. I'm working on re-gaining my self esteem and re-kindling my love affair with Cajun and Southern comfort food in a healthier way all the while juggling eating as clean as I can, re-establishing myself in the entertainment industry which, as we know, is historically fat phobic all the while showing my inner phat girl some love - that's phat with a PH - pretty hot and tempting. Let me tell y'all a tale or two...

While I'm first and foremost an actor, writer and creator, my "side hustle" for many years before the pandemic was a personal organizer. I got into it because I was used to large homes with a lot of storage in South Louisiana and then I had to get creative in college with storage and even more so with my tiny apartment (which aren't quite as cute as tiny houses on HGTV) in Brooklyn. One of my friends told me, "Hey, you should do this as a job." And, that's how it all began.

We all have heard about Spring Cleaning. Hey, there's a whole Full House episode about it (which isn't surprising given that Danny Tanner is such a neat freak. Much love and respect to Bob Saget up there.) Spring cleaning makes sense. It's spring; it's time for a fresh start. Time to clean up our house and our stuff and get ready to spend the days outdoors...so let's clean up our homes even though we are going to be outdoors more now that the weather is warmer. It makes sense but no one ever talks about fall cleaning.

I think FALL CLEANING is also necessary because you're fixing to spend a lot of colder winter months in your house, don't you want it clean? Winter is already heady and heavy enough, why not refreshen it up by getting rid of stuff?

So, today I'm going to tell some tales and share some tips about organizing and de-cluttering as well as giving y'all some of my pet peeves of the organizational things we've been told in magazines and TV shows that just aren't true to real life.

Personally, organizing is the easy part for me. Acquiring too much stuff and parting with stuff is more difficult. I'm a TJ Maxximalist, y'all. I'm not saying that the way out is to be a minimalist because that's not going to work for everyone. But, there needs to be a rhyme and a reason to your things. You need to know where they "live" both physically and the mental space they take up. They say, "Listen to your body" when you're starting to get sick. And, I always say, "Listen to your stuff." A sure fire way to help me with mental overwhelm is to do something tangible and to go through and do a cleanse of my stuff.

Here's the thing. Don't ever bet on getting more space as being the resolution to having more stuff. Oh, I have all this stuff but if I get a storage unit or if only I had a bigger house, that'd be the solution. Not necessarily. I have a two bedroom one bath house. Up here they call it a row home. In New Orleans they call it a shotgun home. If I took all my stuff here and put it in my aunt's Acadian style home that's 4 bedrooms and 3 bathrooms, I MIGHT be organized for a hot minute just because I wouldn't YET have enough stuff to fill the home. But, like a koi fish to a koi pond, your stuff is going to expand to its Joanna and Chip Gaines approved vessel if you don't have an organizational system in place. I know I keep saying "organizational system". I really mean like a philosophy or following a few basic tips which I'll share in a little while AND having a space for everything and everything having a space.

Without a method (and here's where an organization coach can come into play - wink wink nudge nudge shameless self promotion as I do virtual organization and in person coaching - save 20% on your first session with code I heard about this code on your podcast, Brooke) chaos can happen even in a vessel as large as the Home Alone house or heck even in the Richie Rich mansion. What's up with me and my Macaulay Caulkin movie references?

We need to bring him back and make him portray a middle aged hoarder in a film. Although his brother Kieran would probably be the one to book it, let's be honest.

Too much "stuff" can feed and fester up in your brain like termites on a cypress home.

I don't like scare tactics, y'all. I really don't. But when it comes to cleaning and organization, I take it seriously because not only do I see how it affects people mentally to have too many things it literally translates from physical things to emotional things. What are we really holding on to?

What's more important to me, my favorite part of the job is seeing clients feel the relief once their home has been organized. Things that we thought we had to keep - whether a gift, a great discount, an item we're saving for a special occasion that never happened all take on a too much physical space and too much mental space and we aren't even aware of the mental load of it until we get rid of it, release it.

Here's the thing, though. Many of the clients I've had in the past just want me to go in there and be the work horse and clear everything out and get rid of it for them. Which I don't mind. BUT when I go back in 6 weeks or 6 months or even 6 days, we are right back to where we started with stuff accumulation and clutter and chaos.

Sometimes people don't want to learn the organizational systems and rules I try to teach. Or they're too afraid - or too busy - or can't be bothered with addressing the behaviors, the triggers that cause this need to over accumulate stuff. While many of us want peace, we thrive on chaos.

I once had a client who needed to sell her Upper West Side apartment or more so a real estate agent who actually got me the gig coerced her into selling her apartment. He hired me to come over and help her excavate so we could eventually get to the staging process. The real estate agent, like a good sales person, wasn't completely honest or upfront about how bad this apartment was. It was a beautiful 2 bedroom 2 bathroom apartment a half block from Central Park west but you could barely walk in it. I'm a personal organizer and sometimes part unlicensed therapist but I'm not a miracle worker. Still, I tried my best.

This lady saved EVERY thing. Including receipts from the 90's that she kept in boxes upon boxes. Many people would say, "Oh just throw those damn receipts away." And I wanted to. But, you're dealing with people here who have feelings and emotions and attachments and memories. So, I got creative on her and I suggested we get her favorite receipts (the ones we could still read that weren't all faded away) and make some shadow box artwork out of it. She seemed to like that idea but then when we got to the boxes that had toiletries from hotels from 1985 - 2013, I said, Oh we are NOT shadow boxing this shit.

I told the real estate agent he needed to have a big heart to heart with this client because deep down, she couldn't let go of stuff that seemed "insignificant" to the outside eye. I said, "How do you expect her to part with an apartment when she can't even get rid of a bottle of twenty year old shampoo from the Hilton?"

I also gently nudged her to find a therapist to talk to because I could tell she was very reticent about doing her homework of bringing things to donation that we had painstakingly worked on to put in a "to donate" pile.

She had even saved one of those blue NJ license plates (she hadn't had a car or lived in New Jersey in nearly 20 years) and she promised she'd give it to me because I told her I have a license plate collection as wall art in my backyard (hey it's a Louisiana thing) but she couldn't part with it.

This was an extreme case and not many of my clients are extreme hoarders. BUT everyone, including myself in some shape or form has a healthy and oftentimes an unhealthy connection to THINGS.

I want people to realize personal organization is more than simply having magazine worthy before and after and cute containers from the container store. This isn't better homes and gardens magazine, this is your life. It's an emotional roller coaster and a way to organize and declutter your brain, heart and soul while creating space in your underwear drawer.

We have to let go of the fear while we let go of the cashmere (ah that rhymed) sweater that has moth holes and it's an ugly chartreuse that was never really a good color on me - I mean you - but we bought it on sale at Filene's basement and it was

such a good deal and I was gonna wear it to that ugly sweater party - that I was never invited to. Y'all feel me?

Here's the way I approach organizing. I can't stand how magazines and Pinterest (which I love and pull inspiration from) make it seem like having a perfect home, perfectly organized, so much space and room and minimalism at its finest is the ONLY way to go. It's very black and white. And, really, many of our organizational spaces and budgets live in the grey. We have to work with the best that we can. Having a perfect home feels as difficult and unachievable as having a perfect body and both are really figments of all the magazines I read in my bathtub's imagination.

If the organizational and home improvement and cleaning photos and posts you see give you more guilt instead of inspiration, then that's going to cause a complete lack of inertia. We are going to tell ourselves, well my studio apartment will never be able to look like that, so why start?

So, I'm going to break it down and give y'all some tips that may help and remember, Rome wasn't built in a day and neither was a clutter free space. You may need to keep things that don't bring you joy. And, you may not have room for things that bring you joy and you may have to part with them. Having lost 100 pounds I've had a TON of experience of getting rid and parting with clothes that just don't fit me anymore, including clothes I LOVED like that green Grinch looking polar fleece that got me through my college years.

Here are SEVEN organizational tips you can do TODAY to help clear your clutter and your mind.

(1) MAYBE :

Have a maybe pile. Get a laundry basket or even use a trash bag. Put all your maybe stuff in it and if you don't wear it within 3 months within that season then it goes. If you want to get it rid of it sooner than 3 months, Here's what you do. I think Kim Kardashian does this trick instead of looking at yourself in a mirror to get a good idea of what something looks like, It's actually better if you take a photo of yourself. So take a photo of yourself and all your maybe clothes. That way you'll also have it for later when you want to text your friends and say Hey. I don't want this. Do you want this? Because if you have donation guilt as in I bought this, I don't want to just donate it to one of those donation piles that will probably end up in a landfill. You might want to text your friends and see if they want it. So if you don't like the way you personally look at it in the photo, then text it to your friend who you think might really like it or could make it of good use. But maybe pile is a lot easier than having a definite yes and no pile.

(2) PACK A REAL OR PROVERBIAL SUITCASE :

This is a good way to figure out your favorite and or most useful items. Pretend like you're going on a trip for two weeks in the fall or spring. Depending on where you live...Pretend like you're going on a trip for every season - or if you're in Louisiana

or a climate without crazy seasons, adjust accordingly. New Yorker friends, pack your bags for Alaska and pack your bags for Hawaii. You'll suss out your favorite winter and favorite summer clothing and gear.

(3) Don't Fret about Perfection:

Making some head way is better than nothing. Having some sort of system in place, even if it's "I'll tidy up the kitchen table or counters before bed every night" is GOOD. Don't think about what you HAVE NOT done. Think about what you HAVE accomplished. Our homes will never look like a magazine unless you have TONS of space and TONS of money to spend on organization equipment. Do the best you can so it's manageable for you to be able to find everything and know what you own which leads me to

(4) Don't Spend a Ton of Money on Organizing Equipment

Don't buy stuff in advance. You won't know how much you'll keep, toss or donate till later. For boxes and storage, Always think clear when possible. And, Always maximize space. Certain storage containers can have edges that are almost bubble shaped. Don't use those. You should be able to slide, stack and insert with ease. Your organization equipment is like a puzzle, like a puzzle with big pieces, it should be easy. Not a rigmarole.

(5) Re-think storage options - think outside the box

Typical storage containers meant for certain things can be repurposed. For example, silverware containers can be used for makeup or markers -those over the door shoe holders can be used for winter or summer paraphernalia

(6) One in TWO out

one in one out is good and it's a rule you'll hear often. If you buy one sweater, get rid of another sweater before you put away the new sweater. But one in two out will help prevent clutter even better and force you to really rethink things. In fact, I started doing this when I'm out shopping. For example, this hot pink sweater will replace college era Grinch polar fleece and snowflake sweater because they all bring me joy, they're all bright and fun but hot pink is the best vibe. I can get rid of those two sweaters before I even swipe my card at Marshall's. This is HARD, y'all. I get it. TRY. Worst case scenario, you'll at least think of ONE thing to get rid of and you've still had a #smallwin.

(7) Rollin' with the homies

This goes for packing too. Rolling saves space and prevents wrinkles. I love it for shirts. Plus you can see every color of shirt you have easily instead of folding and stacking.

I have plenty of more tips and can make customizable plans for YOUR organizational crisis whether it's your closet, the fact that you don't have a closet, the war on paper work or the war on stuff you've accumulated for a rainy day. I don't like to make my podcasts too salesy BUT I do genuinely love helping people organize. In fact, it's

something my mom had me help her friends with when I was younger and would complain that I was bored. She'd send me over to Miss Connie's house, which was on a lake on stilts. Miss Connie would chase me around with her purse that had a snake head on it and we'd organize some STUFF. I'm giving all new clients 20 percent off their first virtual or in person session with me. Just mention you heard about it on this here podcast, no fancy codes needed. Email me at whosdatphatgirl@gmail.com for more info.

One more thing I want to leave y'all with is this...

"out of sight out of mind" doesn't apply to organization. You still FEEL the energy. Many of my urban dwellers can relate to the fact that we don't have any closets at all or many closets so we can't just throw stuff in somewhere, hide it and shut the door and call it a day. Stuff accumulates like cobwebs (and it's after Halloween as I record this so cobweb's ain't cute any more) and it's time to clear them out to make way for fall and winter since we'll be at home a lot more, enjoying it. Enjoy the cooler weather by getting organized with me as your sidekick. Was that too salesy?

Thanks so much for listening, y'all. It is my hope to inspire, uplift and entertain you with this Who's Dat Phat Girl podcast. So, if you're HUNGRY for more, you can book me to speak or perform my solo show that inspired this podcast Phat Girl Costumes written by yours truly and directed by my best bud Brian Lady at your virtual or in person event. Please visit Brookehoover.com/huffybuttproductions or email me at contactbrookehoover@gmail.com for more information. And, let's follow each other on instagram - I'm @Br00keH00ver and those O's are not the letter O but they're ZEROS. Not because I want to be a size 0 but because I guess I'm just so clever with my late 90s Yahoo! self

And, if you like this podcast, please give me a five star rating and write a review on Apple Podcasts and, please, most importantly, share with your friends, family and other people you may know who are as phat as we are - that's phat with a PH.

©2023 Brooke Hoover Who's Dat Phat Girl?