



TRANSCRIPT

# Episode #: Survival Mode

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**Tasha:** Welcome to the Get Organized HQ podcast. I'm your host, Tasha Lorentz. Every week we share practical strategies for less stress and more peace as we dive into all topics, life and home organization. I'm so glad you're here for this week's episode.

Today we are talking about survival mode. So survival mode is what I would define as a time when you feel like you are about to pull your hair out every single day.

And this can come for so many reasons. It might come just from a busy season. It might come from facing health struggles or having a family member or loved one who is facing health challenges. It could come from deadlines at work.

There are so many things that can kind of thrust us into survival mode and make us feel like we are barely keeping up. We go to bed at night and feel like we're never getting enough done and like, there's certainly no time for taking a deep breath or working on and making progress on the things that we want to do with our lives.

We are just trying to make sure there's food on the table, we're getting some amount of sleep, hopefully maybe some sort of something that's good for our health, and that's about it. And so if you feel like that right now, or if you have ever felt like that, this episode is for you.

Okay, survival mode. I think we have all been there at different times in our life where we feel like we are hanging on by a thread. A lot of times this seems to be caused by circumstances outside of our control.

I think a health struggle is a really good example. But there could be so many things that make you feel like you are in survival mode where you are just doing the bare minimum to get by and you have no idea when you are going to be able to stop doing just the bare minimum.

There's no, like, path forward that you can take that is going to fundamentally change your circumstances. You kind of are where you are for as long as life seems to have you there.

And what do you do when you're in this circumstance? How do you set goals or move forward or make progress or declutter and organize your home or do any of the things that you want to do whenever it feels like a struggle just to face day in and day out?

And let me tell you, I have been there. And the suggestions I'm going to give in this episode, they are not an easy fix. And they don't minimize the fact that survival mode is real and there are real challenges and struggles, whether it be health challenges, emotional challenges, relationship challenges.

I think honestly, probably everyone you interact

with has been there. Sometimes we share about those things very openly and sometimes they're just the type of thing that the nature of it is something that maybe it's even better to keep more private.

But you are not alone in this. And walking this journey of feeling like every day you're doing all that you can to get through the day. I have had the days where I lay on the couch and I stare at the wall and I don't know what to do with myself. I have had those days. Now I've had better days too. And I have come out of those days.

And so I don't share that to say that we should all despair and that everyone you know is probably going home in despair. I just wanted to share that this is a really normal experience and I wanted to make sure that before we dive into any strategies for working through survival mode, that you hear me when I say that this is not a band aid solution.

This is not a quick fix. This is not something that, oh well, follow this three step process and you won't be in survival mode anymore.

The truth is, I don't know what your storm or your battle looks like. I don't know what the details of your unique story are.

And honestly, even if I did, unfortunately, there are so many things where there's no special advice that I could give you to get you out of that storm. Be like, okay, you know, follow this prescribed plan and in 14 days or so you'll be feeling much better.

Sometimes it just doesn't work like that. And so what we're talking about today is truly how to function on the days where you feel like you can barely function. And I think that's where all

of this starts. It starts with redefining success.

So many times, even when we find ourselves in survival mode, our goal is to get out of it. Our goal is to say, I want to be back at a place of not feeling at my wit's end. I don't want to feel this stress. I don't want to go through this struggle. And sometimes that in and of itself is not an option.

And so let's talk about redefining success. And I think the first part of that is acknowledging this is a hard season. There are things that are outside of my control right now.

Maybe you are walking through grief. Maybe you are walking through a really hard diagnosis or treatment plan. Maybe you are walking through a strained relationship that you cannot fix all by yourself. It's, you know, a two way street. And you cannot make everything happen the way that you think it should happen or wish that it would happen.

And so the first thing to acknowledge is that our goal might have to not be to get out of the situation. That might be a goal that we don't have the ability to attain.

Now realize there's a difference between a goal and a desire. So you can desire to be out of that situation. And of course, if anyone came to you and gave you a way to get out of a difficult situation, that's fantastic, that's wonderful. But sometimes we're in a place where that is not possible.

And so if our goal is locked in on, I want to be out of this stressful situation. I don't want to feel like I'm in survival mode. I want to fix this health problem that I have. And we don't have that ability within ourselves to actually accomplish that. We are right away setting

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ourselves up for failure.

I think a health struggle is a great example of this. And actually, I'm going to borrow a part of Laura's story here to illustrate this.

So if you've been following along with Get Organized HQ, you might know that for several years, Laura has struggled off and on with IBS. And that has at times been really debilitating for her.

Where there are days, it's really hard to do the normal human functioning things just because of the chronic illness and pain that comes along with that. And there are a lot of things that Laura has worked on through the years to help her own health, to try to find solutions.

And we are so thankful that right now she is in a season of feeling a lot better. So I wanted to share that right here. So nobody's worried.

But I'm thinking back to a couple of years ago, and Laura has shared some about this on her YouTube channel. You can go and see some of her health updates that she's shared over the years.

But I know so many things that she has tried. You know, try this special diet, try this medication, try this exercise, try resting more, try this or that or the other thing. And you try and you try and you try. And there were a lot of things in a row that did not work.

There was a lot of money put into fancy special diets and special foods that had less of this ingredient or more of that ingredient. And, you know, let's spend the next couple of months making kind of abnormal foods and see if that helps. And it didn't help.

And if success was only defined by reducing her symptoms, not having this disease anymore, that was something that was out of her control.

Now, I think she was obviously totally right to try the different things that doctors are recommending. A lot of times there is a lot of trial and error, especially when it comes to health struggles.

But the end all, be all goal at the end of the day cannot be to get out of the situation, if it's not within your power to get out of the situation. You are setting yourself up for failure in that case. And I want to save you from that because that is only going to add despair on top of the difficult situation.

So what should our goal be? I think we have to redefine success and try to focus on some of the things that we can do in the circumstance that we are in.

So, so maybe you are facing chronic pain or a diagnosis or some sort of treatment or some difficulty, and you used to be a person who worked a full time job, you volunteered, you had a really busy social calendar, you would go out multiple nights a week and do things with friends. And there were just lots of things that were a part of your life. And now you maybe cannot do all of those things.

And so instead of trying to attain to what you used to do before you were in survival mode, let's shift our expectations and say, okay, what can I do? Like, that is the first question, what physically am I able to do?

And I think that question is pretty hard to answer if the struggle that you're going through is more emotional than physical, I almost think, not that it's easy to have a

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physical pain or sickness or difficulty, but at least I think our minds understand.

If I have chronic pain that makes it hard to walk, then even if I used to be a runner, as much as it is difficult to admit, and as much as it is frustrating, it kind of makes sense in my brain. Like, yes, I cannot run.

But if the struggle is more of an emotional struggle, a mental struggle, which are very, very real, I have been through those myself. It is a little bit harder to make the connection of like, okay, I am having this difficulty, I am feeling really overwhelmed.

And so therefore I may need to limit this physical activity that I used to do. Even though I have, like, my body has the capability, but knowing our mental emotional limits is different.

So this takes some introspection, this takes some trial and error. And essentially what I'm telling you to do here is lower the bar.

Lower the bar of what it is that you can accomplish each day, Lower the bar of what you're expecting of yourself. And let's get ourselves in a place where we are setting ourselves up for success.

You need goals for each day that you can accomplish so that you can build a positive momentum. Because there's nothing more discouraging than having day after day after day where you aren't reaching the goals you set for yourself.

Even in the small things. Even if you were saying, okay, today I really want to catch up on dishes, catch up on laundry, make some returns, run some errands, like, those are all

very normal things.

But if day after day you're putting these things on your list and you can't accomplish all of those things in one day, then day after day you're going to bed discouraged.

And so let's reframe our thinking. Let's acknowledge what is. Acknowledge that we're in survival mode. Acknowledge that that is changing what our day in and day out life looks like. And let's set ourselves up to be able to accomplish what we are expecting of ourselves.

Now, speaking of accomplishing things, I want to share a little trick with you because my guess is that you are accomplishing more than you think that you are. Now, this isn't always the case, but probably for a lot of you, there's more that you're getting done than you realize.

And there's a little thing called a done list that I would recommend that you try to make if you are feeling in a season of even just general overwhelm.

Okay, so some of the examples we've been giving, chronic pain or a really strained relationship, like, these are big examples, but sometimes the seasons of survival mode, they just come because normal life is happening. You know, it's a back to school routine and things are super, super busy.

I wouldn't quite call it survival mode, but a couple months back, my husband was doing kind of an experimental thing. He has chronic knee pain. It doesn't like, it's not debilitating at all, but it's something that we'd really like to get fixed.

And so there was a certain treatment he was doing. He was supposed to do it multiple

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times a week. And so this meant that like he is working his full time job, going straight from there, 20 minutes away to the facility where they're doing this thing.

And I mean, his treatment each time he went probably took like 20 minutes, but it was 20 minutes to drive there, 20 minutes of being there. Sometimes he had to wait a little bit when he got there or something, 20 minutes of coming home.

And this was like three or four times a week. And so we were looking at three to four hours of our week all of a sudden that were taken up with something that had never been a part of our life before.

And so that, in a way, can be a season of survival mode. It doesn't have to be some big, flashy, dramatic thing. You know, there wasn't anything traumatic that was happening. We were glad to be trying this out. It wasn't causing him any pain to be doing this. It literally was just taking more of our time.

And so these methods and ideas and tips can work even if you're just like, you know what? I just am busier than normal. I have more deadlines approaching than normal. Something is just kind of off. I'm just feeling overwhelmed. And I don't even know why. These strategies can work in those circumstances too.

So a done list. It is exactly what it sounds like. It is a list of what you have gotten done. So we're so used to making to do lists. These are the lists of things that you would like to do. But a done list is a list of things you have done, you have accomplished.

And so you can either do this at the end of the day, sit down, grab a notebook, open up a

note app on your phone, you don't even have to write it on physical piece of paper, and write down everything you can think of that you did today, big or small.

The laundry, making a return, responding to emails, responding to work messages, cleaning the bathroom, picking someone up from school, going out to dinner with someone. Like, what are the things that made up your day? What did you actually do?

Because the thing about a to do list is we can be a little bit unrealistic. We can be thinking, okay, my to do list. What do I want to get done today?

Oh, glad you asked. So many things that I want to get done today. Let me just rattle off a list of every work project I'd like to accomplish, of every email I'd like to respond, to every errand I'd like to run, everything in my house I'd like to clean. These are the things I would like to do.

And so many times when writing our to do list, we don't even include the things that we're already naturally going to do. If you have a doctor's appointment, for example, is that on your to do list?

Like, you're just going to go to your doctor's appointment and you may not have put it on the to do list, but that might have taken an hour and a half out of your day? Well, of course you can't get as many things done on your to do list if you're spending an hour and a half going to a doctor's appointment.

Do you exercise or get some sort of daily movement? I mean, maybe you just walk your dog on a daily basis. Maybe you go to a yoga class at a gym. Was that on your to do list or is it just something that you do?

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It's a good thing to get done. It's something to continue doing. But so often the things that we are best at, the things that we have made a integral part of our daily routine that are honestly probably serving us in so many ways, we don't put them on our to do list because they've become a part of our routine.

So making a list of what you have done really empowers you to say, wow, I am getting more done than I thought that I was getting done. And it can kind of help reframe the whole to do list idea.

If there are a dozen things on your to do list and there's a dozen things on your done list, you still did a dozen things that day. It's just the things that you did might be different than the things that when you sat down in the morning, you thought, huh, it'd be nice if I could get these done today.

So that's just a little trick of something you can try. If you're feeling really discouraged and like you're not getting enough done, make a list of what you have done.

And if you don't want to sit down and do it at the end of the day, you could also do it as you go throughout your day, just kind of as you do thing to thing, maybe at work, or if you're sitting in a car line pickup or something like that.

Just adding continually to a list, what did I do in the last hour? What did I do in the last couple of hours? Making that list throughout the day so that you can look back and say, yes, I am being productive, I am getting things done. And here is the evidence of all the things I'm getting done.

Now, we're still going to have a to do list,

right? We're still going to have tons of things that we want to do. And this is where it gets challenging.

But the honest truth is you're going to have to prioritize and you're going to have to take some things off of your list. You're going to have to say, these are the things that are most important to me and the other things I am okay with putting on hold.

And let me give you a couple of tips on how to prioritize and how to decide which things to take off your list.

So if there is something that you are already doing really consistently, I would give that a really hard look for two reasons, and they're very opposite reasons. But hear me out.

So if there's something that you're already doing really consistently, it could be because that thing is really important to you. So once again, some sort of like daily movement or exercise, and that just makes you feel better.

It starts your day off on the right foot. Like, that is a really good thing. And you probably want to hold onto that thing that you're already doing super consistently.

Maybe you meet up with a friend once a week and get coffee and you just have great discussions with that friend and that's a thing that you're already doing.

And so on the one hand, I would say if there's something that you're already doing super consistently, that in and of itself might be evidence that that is one of the things that should stay.

And some of these other things that keep

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getting on your to do list day after day after day, well, those might be the things that it's time to say, okay, you know, I really wanted to start decluttering the guest room, but it's not urgent and I would rather have the time for these other things.

And I cannot do it all, especially in this season that I am in. And so we are going to say the guest room, it can go.

But this can also work the other way. And the only way to know is to take an honest look, not a stressed look. There's not like a right and wrong here where you just have to make, like a very critical decision.

But just take an honest look at the things in your day, because on the flip side, there could be things that you're doing every single day that are not actually serving you well.

And these can be all sorts of different things. This is where people really start to get on the case of social media. And I want to be very cautious with that because I actually think that having some downtime can be really beneficial.

Whether it's downtime to watch a favorite YouTube channel or to get on Instagram, or to watch a show with your family. Like, there are good memories made around some of those things.

But there are also times there are things that we just regularly, intuitively do. It's pretty much a habit. And if we stop and look at it, we don't even like doing that thing that well. It's just kind of become the habit of what we do.

And so if there's something that you're looking at that regularly happens in your life. And you're thinking, I don't even enjoy that. Like, I

watch this show every week when it comes out, because I've just done that for years, and I don't even really like that show. Like, I'd be perfectly happy if I missed it.

Then those are the kinds of things that you can take off and that may free you up to have some time to do some of these other things that are on your to do list.

And so it really just means taking an honest look first at the things that are already naturally happening, and then secondly at the things that are constantly on your to do list.

And here's a little just thing I've noticed about to do lists. If there is something that's been on your to do list and it got moved to the next day and it got moved to the next week, and it got moved to the next month, and it just hasn't happened, sometimes that may just be a natural procrastination, to be honest.

We've all done it. We've all had the things that we do not want to do and we put off. And we put off.

I can tell you this is really gross. Are you all ready to hear, like, a kind of gross story about my house? There's no judgment here, right? We're in a safe space to share these stories.

So a couple of years ago, I caught our grill on fire. Like, I don't know what was happening, but the grease caught on fire. And there's nice smoke coming out of our grill, and it's on a wood deck in our backyard that's surrounded by woods.

Now we live in Indiana. Okay. My husband is from California. He is very fire conscious, as you would be if you lived in a state that regularly has wildfires.

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And the grill is on fire. We turned off the gas to the grill and we had it open and we saw like, it was, you know, very contained. But as we watched it, I was like, that is getting bigger. That's not getting smaller. I'm very concerned that that's not. Yeah, like, it wasn't dying down. And it was like, bigger.

You know, you've had the grill fire where, like, oh, it kind of like flames up a little bit or there's like a little ember. That's no. Like, the grill was on fire.

And so we ended up fire extinguishing it. We fire extinguished our grill with the food on it. We definitely went out that night because, yeah, the food got fire extinguished.

And now I have a grill with gross chemically fire extinguished parts on it. And grease. There was a ton of grease on it too. What do you do with that? What do you do with gross, greasy, fire extinguished grill parts?

So I was like, okay, I want to save our grill. I'm going to grab a storage tub. And I got the hose. And I think I even like looked up like, how do you clean fire extinguisher chemicals off of things?

And I don't know, everything in the world calls for like baking soda and vinegar or dawn dish soap. I don't even remember which one it asked me to use. But I'm trying to like wash these things by soaking them in this giant tub. And it didn't really go great.

But now I have a storage tub with disgusting, slimy water filled with fire extinguisher chemicals. And that storage tub sat on our back deck probably for a year because I didn't know what to do with it.

I kind of knew that I should do something with it, but I really didn't. I was like, what do I do with gross fire extinguisher chemical water?

By the way, a ton of that water, unbeknownst to me, evaporated in the entire time that it sat there with me, not sure what to do. There was a lid on it. So that's why I didn't notice it was evaporating. And yeah, that was kind of on the back of my mental to do list for about a year.

And so I share that story to say that I have totally had the things that I needed to do something with the tub of fire extinguisher grease, chemical water. And eventually I did take care of that.

And that was the type of thing that just got moved from my to do list over and over and over again because I was procrastinating. Honestly, I was procrastinating because I didn't know what to do with it.

It wasn't like I knew exactly what I should do and I just didn't want to do it. I think procrastination so often happens when we don't know what to do. That's a whole episode for another time.

But like, that one's free if you feel like you're procrastinating on something. I wonder if it's because you're not sure what to do next, not because you're just lazy and don't want to do it. But that is an example of something I really did have to do. And it just kept getting pushed on my to do list to later and later and later.

On the other hand I have many times. This happens a lot for me with work. Had things on my to do list where I was like, oh, yeah, we need to do this. I think a good example would be sometimes we want to have backup systems for things.

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So you're going to hear a lot of examples about the Get Organized HQ virtual conference. Because that is what I do for Get Organized HQ, other than doing this podcast and a few random things here and there, like the Get Organized HQ virtual conference, that is, that's me. That's what I work on.

And a lot of times we want to have backup systems in place. I mean, over a hundred thousand people come to this virtual conference that we have. Like, we want to make sure it's working when you come and you are part of this conference. We want it to be an excellent experience for you.

And one thing that we have learned in the decades of working with the Internet is that we don't control the Internet and servers go down and softwares go down and we don't own all those softwares and we have no control.

And so we have backup systems in place. So if, you know, the service that we use that allows you to purchase the access to the conference goes down. We've got another one over here. We can swap them out and you're good to go.

But there have been times I've wanted to make backup systems. And like, it's gotten pushed off on my to do list and pushed off further and pushed off again.

And what I finally realized is this is not something that we actually prioritize, having a backup system of whatever. Whatever the thing might be, and we just end up not making one. It wasn't that important.

Like, yeah, it was a nice idea to have a backup for this, that or the other thing, but it really wasn't that important. And when it came down to it, we talked about it as a team or whatever

and decided we don't actually need that.

And so sometimes there might be something that you've noticed on your to do list over and over and over again. And the reason that it keeps getting moved is because it's actually not that important.

And when you come to that realization, it's okay to let that thing go. And just to say that thing's not that important.

And that is a skill. It's kind of like a muscle. The more you do it, the easier it gets to recognize those things. But that can really free you up as well to get things off of your to do list that aren't actually that important.

And it's also a practice of saying that is not a priority right now. And you are allowed to say that. You are allowed to say, right now my priority is not making a backup system. My priority is this other thing that needs to happen. And so being able to practice saying, right now, I'm going to hit pause on that. That can really free us up a lot.

Now, another thing to look out for. I feel like so much of this is advice for life, not just advice for survival mode, but especially when you're in survival mode, be sure that you are not setting competing goals for yourself.

And this one is so hard because there's so many things that we want to do and we want to improve and we want to be better at. And it is easy to unintentionally set ourselves up to be working against ourselves.

So here's like a classic example. Let's say that you were like, I really need to get more sleep. And so I want to make sure that every night I'm in bed by 10:30pm like, this is my goal. Sleep is

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really going to help me. Right now. We're going to bed by 10:30.

And let's say that you were also thinking, you know, I have really noticed that I have a better day when I wake up to a clean kitchen. Like, I just can walk into the kitchen, I can make my breakfast or make my coffee and just everything starts more smoothly. And so I'm going to make it my goal to have all of the dishes clean before I go to bed at night.

Like that sounds great. Like both of those are excellent things. Sleep is so important. Waking up to a clean house can be so refreshing. I love both of those goals and I would never discourage anyone from either one of those goals, but they are in conflict with each other.

If both of these are brand new habits that you're trying to add into your life. Those two things are going to be working against each other. And you are going to come to a point where you're going to have to say, do I give up on getting to bed by 10:30 or do I give up on washing the dishes before bed?

Because it is 10:15 and these dishes are not going to get washed by 10:30. So if I accomplish my goal of washing all the dishes every night before bed, I am not going to make it to bed by 10:30. And so that's just one really simple example of two goals that really don't mesh well with each other.

And so this goes back to prioritizing which one is the most Important. They are both good. I just said with that example, I love both of those goals and if I could have both those things in my life all the time, fantastic, awesome, awesome, awesome.

But which one is more important right now?

Which one is the one that's going to be the bigger difference maker?

It doesn't mean that you can't try to do the second one, but have a clear priority and say, this is the goal. This is what we're doing. Going to bed by 10:30pm even if I have to drop everything, even if I have to do the dishes in the morning, it's going to bed by 10:30pm if that's the one that's important, then make that the goal. Everything else is secondary.

And, you know, it probably goes without saying, but just don't try to juggle everything at once. It's so hard. There are so many good things in the world.

Laura likes to say that when we have too many good ideas, it's actually a good thing because it means that there are so many more good things that we could be doing.

And there are so many things that I want to do with my life, skills that I have not learned, talents that I do not currently have, but other people in my life do, and I would love to learn them.

I hear about things that other people are doing with their lives, ways that they're volunteering or just ways that they're, like, going out and living their life in the most epic ways.

And I want to do it all. Like, I want to go on every vacation, I want to have every skill. I love endurance challenges. Like, I love seeing those things. It's like, okay, well, now I need to run a marathon, but maybe that's not enough. I need to do an ultra marathon, too.

And, oh, I should become a swimmer and do a triathlon. I can't swim, by the way. I mean, like, I might be able to save my life for two minutes,

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but I would have been one of the people to die on the Titanic. Let's just say that.

Anyway. Don't try to juggle everything at once. I know it is so hard. It can almost be discouraging. But realize that you are prioritizing the most important things and once you get that solid base of the most important things, you can build on that those other things that you would like to do.

So when you say this is the foundation, this is what everything else is being built on, these are the non-negotiables.

And I know I sound so vague, like, I wish I could tell you these are the non-negotiables - go to bed by this time and do this particular exercise routine and do this daily devotional or meditation.

And if you do all these things, these are the building blocks. These are everyone's non-negotiables. Everyone's are the same. Do that and everything's going to get better.

But the truth is, not everyone's non-negotiables are the same. Everyone's life and needs and struggles and things they're naturally good at and things they naturally need more help with. It is different and unique for every single person.

But figure out what are the non-negotiables for you, and they can be ridiculously simple non-negotiables. These don't have to be complicated, but what are we building on?

And in survival mode, fall back on those non-negotiables. Say, these are the three things that really matter to me if I'm getting these three things and everything every single day.

Everything else is gravy. And I love gravy. I want a lot of gravy in my day, right? I'm hoping for great days where even more is happening.

But I am going to refuse to give into the guilt because I'm going to make sure it's just these three things every day, day in, day out, they're the same things. They're not flashy, they're not fancy, not going to win any awards for them, but they are the things that help my day to function day in and day out.

And so this comes back to what we were talking about at the beginning. I really hope that if you're listening to this and you are in a season of survival mode, that it ends for you soon.

I have been there. I have had loved ones who have been there and have watched them walk through that. And I have wanted so badly for that to end for them. And I have not had any ability to get myself or anyone that I love out of survival mode.

And so I want you to know that I see you and I know that these seasons can be so challenging. But find your non-negotiables, fall back on those.

Don't worry about anything else that you may or may not be accomplishing, and trust that this is a season and that it is okay to focus on the things that are absolutely most important.

And in some ways, when you look back, it may not be right now in the moment, but when you look back, you may find that you learned something about yourself and you learned something about what is really truly the most important for you.

And so I hope that that is at least a gem that you can find through this season as you walk

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through it, and I hope that these tips can help you if you find yourself walking through survival mode.

So thanks so much for tuning into this episode of the Get Organized HQ podcast. Can't wait to hang out with you again next week.