

Less is More!

How to Simplify Your Life

Life is complicated. Most of us are pulled in many directions by commitments to family, friends, work, and outside activities.

To respond to these pressures, many people are consciously simplifying routines at home and work. *The goal:* to become skilled at balancing personal relationships, work issues, finances and other demands.

Being in the moment

Slow down and stay in the moment. Be aware of what you are doing. Don't think ahead or look back. By constantly looking forward, we do rush through less pleasant tasks, but we also hurry through things we love to do.

A good exercise is to follow your breath. Notice your breaths and try to make them as calm and even as possible. Your breaths should be long and slow, and should come from your diaphragm rather than your upper chest. Pay attention to each breath, letting thoughts fall away.

Make it a goal to be mindful, in general, but also set aside short periods to practice. This will improve your ability to make it a habit. You also will feel more centered.

Slow down

Too much information? Stop newspapers, magazines, or email newsletters you rarely read. Leave the radio and TV off unless really listening to something that matters. Turn off your cell phone unless making a call or waiting for an important one.

To reduce “stuff” at home, ask these questions before you buy something:

- Do I really need it?
- How often will I wear or use it?
- Where will I store it?
- Is there a reason why I must buy it?

Get organized

Begin by sizing up the problem areas in your home or at work. Make a plan of attack. If you are easily discouraged, start with a small, confined area, like a drawer.

Otherwise, target an area that gives you the most grief. Your goal should be to clear out clutter that causes you to waste time—a hall closet that is a catchall for everything from clothes to sports equipment.

Also, learn to focus at work. Multitasking can be an asset, but often the lack of focus it requires means you actually get less done in a day, or less done well. To increase your focus and break free from distractions:

- Begin each day by setting priorities on what you want to accomplish
- Check e-mail at set times, instead of letting new messages interrupt you
- Set aside a time to retrieve voice mail and return calls
- Keep a deadline and obligation calendar

Key word is balance

Find the right balance that works for you. Celebrate your successes. Don't dwell on your failures. Life is a process, and so is striving for balance in your life.

Achieve a Better Balance in Your Life

- **Slow down**—Life is too short. Stop and enjoy things and people around you.
- **Manage your time**—Most stress comes from disorganization and procrastinating. Set more realistic goals and deadlines. Then stick to them.
- **Share the load**—Get your partner or other family members to help with personal and family responsibilities.
- **Let things go** (don't sweat the small stuff)—Learn to recognize the things that don't really have much impact in your life. Allow yourself to let them go and then not beat yourself up for doing so.
- **Explore your options**—Get help if you can afford it or enlist family members and friends for some tasks. In many cases, you have options, but you need to take the time to find them.
- **Talk to your employer**—See if you can modify your employment to better handle your current situation [i.e., flextime, job-sharing, telecommuting, or part-time employment].
- **Take charge**—Develop a prioritized list of things that need to get done. Set priorities. And then enjoy the satisfaction of crossing things off your list.
- **Simplify**—Change your lifestyle. Learn to say no and to ask for help. Get rid of the clutter and baggage in your house and your life.

If you or someone you know is having a problem, contact your EAP—help is available!

Source: Life Advantages, Workplace Options

For more information or to talk with a Counselor, please call your EAP: **1.800.492.4357**

Online Services: www.mhnetap.com

Callers with TTY equipment, please call: **1.800.338.2039**