

work well. live well.

Less Is More: How to Simplify Your Life

Life today is complicated. Most Americans are pulled in multiple directions every day by commitments to their families, workplaces and communities.

Many people have responded to the pressures of modern life by seeking ways to consciously simplify their routines and attitudes at home and work.

“The goal of living a more simple life isn’t to arrive at a static point in your life but to become skilled at balancing your personal relationships, workplace issues, finances and other demands,” says Heather G. Mitchener, coauthor of *The 50 Best Ways to Simplify Your Life*.

Being in the moment

One way to simplify your life is to practice mindfulness -- to slow down and recognize and appreciate the simple things in life. To be mindful instead of mindless, stay in the moment and be conscious of what you’re doing. Don’t think ahead or look back.

“When we look ahead constantly, we not only rush through the less pleasant tasks, we also tend to hurry through the things we love to do, because we’re always thinking or worrying about what we have to do next,” says Ms. Mitchener.

A good way to practice being in the moment is to follow your breath, a technique that doesn’t require any special training or self-consciousness. To breathe mindfully, take notice of 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.

“You can do this exercise any time you think of it,” says Ms. Mitchener. “Make it a goal to be mindful, in general, but also set aside short periods to practice. This will improve your ability to make mindfulness a habit. As you learn to live this way, you’ll feel more centered.”

Slow down

If you feel like you have too much information in your life, stop subscriptions to magazines, newspapers or e-mail newsletters you rarely have time to read. Leave the radio and TV off unless you’re really listening to something that matters to you. Turn off your cell phone unless you’re making a call or waiting for one that’s important.

To reduce the amount of “stuff” in your home, ask yourself 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 workplace and making a plan of attack. If you’re easily discouraged, start with a small, confined area, such as a single 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 has become a catchall for everything from clothes to sports equipment.

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, rather than letting each new message interrupt you.
- Set aside a time to retrieve voice mail and return calls.
- Keep a calendar of your deadlines and obligations.

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Signs of Alcohol Addiction (Alcoholism)

Do you want to have more fun, to fit in, to cope better with your problems? It's as easy as taking a drink—if you believe what you see on television. But if you think that alcohol will improve your life, you're fooling yourself. The more you regularly rely on alcohol to relax you or get you "up," the closer you move toward addiction. If you decide you are on the path to addiction, you can take action to keep it under control or find caring people to help you.

Check Your Addiction Level

You may drink alcohol to feel charming. But instead, it can lead to impaired speech and to inappropriate or dangerous behavior, such as driving while drunk. Alcohol can also lead to liver and heart disease. Read the following statements and check "yes" or "no." Answering "yes" to three or more questions may be a signal that alcohol is taking over your life.

- Do you think a party or social gathering isn't fun unless alcohol is served?
- Have family members, friends, or coworkers ever commented on your drinking?
- Do you have friends you drink with?
- Do you look forward to your next drink?
- If you only drink after work or on weekends, do you think you couldn't have a problem?
- Are family members or friends beginning to avoid you?
- Have you unsuccessfully tried to cut down or quit using alcohol?
- Do you hide your use from other people?
- Are you beginning to distrust and avoid some people?
- Do you get up the day after drinking and not remember what happened the night before?
- Do you have health problems as a result of your drinking?

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