

Living more SIMPLY

There are many reasons why we yearn for a simpler life, for example - the fast pace and complexity of the modern life and the fact that while the workforce is aging, the demands and expectations of the workplace remain the same, if not greater.

This yearning is expressed in two of the more common frustrations of those coming to counselling -

- *There are not enough hours in the day to do all I should.*
- *I am just too tired to complete everything I need to.*

Or a spouse may complain to the counsellor -

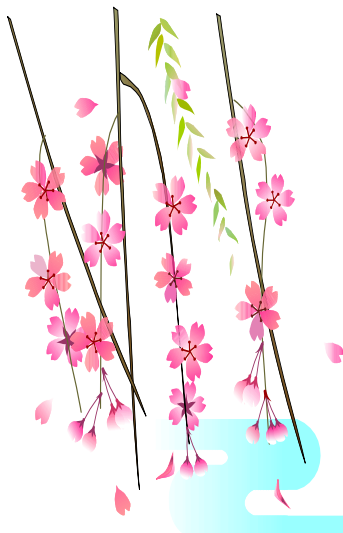
- *As soon as the evening meal is finished, my partner retires to the couch and the television, and is just not there for our family.*
- *We have no life other than work; my partner spends the weekend getting ready for the work week.*

We convince ourselves that if we are in the same house at the same time, we are giving priority to our relationships. However, close relationships frequently require more time and energy than we devote to them.

Many of us fantasize about dropping out or retiring as the means of regaining personal time and energy. However, most of us cannot drop out as we are not in a financial position to do so, in all likelihood will not win the lottery, or are too young to retire. A large group of us, while wanting to regain time and energy, still wish to continue working as we enjoy what we do.

It Can Be A Challenge To Live More Simply

At some level we are used to and perhaps comfortable with all we do and our fast-paced lives. It too has its rewards. While we may be pressured by others who are used to the benefits they derive from all that we do, most of the pressure will however come from within ourselves. It takes a great deal of resolve sustained over time to make the changes necessary to simplify our lives.



Having Resolved To Accept The Challenge - How Can We Get Started?

Here are some suggestions to help -

- **Examine your finances.** Sometimes our need to earn more is related to our perceived need to do and have more, which in turn generates costs resulting in the need to earn more - a vicious cycle. A careful review of what we really want to do and have, can show a reduced need for money.

One of the tasks of daily living that can consume a lot of time is managing our bills. Investigate arranging automated payment plans. If all but a few payments are automated you can save time and those pesky stamps.

- **Eliminate intrusions.** Annoyed with junk mail and telephone solicitations? Get rid of them.

Enroll in CRTC's National DO NOT CALL list

www.lnnte-dncl.gc.ca/insnum-regnum-eng

Calls will stop within 31 days and your registration valid for 5 years.

- **Get rid of clutter.** It may be time to get rid of all those collections of things you no longer need and even those you think you may need someday - magazines, unused clothing, furniture, toys, and household goods. There are a number of organizations (Big Brothers, Development Disabilities Association, etc) that will pick them up. The articles, or proceeds from their sale, will benefit someone else.

Once some of these collections are gone you gain more physical and emotional space. You can always replace these items later if needed. So the clutter does not accumulate again, when you bring in something new, throw something out. Another suggestion is to recycle any item of clothing (other than special occasion wear) that you have not worn in the last twelve months.

- **Review obligations.** Re-examine all the things you have committed to - the organizations where you volunteer, the celebrations you organize, the relatives you assist, etc. Turn a few over to others so you can enjoy those that are left. Learn to say no, to refuse yet another demand without feeling guilty. Promise yourself not to take on anything new until you drop at least two things in which you are currently involved.
- **Question children's extracurricular activities.** Question whether your children need to be in every activity that is presented. Are you just the chauffeur? Perhaps it would occasionally be better if they too had unscheduled time.
- **Use a time versus a project management approach.** Instead of making a list of all the things that need to be done then finding that you do not have time to do them all, decide how many hours you can spend on that general activity. For example, house cleaning - do as many of the chores as you can in that allotted time.
- **Get help.** Hire neighbourhood kids to do jobs you dread or don't have time for.
- **Get rid of distractions.** Our lives fill up with so many things, so readily. While some may be very hard to avoid because of convenience, many of the same distractions seem to inextricably drag us along. For example, how many times have you found yourself watching television simply because you failed to make some other conscious decision about how you would use your time?

A skill for simplifying our lives is to exchange mindless activity for mindful activity (doing one thing with thought and attention).

Turn off the television or radio and let the answering machine pick up.

The resulting quiet time can be used for reflection and solitude.

**For confidential assistance
Brown Crawshaw 1.800.668.2055
www.browncrawshaw.com**