

Simplify Your Life

"I'm really busy," seems to be the catch phrase of the day. The busier we are, the more important we feel. Then we become hooked on the fast-paced life and the status we think it brings – *you think you're busy – wait till you hear what I'm doing.*

But, eventually as we continue to run around, like chickens with our heads cut off, we wake up and realize *we've lost our heads!* What are we doing - tearing around day after day, out of control, running from one thing to the next and not taking time to enjoy life, our friends, our families?

Just how do we take a step back, slow down, and keep our heads. You can start by not saying *I'm really busy,* and start saying, *"I'm really happy."* Choose to stop thinking of busyness as a measure of success. MOSAIC Counsellors offer additional suggestions on ways you can slow down and simplify your life.

Attitude

- Plan your life around your values. Ask yourself: *What kind of home life do I want? What do I want the house to look like? What kind of relationships do I want in my household? – and finally - How am I going to get there?*
- Learn to say 'no' and give up the guilt around saying it. Don't live for what others think you should do. Take time to do things you enjoy. People respect you when you have your own focus and life.
- Use your kids as a good thermometer. If you're hearing *'you're going out again'* repeatedly, maybe it's time to get off a few committees.
- Get enough sleep.

Organization

- Set priorities, and again, make sure that those priorities are what you think you should be doing rather than what others think.
- Write it down; make lists. Planning the night before can help to simplify the next day's events.
- Integrate your home and work calendar and record all regular activities.

Food preparation

- Put healthy lifestyle at the top of your priority list. Eating right and getting exercise will help you feel better and have more energy as you go about the rest of your day. While eating out and junk food may be simple, it is not nutritious and means less energy for a busy lifestyle. Instead, pick up a roast chicken or hamburgers and forget about the French fries and pop. Take it home and make a salad and potatoes to go along with it. It's the main part of the meal that tends to overwhelm us, not the side dishes.
- Plan your week's menu before preparing your grocery list. Record the week's menu and stroke off each dish as you prepare it through the week. It is often trying to think of what's in the fridge and what you're going to make for dinner that is more stressful than actually preparing the food.
- On weekends double your casserole recipe and freeze one.



- Make freezer soup. Instead of tossing little bits of leftovers into the garbage, toss them into a plastic tub in the freezer. Once it is full just add some broth and *voilà* homemade soup – little effort.
- Always have canned beans, tomatoes, pasta and raw veggies on hand.
- Enlist other family members to help. Take turns with meal preparation. Children can help prepare the food as well as set the table and do dishes.
- Make mealtime sacred. To help slow down the pace, decide to not take any phone calls during the dinner hour.

Household Chores

- Learn to ask for help from family members with household chores. Sometimes we fall into the habit of doing everything ourselves, while those around us are enjoying life – and the resentment builds. Men are more in tune these days with sharing household responsibilities and it is good for children to acquire the skills and independence they'll need to run their own households in the not-too-distant future.

After-school and After-work Activities

- Combine activities where you can. Have kids do homework in the kitchen while you prepare supper or do the dishes. Walk with friends – this gives you three benefits - social time, fresh air and exercise.
- Limit children's after-school activities and don't feel you have to keep up with the girl or boy next door. Just because the Jones' son is playing competitive basketball and soccer, completing his grade 5 in piano and taking scuba-diving lessons, does not mean that your son has to as well. Consider one or two favourite activities outside of school and allow your children to enjoy their free, unorganized, creative time.
- Don't feel obligated to give back to every activity your child participates in. Coaching your son's soccer team may be your family's contribution. You don't also need to be teaching Sunday school and sitting on school council. Another parent can take on those roles.
- Carpool.

Family Time

- Schedule family time when you can just kick back with your family and have a relaxing night. As your kids get older, you may not be able to have a regular weekly family night, but may have to look at each schedule and plan a twice-monthly family movie and popcorn night.

Entertaining

- Don't wait for the perfect moment to enjoy company. It doesn't have to be elaborate and the house does not have to be spotless. Invite friends for tea and muffins, or dessert and cards or munchies and a movie.
- Take time for yourself. And remember, you can say "no." Don't plan a weekend full of events when all you want to do on Friday night is curl up with a good book.

Simplify Your Surroundings

- Have a home file cabinet for all your household information.
- Designate a storage space, then box and label items that are rarely used.
- When you buy something new, toss something old.
- Ditch anything you haven't used in the last year. Juvenile Diabetes and Cerebral Palsy make this easy with their door-to-door pick-ups.

Technology

- Use technology to simplify your life at home. Do your banking by computer or pay bills by phone. You may also want to consider ordering your groceries over the internet for at-home delivery.

