



Work Smart Live Smart

Too Many Hats – Not Enough Heads

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My life is too complicated. I feel like I am always rushing to get somewhere. Most of our time is spent in the car. I feel like I don't spend any quality time with my family let alone spending time taking care of me. What suggestions do you have for getting my life under control?

We rush through traffic to get to work and we rush back again to pick up the children to get to the next sporting event or lesson. We get frustrated. We forget how to talk to each other. Most of us have felt that our lives are too complicated at one time or another.

Previous trends have been to achieve more, get more and do more. One of the ways to uncomplicate our lives is through a contrary movement called Simplification. It can be hard to do, but the rewards can be great.

Simplification means reorganizing your life and routines to focus on the meaningful. It is minimizing the chaos. It is being proactive and purposeful with your time.

Have you ever gone to your closet, and even though it is stocked full said 'I don't have a thing to wear'? Have you ever caught yourself saying 'Where are my keys?' or 'Why are these books here?' Simplification may mean de-junking your physical space so that things are easier to find, clean, and maintain.

Simplification may mean looking at your routines and seeing if there is a way to organize them or to get rid of them to allow more time for family interaction, personal pampering or spiritual reflection.

Simplification means setting up routines that minimize chaos such as getting bags and lunches ready the night before school in order to avoid the 'mad dash'. It may mean teaching all family members to be apart of the maintenance of the house so that everyone has more time.

Simplification means making choices. We all want our children to have many opportunities to learn but we can get too focused on achieving this that we over-program our weekly routine. Simplification is deciding on what is truly important. Instead of running from activity to activity, maybe our children can be exposed to these activities through a one-week summer camp.

Simplification is about learning to say no. We all love being a part of various organizations and volunteering to help out, like our children's school, our church groups, and our community organizations. That is who we are. However, when life is feeling rushed, chaotic and complicated, often our best solution is to say no to volunteering.

That doesn't mean we have to say no to all of them, but it may mean that you don't have to be the one who always says yes to everything that needs to be done. You may not need to be the one who bakes the cookies, sets up the coffee, organizes the dinner or shuttles the patients this week or this month.

This can be hard to do. Sometimes we get caught in the belief that if we don't do it, who will. Even though the organization may depend on you, you serve them best to be at your best. When we say yes to everything, we do a disservice to ourselves and the organization as our patience runs thin, our perspective gets skewed and we can become resentful and burned out.

The more you can par down your life by simplifying your routines, de-junking your physical space and by being careful where you spend your time, the less hectic, chaotic and complicated it will be.

Another way to unclutter our lives is through purposefully slowing down and regaining our sense of rhythm. Have you heard yourself or your friends say 'I was so busy today that I didn't even have time to go to the bathroom'? That is a loss of rhythm.

Our stressful or draining periods were to be followed by relaxing and energy restoring phases. In today's busy world many of us have forgotten the simple techniques that we can use to restore our body's natural rhythm. These 5 Quick Tips are fast and simple. The challenge is to remind ourselves to use them in order to regain our rhythm and feel more in control.

Breathing

Air is the primary 'food' of our body. Rapid, shallow breathing is a common involuntary reaction to stress and is part of our innate stress response. This shallow breathing causes us to feel tired and foggy-headed.

Deep breathing interrupts this stress response and can be a powerful means of recharging yourself and regaining a more natural rhythm. It can relieve headaches, relax shoulders, stop racing thoughts, increase energy and turn restlessness into calmness. Frequently throughout the day, take note and try to increase your oxygen intake and slow your breathing rate.

Deskercises

Tense muscles cause blood to be squeezed out of the body tissue resulting in oxygen and nutrient depletion. This can cause pain and even a lack of concentration. Deskercises or

stretching exercises can be helpful in releasing tension and restoring the flow of blood. Deskercises can relax neck and shoulder muscles, increase focus for problem solving and can revitalize energy. Some quick examples: Neck rolls, shoulder shrugs, stomach squeezes, hip twisters, wrist curls, quarter squats, and yawning.

Deskercises can be used after a stressful situation or as a general technique to promote overall health. Focus on particularly tense muscles or create a whole body stretching routine.

Self-massage

A soothing massage can counteract the effects of stress and help regain a healthy rhythm. Massage not only increases the circulation of blood throughout our body, but it loosens contracted and shortened muscles.

One effective use of self-massage is when we find that our hands are cold. Self-hand massage is a technique where by the individual fingers, wrist and palm of the hand are gently rubbed in a circular motion. You can also add an aromatherapy hand cream to enhance the relaxation effects. Soon you will find that your hands are warm and that the break has given you renewed focus.

Nutrition, water, light

During chaotic times we often compromise or completely forget about eating, drinking and getting outside. Taking lunch, drinking a glass of water, or going outside for a stretch break are simple and necessary techniques that provide essential energy and can restore rhythm.

Safe Space – beauty, sound, aroma

The space in which we live and work can have a profound effect on our mood, energy and comfort. It is to our benefit to create a space that feels, sounds and smells great. Personalize your space. Invest in a sound therapy machine, radio, CD's or even screensavers that can give you a time out, away from the challenges that you are facing. Promote relaxation or motivation with aromatherapy. Find smells that trigger pleasant and relaxing thoughts or some that can be used to give you a lift in the middle of the afternoon.

Life can be complicated and chaotic, but we can take control. Look at where you are and what can you de-junk and simplify to move yourself towards what is truly important. Look at how you can use the stress busters to give yourself a break and restore your energy and focus. These strategies will help you to find more joy, meaning and success in your life.

A Dozen Ways To Reduce Stress Or

A Dozen Ways To Uncomplicate Life

- Dare to be happy - pat yourself on the back
- Be 'Thankful' for today - don't live for retirement or wish your life away
- Change the way you describe your life
- Recover quickly - learn from your mistakes and forgive yourself
- Stop procrastinating - do the worst first
- Plan ahead - anticipate delays, line-ups, and waiting
- Have some 'me' time each day
- Acknowledge and appreciate others
- Say what you mean, mean what you say and learn to ask for help
- Sleep, rest, and nap
- Eat for energy and enjoyment
- Learn to breathe deeply

Stress and wellness specialist, **Beverly Beuermann-King** translates current research and best practices information into a realistic, accessible and practical approach through her dynamic stress and wellness workshops, on-line articles, e-newsletters and media interviews and through a collaboration called *Awakening The Workplace*. Visit www.WorkSmartLiveSmart.com for more on Beverly and her wellness work.

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