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Simple Living News

Simple Living News — Issue #73 — November-December 2009

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OnLine Study Groups

Join Our On-Line Classroom. Simplify Your Life. Transform Your Relationship With Money.



Registration In Progress
Next Course: November 24, 2009

Introduction & Announcements

The Holiday Season

The Holiday Season is upon us. If you are like me, this can be a difficult time of year. Having chosen the simple living lifestyle, I sometimes feel pressure to conform to the status quo of putting up silly, often environmentally harmful decorations, throwing huge parties and giving too many gifts. I relentlessly resist, sometimes successfully, sometimes not. I strive to celebrate quietly with a few family and friends and avoid giving gifts out of of guilt or duty, but because they convey a sense of deep thoughtfulness and caring — often something I've made myself or a rare purchase that is extremely appropriate to the recipient.

The last thing we want to do is support the purchase of more stuff and junk — The Simple Living Network is decidedly anti-consumerism. In fact, this and past holiday issues of our Newsletter are loaded with simple, often low or no cost, holiday gift ideas....



- **Holiday Gift (or not) Ideas & New Resources — 2009**
- **Holiday Gift Exemption Voucher — PDF File**
- **Holiday Cards Without Clutter — 2008**
- **Looking Forward To Holidays & A New Year — 2008**
- **The Secret To A Relaxed Holiday Dinner — 2007**

Be A CyberAngel

Support The Community Services On This Web Site

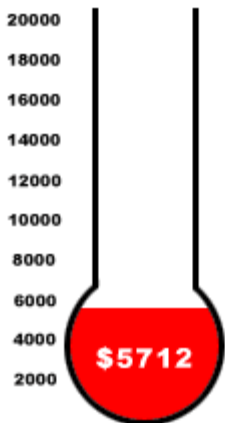


+ Why We Need Your Help

+ Make A Contribution

+ View The Hall Of Fame

How Are We Doing?



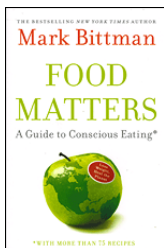
As Of: 11/01/09

"How you spend your money is how you vote on what exists in the world."

Featured Resources

Our most popular resources.

Food Matters



From the award-winning champion of culinary simplicity, a plan for responsible eating that's as good for the planet as it is for your weight and your health.

[Purchase](#) [More Info](#)

Item #KFM
\$25.00

[Choosing Simplicity](#)

- Preparing The House For Thanksgiving — 2001
- Simple, Sustainable, Clutter-Free Gift Ideas — 2007
- Scrooge's Christmas List — 2004
- The Ecological Costs Of Christmas — 2001

In all reality, we know that some of you will purchase holiday gifts this year and will probably think long and hard about the social, political and environmental impact those purchases will have. If that is the case for you, you can further support The Simple Living Network by shopping through this web site. We stock almost 2000 simple living and do-it-yourself resources — Books, DVDs, CDs, T-Shirts, Posters, Bumper Stickers and more. Take a peek at the [Holiday Gift Ideas & New Resources](#) section below and our Library Menu on the top left side of your screen..

By purchasing your gifts through The Simple Living Network you are not only supporting the free services you use here, you are also making a statement that says you believe in small, home-grown businesses that do everything in-house.

Alternatives For Simple Living 2009 Resource Guide

Introducing the 2009 Alternatives Resource Guide featuring over 100 new books and tools for simple living — both faith-based and secular. This 2009 Guide is available in a PDF format for printing and a web-based version for on-line ordering.



Organized in 1973 as a protest against the commercialization of Christmas, Alternatives for Simple Living encourages people of faith to examine and challenge our consumer society. Their most popular resource, [Whose Birthday Is It, Anyway?](#) has also been updated for 2009 and is now available for individual or bulk, congregational purchases.

The Simple Living Network began a partnership with Alternatives for Simple Living in 2008 to provide this like-minded, faith-based organization on-line order fulfillment assistance.

Thank You CyberAngels!

As always, thank you to all of the CyberAngels out there who, even in these tough economic times, have found a few extra dollars here and there to help support this web site and keep it commercial free. We're still behind on reaching our 2009 goal. So, if you are able, please help by making a contribution you feel is appropriate. Without your voluntary support this web site would not exist.

Your Money or Your Life Study Group Update

We are excited to announce that the [Study Guide for Groups or Individuals](#) and our On-Line Study Groups for following the nine-step program in [Your Money or Your Life](#) have now been updated to coincide with both the 2nd and new 3rd edition of [Your Money or Your Life](#).

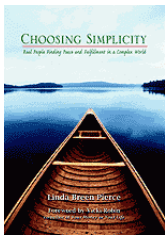


The On-Line Study Group process is perfect for folks who do not have access to a local Study Group, find it difficult to attend face-to-face meetings on a regular basis, or for those who wish to maintain the anonymity provided by the Internet. If you are unfamiliar with this great on-line course for transforming the way you think about, earn and spend money, we invite you to take a free tour.

The next class begins November 24th!

Enjoy & Thanks Again!

We hope you enjoy the Newsletter. Again, thank you CyberAngels. Thank you Fred Ecks and Ann Haebig who have once again assembled an impressive, wide-ranging collection of articles. Thank you



A groundbreaking work that goes beyond the books that tell you "why to simplify" and "how to simplify" your life.

[Purchase](#) [More Info](#)

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[Mortgage Free! \(2nd Edition\)](#)

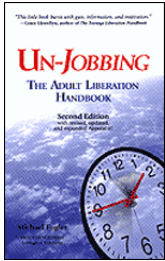


Innovative strategies for debt-free home ownership. Highly Recommended!

[Purchase](#) [More Info](#)

Item #BMF
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[Un-Jobbing \(PDF Edition\)](#)



Gives you the ideas, information, and inspiration to free yourself from a life of merely earning a paycheck, in order to reclaim a liberated life in complete alignment with your personal values.

[Purchase](#) [More Info](#)

Item #BUNJOB-PDF
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\$10.00

to all of the authors who have contributed.

Dave Wampler
Founder
The Simple Living Network

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The Simple Living News — A User-Supported Service — Please Do Your Part

Holiday Gift Ideas & New Resources

[Click here to visit the New Resources page](#), or scroll down and click individual titles for specific details...

Holiday Cards

All of our Holiday Cards are printed on Recycled Paper. [Click here to view all Holiday Cards...](#)

- [And The World Changed \(Year Around Cards\)](#)
Let us celebrate and renew our commitment to build a world free of all forms of violence. Peace.
- [Circle Dance \(Holiday Cards\)](#)
Together we will make a better world. Happy Holidays!
- [Earth Song \(Holiday Cards\)](#)
Peace to all Beings. Happy Holidays!
- [Menorah \(Holiday Cards\)](#)
Happy Chanukah!
- [Peace & Love \(Holiday Cards\)](#)
Happy Holidays! / Felices Fiestas!
- [Reindeer Dream \(Holiday Cards\)](#)
Imagine a world of peace and freedom. Happy Holidays!
- [Sun & Moon \(Solstice Cards\)](#)
Greetings of the season. Happy Solstice.



Holiday Gift (or not) Ideas

In addition to all of the great new resources listed below, The Simple Living Network offers a wide variety of ideas for creating your own Holiday Gifts. Be sure to visit the following sections of our web site:

- [Holiday Gift Exemption Voucher](#) — PDF File.
Print and give it to your family and friends and let them off the gift-buying hook!
- See the [Holidays & Celebrations Section](#) of The Simple Living Library. Here you will find numerous books for simplifying the holidays plus a selection of [PDF E-Books for making your own Holiday Gifts](#).



Faith Based Holiday Resources

- [Whose Birthday Is It, Anyway?](#) — Ideas for a Christ-centered holiday.
- [The Unplug The Christmas Machine Kit](#) —



materials for offering a four-hour workshop to put love and joy back into the season.

- [Additional Christmas & Advent Resources](#) — Spiritual writings, pageants, and ideas to give more meaning to your holiday.

2010 Wall Calendars

Many of our 2010 Wall Calendars are printed on 100% Recycled Paper. [Click here to view all 2010 Calendars...](#)

- [2010 Peace Calendar](#)
- [Cycle & Recycle 2010 Calendar](#)
- [Master Of Illusion 2010 Calendar](#)
- [Posters For Peace & Justice 2010 Calendar](#)
- [Organic Kitchen Garden 2010 Calendar](#)
- [Zen Of Hiking 2010 Calendar](#)
- [Thich Nhat Hanh 2010 Calendar](#)
- [Llewellyn's 2010 Herbal Almanac](#) — *not a calendar*



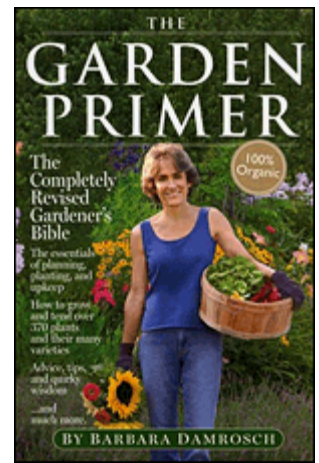
New Resources For Simple Living, Money, Investing, Financial Planning & Sustainability

- [In Cheap We Trust: The Story Of A Misunderstood American Virtue](#) — **Highly Recommended!**
- [Less Is More: Embracing Simplicity For A Healthy Planet, A Caring Economy & Lasting Happiness](#)
- [Mortgage Free! Innovative Strategies For Debt-Free Home Ownership](#) — **Revised 2nd Edition!**
- [Miserly Moms: Living Well On Less In A Tough Economy](#) — **Updated & Expanded!**
- [No Impact Man: The adventures of a guilty liberal who attempts to save the planet and the discoveries he makes about himself and our way of life in the process](#) — **Highly Recommended!**
- [No Impact Man \(Audio CDs\)](#) — **Highly Recommended!**
- [The Sharing Solution: How To Save Money, Simplify Your Life & Build Community](#) — **Highly Recommended!**
- [Shop Class As Soulcraft: An Inquiry Into The Value Of Work](#)
- [Simplicity Parenting: Using The Extraordinary Power Of Less To Raise Calmer, Happier, & More Secure Kids](#)



New Resources For Green Living, Cooking, Gardening & Country Living

- [Cordwood Building: The State Of The Art](#)
- [Do It Yourself Home Improvement: Step-By-Step Photographs For Success Every Time](#)



- [Gaia's Garden: A Guide To Home-Scale Permaculture — New 2nd Edition!](#)
- [The Garden Primer: The Completely Revised Gardener's Bible — Highly Recommended!](#)
- [Green, Greener, Greenest: A Practical Guide To Making Eco-Smart Choices A Part Of Your Life](#)
- [Herbal Recipes For Vibrant Health: 175 Teas, Tonics, Oils, Salves, Tinctures & Other Natural Remedies For The Entire Family](#)
- [Llewellyn's 2010 Herbal Almanac: Herbs For Cooking & Craft, Health & Beauty, Growing & Gathering, history, Myth & Lore](#)
- [Whole Green Catalog: 1,000 Best Things For You & The Earth](#)

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The Simple Living News — A User-Supported Service — Please Do Your Part

The Christmas Shopping Countdown Began In July Alternatives For Simple Living

By Michael Mortvedt

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Remember when President George W. Bush, shortly after the horrific events of September 11, 2001, asked citizens to support the country in the wake of terrorist attacks by shopping? Well patriots, arm yourselves with credit cards and help our nation pull out of the global economic crisis with early Christmas shopping! That seems to be the hope and perhaps the subtle purpose of several major retailers starting their Christmas sales and promotions in July this year.

According to Ann Zimmerman in her article in the July 31, 2009 issue of *The Wall Street Journal*, Toys 'R' Us, Sears and K-Mart stores have launched Christmas shopping promotions on their websites with virtual snowy street scenes and free shipping offers starting in the heat of summer.



Of course there is good market-driven logic in promoting Christmas or Chanukah or Kwanzaa consumption. In the last half century the North American economy has shifted to a largely consumption-based economy. The bubble has burst on the Wall Street model of speculative lending and making money on money; less politely referred to as usury in the Hebrew Scriptures. So consumers, it is up to us to start our Holiday shopping early. Or is it? Alternatives Board of Directors member Sean Killackey addresses that question well: "The celebration of our Savior's birth should not be used like Pavlov's bell to incite conditioned automatic-purchasing-response among shoppers."

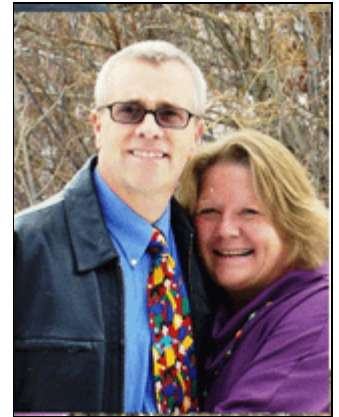
Last year, when the economic meltdown was breaking news, I was interviewed by a reporter for a local newspaper on whether it was patriotic to buy more at Christmas to support the economy or not. I acknowledged that in the short term it might save some jobs in retail, but in the long term it was supporting a form of idolatry. From my perspective as a Christian there are much better ways to celebrate the birth of Jesus than excessive spending and debt that contribute to ecological destruction, sweatshop labor practices, and wars over petroleum. As Grandpa Ole bluntly puts it, "Everything is about the Buck!" Should Christmas be about making bucks? Likewise should Kwanzaa, a cultural celebration of Black heritage, which emphasizes the principles of unity and cooperative economics, be about excessive consumption and materialism? Or should Chanukah, the Jewish celebration of the

rededication of the Jerusalem Temple in 165 BCE and the manifestation of God's presence in the face of imperialist oppression, be about the making bucks?

I encourage you to create meaningful celebrations based on the traditions of your faith and on your personal values, not on excessive consumption and materialism.

About The Author

The Reverend Michael A. Mortvedt is the Co Director of [Alternatives for Simple Living](#) with Sandy Olson. He is also the Vicar of Trinity Episcopal Church in Kremmling, Colorado, and a spiritual director. An avid hiker and backpacker, he and his Norwegian Elkhound, Thor, explore the mountains of Colorado contemplating the essence of the spirituality of Simplicity. Alternatives For Simple Living can be found at www.SimpleLiving.org.



Related Resources

- [Whose Birthday Is It, Anyway?](#)
- [Unplug The Christmas Machine](#)
- [A Simple Christmas \(Chapin\)](#)
- [A Simple Christmas \(Hanby-Robie\)](#)
- [Celebrate Simply - 2nd Edition](#)
- [Hundred Dollar Holiday](#)
- [Treasury Of Celebrations](#)

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The Simple Living News — A User-Supported Service — Please Do Your Part

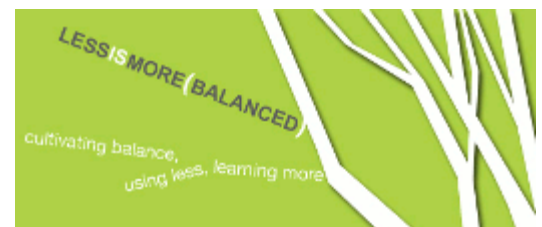
Saying Goodbye to Stuff Less Is More (Balanced)

By Danielle Davis
Copyright © 2009

In preparation for a recent apartment move, I've been thinking a lot about stuff.

I don't want to be part of throwaway consumer society that buys and buys and fills the landfill when it's tired of something. On the other hand, I don't want to save everything I've ever bought or been given and end up shackled by possessions or with a storage unit in a strip mall somewhere. I'm aiming for a balance of only buying lasting things that matter or reflect my values as much as possible and letting go of things that no longer make the mark. I'm finding that giving things up and living a sparer, more streamlined life creates much more freedom — fewer things to maintain and clean, less clutter, not so much of a chance I'll be stuck sifting through slush piles when it comes time to move again.

For someone who lives *less is more* and has never owned a house in which to let things pile up, it's still amazing how much I had in my apartment that I didn't actually use on a daily basis — everything from vases to eyeglasses to jackets to my grandmother-in-law's dusty silverware. Luckily my move was from a two-bedroom with abundant closets to a one-bedroom with almost none (a step most people I told couldn't understand), so I had the opportunity and luxury to consider my stuff and direct it to appropriate places — places other than my home.



I'd say my husband and I donated to [Goodwill](#) or neighbors or sold through a yard sale and [Craig's List](#) almost half our possessions. (Of course, there's still more to do without — it's a process.)

For me, the two hardest things to get rid of by far were books and keepsakes. The first, because I'm a reader and a writer and there's a certain amount of fear and ego attached to getting rid of tomes. "How will I live without it (even though I haven't read it in years and don't really care to revisit its

pages)?" and, "How can I call myself a writer/reader if I don't have certain 'important' books on my shelf?" But inspired by a literary heavyweight friend who has said goodbye even to Shakespeare in the name of space and being true to herself, I decided to part ways with much of my collection. The ones I kept are books that I really love, that inspire me, and that I could see myself realistically reaching for and rereading or lending in years to come.

Then there were keepsakes. Here's how I dealt with those: Anything I was presently storing and not ever looking at (with hand to heart) had to go. That meant recycling my old yearbooks (after much debate). After all, I will always have memories (and besides, there's [Facebook](#), which takes up only how much room you let it). That also meant donating the nicely bound albums my wedding photo proofs came in (the photos themselves had to go in the trash — yet another reason I'm glad to have gone digital over the last few years) along with the cards and mementos from the day we'd been storing in a nicely organized box for almost seven years. It may seem heartless, but we decided that one photo album of the keepers was enough. Again, there's the fear: "What if I want to look at those one day?" And then there's the counterargument: "I haven't had that urge in seven years, and I'll always have the memories — and the guy."

In both the book and keepsake categories, it was hard to see stuff go, but I'm guessing I won't miss anything in more than a fleeting, manageable sort of way.

But even for this unsentimental gal there were things I was storing I didn't quite want to part with. My answer? I'm coming up with a way to display them, to make them part of my living space so they become touchstones of gratefulness, rather than objects gathering dust bunnies somewhere.

All those treasured letters, ticket stubs, black-and-white photos of my grandparents, my late father's high school ring, coins from the country I grew up in (Hong Kong), those will go in a special, handmade box I'm hoping to score on [Etsy](#) or in a local artisan's shop or if I'm really lucky, make with the help of my husband. Then they'll be displayed and within reach, things I can actually get to and engage with every so often.

As for everything else that didn't see the light of day at least once a week, I've pretty much let it go.

How do you deal with and limit the stuff in your life?

Here are a few web resources for saying goodbye to stuff:

Living with 100 things challenge: <http://www.guynameddave.com/100-thing-challenge.html>

The mnmlist's recent post about the process of how to "let go of possessions": <http://mnmlist.com/how-to-let-go-of-possessions/>

Unclutterer has useful posts on decluttering: <http://unclutterer.com/category/decluttering/> and minimalism: <http://unclutterer.com/category/minimalism/>

The Story of Stuff film: <http://www.storyofstuff.com/>

About The Author

Danielle Davis is a writer and simple liver in Los Angeles where she keeps up her eco-conscious living weblog, www.lessismorebalanced.com. In addition, she is Green Living Contributor for www.yourdaillythread.com, and walks, bikes, hikes, and writes books for the youngest readers (and older ones, too!). You may reach her at danielle@lessismorebalanced.com.



Related Resources

- [No Impact Man - Book](#)
- [No Impact Man - Audio CDs](#)
- [Less Is More](#)
- [The Not So Big House](#)

- [The Not So Big Life](#)
- [Little House On A Small Planet](#)
- [Get Satisfied!](#)
- [The Happy Minimalist - Book](#)
- [The Happy Minimalist - PDF eBook](#)

Alternative Gift Registry

The Center For A New American Dream

Copyright © 2009

Why Alternative Gifts?

Do you want to plan an event that emphasizes time spent with loved ones and de-emphasizes store-bought gifts? Do you want to give a special gift to someone you love that focuses on the bond you share, rather than something that costs a bundle and may not be what they really want?

We all love giving and receiving gifts; it's important to our culture and good for the spirit. When the gifts we buy don't match our values however, they can distract from, rather than deepen, the meaning behind an event, despite the best intentions of those involved. The cost to gift-givers — not to mention the environmental impacts — also adds up quickly.



Fortunately, for many brides, grooms, parents-to-be, and other gift recipients, less truly is more. By encouraging non-material, second-hand, homemade, and environmentally friendly gifts, we seek to continue the proud tradition of gift-giving while helping celebrants focus on what matters most: a joyous commemoration with loved ones that honors the important moments in their lives.

Creating a registry and choosing a gift, of course, is highly personal. We have offered a number of green suggestions, but celebrants can fill in their own ideas and link to products outside this site to offer the widest and most meaningful gift selection possible.

To get started just [click here](#) to create a registry, or [click here](#) to find your loved one's registry.

The Impact of All Those Gifts

With an estimated 2.5 million weddings in the United States each year and an average of 175 guests invited to each celebration, the stuff associated with weddings quickly adds up:

- According to The Knot, one of the largest wedding planning resources in the world, \$19 billion is spent buying gifts from wedding registries each year.
- Many traditional gifts that were once meant to help a couple set up a home no longer apply, with so many couples getting married or remarried later in life.

It isn't just weddings, of course. Approximately four million babies are born in the United States each year, and thousands more are adopted.

- According to a 2006 article on CNN Money, the average new parents spend \$6,200 buying their first year's worth of baby products, including furniture, car seats, clothing, and toys. That's a huge chunk of change for items that will generally be used for less than two years.
- According to a 2005 poll by Redbook, 87 percent of expectant parents "anticipate that baby expenses will increase their stress level." — Is it any wonder?

New American Dream wants to help relieve some of the stress that weddings, new babies, and other big occasions can cause, helping to keep the focus on the joy of the celebration.

Our registry options encourage and legitimize asking for help from friends, sharing time together, reusing second-hand items, and giving environmentally sound presents as tasteful, thoughtful options.

The user also has the freedom to add personalized requests and links to desired products. We want the registry you create to have a tangible and meaningful effect on your life and well as the planet!

[Start your registry now](#) | [Find a registry](#)

Related Resources

- [Holiday Gift Exemption Voucher — PDF File.](#)
- [22 Herbal Gifts For The Holidays](#)
- [Gifts From The Heart](#)
- [Holiday Gifts From Nature](#)
- [Holiday Gifts From The Kitchen](#)
- [Holiday Gifts From The Workshop](#)
- [Holiday Gifts Kids Can Make](#)

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The Simple Living News — A User-Supported Service — Please Do Your Part

Gems Of The Discussion Forums Holidays, Novels, & More!

By Ann Haebig
Copyright © 2009

The holidays are coming around again, so it's time to point out the [Holidays](#) forum. Folks are discussing [how they're preparing for holidays](#) and [how to deal with holiday burnout](#). The [Hobbies & Creativity](#) forum gives ideas for gifts you can make yourself. For those of you looking to opt out of the holiday gift exchange, be sure to check out The Simple Living Network's [Holiday Gift Exemption Voucher](#).

If you enjoy keeping religion in your holidays, check out the [Religion and Spirituality](#) forum. Note this forum is in no way limited to just the Christian faith, as a recent conversation about [Vipassana meditation](#) shows. Often the conversations here are more contemplative than strictly religious — current themes include thoughts on [how to handle failure](#) and [feelings in general](#). Because religion can be a contentious topic, please read the [moderators' guidelines](#) before contributing here.

November is [National Novel Writing Month](#), as one of our forum participants tells us. This is a good opportunity to point out the [Reviews](#) forum. A list of [literature with a minimalist theme](#) and another of [what folks are reading this fall](#) give a plethora of ideas for those of you who do exchange gifts this time of year, or who just want something to curl up with on a cold winter night. Also in the fall theme, people are planning [winter meals](#) and enjoying [pumpkin dishes](#).

Finally, an excellent topic I have to draw attention to is one in which people describe [how they decided they had to simplify their lives](#). One of the most popular topics ever in the Forums, this discussion demonstrates the wide variety of reasons people choose Voluntary Simplicity. Share your reasons for being here with us!

If you've never been to the Discussion Forums before,
[CLICK HERE TO CHECK OUT THE INTRODUCTION](#)
to our on-line community. Then join the fun!

About The Author

Ann Haebig is a part-time geek, part-time bicycle advocate, and dedicated follower and promoter of the [Your Money Or Your Life](#) program. She lives in Boulder, Colorado with her partner, cat and guitar. Ann can be reached at ahaebig@pobox.com.

Related Resources



- Living Wisdom With His Holiness The Dalai Lama
- The Integral Operating System
- Less Is More
- Following Raven, Finding Ground (PDF Edition)
- The Sharing Solution
- Songs & Stories Of Simple Living Book
- Songs & Stories Of Simple Living CD
- Farmer John's Cookbook
- Animal, Vegetable, Miracle

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The Simple Living News — A User-Supported Service — Please Do Your Part

How Do You Judge Success? My Year Without Spending

By Angela Barton
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Editor's Note: This article is an excerpt from Angela Barton's "My Year Without Spending" weblog at myyearwithoutspending.blogspot.com, reprinted with permission.

When I embarked on my experiment with nonconsumerism this year by joining [The Compact](#), I assumed I would be successful. That is, I thought I would be successful at eschewing material comforts and making do with what I already had, with maybe a few slip-ups.



What I didn't realize was how much the whole endeavor would subtly work on my entire value system and world-view: what I care about, how I spend my time, and my definition of success.

I've been thinking about continuing with [The Compact](#) after this calendar year. That hadn't occurred to me when I started, but lately it seems very feasible. What's certain is that I'm not *chomping at the bit*, just waiting until I can go on a *shopping binge* come January 1st, 2010. My *Buy Nothing New* commitment has changed me, because I've become aware of every purchase I make, and I could never go back to being an unconscious consumer.

Becoming conscious in this way has made me see more than ever how empty a value system that judges success based on material possessions really is. It's not that I didn't believe that before; it just wasn't quite as strong a conviction.

Sure, I like nice things. And having the bills paid and money in the bank helps us sleep at night. But once you're past that threshold of survival, does another pair of designer jeans really make you happy? A fancy car? A bigger house?

These questions aren't new or original, and each of us has to find our own answers, live our own lives, make our own discoveries. But I ask you: Are people happier when they have more things, more possessions, more stuff? I've never seen any evidence of it. So why do so many people pursue that course so relentlessly? Sometimes I think we're a nation of people searching for salvation in a mall. Even some places of worship are turning into *megachurches*, mall-like entertainment centers that I can't begin to fathom.

And how do we buy all these things? We work more, to earn more money, to buy more stuff. I remember once back in the 1980s talking to a student from Germany. He couldn't understand why everyone was running around from one appointment to the next, their *busy-ness* an apparent measure of their success. He said that in Germany, people viewed success as having time to design their own

schedules, and that included lots of coffee house lounging and intense conversation.

My idea of success squares more closely with this one than it does the materialist one. Lately I've been thinking that in our culture, the people we consider successful — namely because they make a lot of money — rarely have a moment to themselves. They have no time for introspection, goofing off, or just plain hanging out. They're slaves to their Blackberries. Maybe not at the level of Oprah or Bill Gates, but for many professionals who live in nice neighborhoods and drive Mercedes it's become the norm.

Certainly working at what you love, being good at it, and making a contribution in your field would constitute success. But that doesn't necessarily translate into material wealth. You could work for the Peace Corps, design a public space, be an excellent nurse, invent a labor-saving device, compose beautiful music, perform life-saving surgeries, write inspiring plays, discover a vaccine, or a million other things, and you may or may not be financially rewarded for it. It's nice if you are, but it doesn't prove whether or not you're successful.

My definition of success includes rewarding work (paid or unpaid), close relationships, an ability to appreciate and be grateful for what you have, having time to live an "examined" life and do the things you enjoy, achieving something you set out to do, doing a little extra when it will make a difference, and not always taking the easy way out. It would also involve a realization that you do make a difference, that we all do, and a resolution to work for what you know is good and right. To live your values. For me, successful people have made the world a better place.

In the end, I don't think anyone has said it better than Ralph Waldo Emerson:

"To laugh often and much; to win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children; to earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends; to appreciate beauty; to find the best in others; to leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition; to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded."

How do you judge success? Please let us know in the Comments section of the [My Year Without Spending](#) website.

About The Author

Angela Barton writes a weblog about living a non-consumer lifestyle without giving up fun or style, or otherwise feeling deprived, at myyearwithoutspending.blogspot.com. She lives with her husband in Los Angeles, CA. She loves to receive email at ABarton62@yahoo.com.



Related Resources

- [Siesta Lane](#)
- [Simplicity & Success \(PDF Edition\)](#)
- [Simplicity & Success \(Printed Edition\)](#)
- [The Sharing Solution](#)
- [Green Living Handbook](#)
- [Our Ecological Footprint \(Book\)](#)
- [The Ecological Footprint \(DVD\)](#)

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The Simple Living News — A User-Supported Service — Please Do Your Part

Memories Are Made Of This The Simple Dollar

By Trent Hamm
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Editor's Note: This article is an excerpt from Trent Hamm's [The Simple Dollar](http://www.thesimpledollar.com) weblog at www.thesimpledollar.com.

A little over a year ago, I began trying a new idea in my personal journal. Each day, I wrote down the five best things that happened to me that day.

I started this as a way to reflect on the positive things in my life and, psychologically, it's been a very positive thing. I can browse through those lists and realize how good my life is, even when times feel kind of tough. Each day, I sit down and reflect on all of the good things that happened in my life. In the end, it's really raised my mood and helped me to reflect on the wonderful aspects of my life.



Once I crossed the one-year mark with this, I decided to take a tally of the things I had written down. How many involved my kids? How many involved my wife?

And perhaps most interestingly to you, how many of the entries involved spending money?

Here are the results (rounded to the nearest percentage).

61% of the entries had nothing whatsoever to do with spending money. They involved things like going to the park, playing in the yard with my kids, holding my wife, having a nice conversation with someone, or so on.

Another 35% of the entries had only the most tangential relationship to spending money. Preparing a meal, for example — I did have to buy the food to prepare it. Playing a board game with my wife or my friends — the board game did have to be purchased at some point.

Only about 3% of the entries had to do directly with consumer activities. Many of these were good feelings about finding a bargain or about talking myself out of buying entirely.

The good moments in my life are the ones where I **don't** spend money. The happiness comes from spending time with my family and with my friends. It comes from writing and from learning new things and from pushing my mind. It comes from conversation and companionship. It comes from intellectual growth and reading.

It doesn't come from trips to bookstores or to the coffee shop. It doesn't come from browsing the shelves at the local electronics shop. It doesn't come from ordering some stuff online. Those things might give me a burst of good feeling, but when I think of them even just a bit later — at the end of the day — I usually feel a mix of good and bad, since I feel some regret at the money spent.

Instead, the purely good feelings come from the free things in life. The hug from my daughter when she runs in the house. A giant high-five from my son. A wink from my wife. A delicious made-from-scratch dinner. A game of Ticket to Ride after the kids are asleep. A kiss.

If you doubt the truth of this, try it yourself. Give it one week. Here's what I challenge you to do:

For one week, don't spend any money at all on non-essentials. Just one week. Give up those little mood boosters. Don't stop by the bookstore or the clothes shop. Do none of it — for just one week.

Every night that week, reflect on your day and make a list of the best five things that happened. Just keep them in a little notebook.

At the end of the week, review your seven lists and think back over your week. Are you missing out on any major happiness in your life by trimming your spending? Sure, you might be actually missing a thing or two, but you'll likely be surprised how happy your life is without spending money.

The benefits are tremendous. If you radically trim your non-essential spending, it suddenly becomes much easier to build an emergency fund. It becomes much easier to become debt-free. It becomes much easier to save for the big dreams you've always had, like starting a business or building a house exactly like what you want. It becomes much easier to retire early. It becomes much easier to support the social causes you care about.

The great things in life don't come from spending money with reckless abandon.

About The Author

In April 2006, Trent Hamm went through a complete financial meltdown ([read his "financial biography" here](#)). He threw himself head first into trying to figure out every nuance of fixing his financial situation, and after a few months he began to get the picture. Within eight months, he had paid off all of his credit card debt, paid off his vehicle, and also established an emergency fund. Since he has a passion for writing and he had learned so much about how personal finance really works, he established [The Simple Dollar](#) near the end of 2006 to tell the world about what he had learned and to help people who were struggling with the same things.



Related Resources

- [Simple Prosperity](#)
- [Living Simply With Children](#)
- [Eco-Friendly Families](#)
- [Recycled Crafts Box](#)
- [Anytime Game](#)
- [Treehouse Perspectives](#)

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The Simple Living News — A User-Supported Service — Please Do Your Part

Going Light The Less You Have, The Less You Need

By Fred Ecks
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A few years ago, I took two weeks away to hike the [John Muir Trail](#) in California's Sierra Nevada Mountains from start to finish, Yosemite Valley to Mt. Whitney. I hiked a total of about 225 miles, and enjoyed an experience I'll cherish for the rest of my life. It was a phenomenal adventure of pristine lakes, high mountain passes, evergreen forests, marmots, mosquitoes and more. I loved the simple life on the trail from day to day, only concerning myself with the weather, water sources, and where I might bed down that night. It was glorious, and yes, I will do another thru-hike sometime in the next few years.

One thing I learned that made the entire trip possible for me is the basic rule, "The less you have, the less you need." By following this rule, I kept my backpack relatively light. Over half the weight of my pack was food alone (and even that was carefully planned to reduce weight). I didn't carry a stove, since that would entail also carrying cooking utensils, pots, fuel, and more. All my food was simple and uncooked (basic grains, cheese, nuts, etc.). My only weight splurge was on a very warm sleeping bag. Because I kept my load light, my time on the trail was spent in wonder at the beautiful natural environment rather than suffering under a heavy backpack. With the lighter pack, I comfortably moved further each day, seeing more and reveling in the changing ecosystems as I moved south. I felt safer because I could go further and would be more able to dodge adverse weather or move quickly through a difficult or hazardous area.



A favorite form of recreation for me is ultramarathon running. An "ultra" is any run longer than a 26.2-mile marathon. Ultras commonly range from 50k (31 miles) to 100 miles or more. As a slow but persistent plodder, my best distance is 100 miles. I used to do this by strapping on a small pack filled with food, water, clothing, lights, batteries, and lots more "what if?" items. More recently, I've been learning to do more with less. Now when I head out the door for a day on the trails, I usually don't carry anything more than a light shell tied around my waist, some food and a small flashlight in my pockets, and a water bottle with built-in filter so I can drink from streams. When I do this, I have more fun, go

further, become more flexible, don't rely on "stuff", and feel safer as a result.

In time, I came to see the analogy between this way of lightweight backpacking & running and a more general "lightweight" way of life. A somewhat well-known lightweight backpacker, Andrew Skurka has written a few pages on his website about what he calls [A Lightweight Lifestyle](#).

Analogies In Everyday Life

The most obvious application I see of this lightweight philosophy is in travel. We've all seen the wide variety of travelers in airports and bus/train stations around the world. There are those with three huge coffin-sized suitcases who need help just getting their stuff to the curb, and those others who carry so little that their entire load fits comfortably on their backs, not even needing to check a bag. While these lightweight travelers are more limited in their wardrobe or toys for the trip, they need not worry about theft or damage to their belongings, since they're always in their possession. They can walk instead of taking a taxi. They can remain flexible to surprise itinerary changes, and roll with whatever comes along. A friend of mine was just in Turkey traveling this way a few weeks ago, and was invited spur-of-the-moment into a Turkish wedding celebration, got an unexpected ride in a bread truck to his next destination, and came home with wonderful stories to tell all of us!

A commonly considered application of "going light" in everyday life is in de-cluttering, reducing the physical "stuff" in our lives. As we create lives with less "stuff" and cheaper used "stuff", we let go of the worry over theft or damage, we no longer need to carry much insurance, we don't need to store things, we reduce the need to maintain everything, and we develop a lower-stress lifestyle. After all, do we own our "stuff", or does our "stuff" own us?

Speaking of "stuff", what about the computers we're using to read this Newsletter? Personally, I use a 7-year-old PC running [Ubuntu Linux](#). Because Linux is more efficient than other choices, my computer doesn't need to be upgraded. I'll continue to use this computer until it breaks, and enjoy the free, high-quality operating system. It's simple and lightweight.

It's the same way I think about sports and fitness. Rather than a gym membership, expensive bicycle & gear, lift tickets, and so forth, I have a pair of running shoes, a pair of used snowshoes, and some amazing trails. My transportation is a bicycle, so being outdoors and getting a little exercise is an integrated part of my day. Admittedly, this isn't for everyone, but many of us use local goods and services (e.g. grocery shopping) within walking or cycling distance from home. In short, why drive to a gym to get on a treadmill?

What about entertainment? Most folks have televisions at home, often with expensive cable services, movie rentals, and so on. The result is that we sit individually in our living rooms watching the tube for entertainment. But wait, isn't it fun to get together with friends to watch a movie? A friend and I spoke with a mutual friend who has a big-screen TV and DVD player, and now it looks like we'll have regular movie nights at his place. He's excited to have company — we'll bring movies and munchies, and we'll all enjoy sharing the fun.

Going further down the road of "going light", we can think of our financial nest eggs the same way. The key to [Financial Independence](#) isn't how much we have; it's how little we need. If we don't need much money, there simply isn't much to worry about!

What analogies do you see in everyday life? How can you lighten your load? Share your thoughts in the Simple Living Network's [Discussion Forums](#)!

About The Author

Fred Ecks is the volunteer Newsletter Editor for The Simple Living Network. He's a dedicated follower of the 9-step program detailed in [Your Money or Your Life](#) and the [Financial Integrity website](#). He uses the time freed up in his life for writing, volunteering, and ultramarathon trail running. He can be reached at fredx@pobox.com.



Related Resources

- [No Impact Man - Book](#)
- [No Impact Man - Audio CDs](#)

- [Get Satisfied!](#)
- [Less Is More](#)
- [Living Green](#)
- [Bringing Nature Home](#)
- [You Are Here](#)
- [10,001 Ways To Live Large On A Small Budget](#)
- [Low Carbon Diet](#)

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The Simple Living News — A User-Supported Service — Please Do Your Part

Simple Living America Transitions To Postconsumers Get Satisfied!

Simple Living America is happy to announce that on January 1, 2010, the [Get Satisfied](#) campaign will have a new home at www.postconsumers.com. Currently under construction, [Postconsumers](#) is an educational company helping to move society beyond addictive consumerism. One of the primary new offerings will be a companion "how-to" interactive web module called "Get Satisfied: How to Find the Satisfaction of Enough," a year in development and produced in cooperation with the Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior at UCLA. Other offerings will include an ever-growing Get Satisfied Cartoon Gallery, a Community Blog (all contributors are welcome to join Randy Gold and Michael Beck) and a unique Help Define Postconsumers public contest/vote. For example, [The Center For A New American Dream](#) has great ideas at www.newdream.org/consumption/rights.php that can be used to help define this cool term: "No longer content to be described as consumers, nor to participate in the world mainly through our buying activity, we the post-consumers of the world claim these unalienable rights..." Let's share our visions for this key word and ways to advance mindful consumption.

In addition, the current [Get Satisfied](#) book will be republished for Postconsumers on January 1 by Easton Studio Press in Connecticut, with new marketing outreach by Cubitt, Jacobs & Prosek in New York



and new web magic by Ripe Media in Los Angeles. Underscoring all of these fresh plans is the "Exploratory Research on Materialism" study recently conducted by The Pollux Group market research firm. So as Simple Living America concludes on December 31 after 13 years, we want to especially thank the Center for Transformative Action at Cornell University for its terrific anchor and all of you for helping to spread the word about visiting www.postconsumers.com often after launch. Call 1-877-UnStuff with any questions or thoughts; it's always fun to talk. Last and most of all, there are numerous excellent Simple Living organizations to turn to anytime you like, such as the Simple Living with Wanda Urbanska national public television series at www.simplelivingtv.net and The Simple Living Network at www.simpleliving.net.

Related Resources

- [Get Satisfied!](#)
- [Simple Living Season 1 DVD](#)
- [Simple Living Season 2 DVD](#)
- [Simple Living Season 3 DVD](#)
- [Simple Living Season 4 DVD](#)
- [Affluenza \(Book\)](#)
- [Affluenza \(DVD\)](#)
- [Escape From Affluenza \(DVD\)](#)

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[The End](#)

