

Ready, Set, Simplify!

Tips for Simplifying Your Life

By Kathleen Barton, MBA

Do you feel frazzled? Do you have too much to do and not enough time? Life is complicated! Do you long for a time when things were simpler and the pace of life was slower? How can you simplify your life in today's fast-paced, complex world? Here are a few tips that will help you simplify your life and regain peace of mind.

Cut Out Tasks and Activities

This may surprise you, but you **cannot** do it all! That's a fallacy that some of us have grown up with. We've been told that we can do it all and have it all. I have so many interests that I couldn't possibly pursue them all at once. The reality is that we have limited time and energy.

Therefore, we need to prioritize and focus on the most important things. This also means that we need to be able to say "no" to the unimportant. What do you need to say "no" to? What unimportant (or less important) activities crowd your schedule? Do you really need to be involved in five professional organizations or networking groups? Can you cut out one or two?

Maybe you have a hard time saying "no" to others. You feel guilty when you say "no". Learn to say "no" diplomatically. For example, when asked to take on another project, you might say, "I'm very interested in the project and I'd like to help, but my plate is full. Keep me in mind when another opportunity comes up."

Get Help

If you have a lot to do, keep in mind that **you** don't have to be the one to do it all. Involve others in tasks that need to be done. Share the load. In two-career families women still take on the primary responsibility for home and child care. Studies show that women do 75% of household chores – even when they hold jobs outside the home. Can your spouse or children take on more responsibility at home? Do you have an assistant at work to which you can delegate tasks?

When you have an important task, first analyze the job. Ask yourself, "Can anyone else do it?" If so, "Who is capable of doing the job?" Then delegate it. Give clear, specific instructions with a deadline. Therefore, it's more likely to get done correctly and on time.

Also consider hiring out the job. How valuable is your time? By hiring a housekeeper or gardener you can spend more quality time with your family. By hiring an assistant or contracting out a project, you may free up your time to spend on more important projects. One of the best things I did when I was working and going to school was to hire a housekeeper. It was well worth the money!

Consolidate or Combine Activities

We all have limited time. How can we maximize our time? By consolidating or combining tasks when possible. Here are some examples:

- *Consolidate errands.* Stop off at the dry cleaners and post office on your way home from work or your child's lesson. That saves driving time (and gas!).
- *Cook in large quantities and freeze ahead.* This saves time and hassle at the end of a work day. You can just pull something out of the freezer.
- *Shop over the Internet.* This saves time shopping at several stores. You don't even need to stand in line to purchase your items.
- *Combine activities.* Read a book while riding a stationary bicycle. Take a walk with a friend. By combining two purposes (i.e., physical exercise and socializing) you can accomplish more in less time.

No matter what your circumstances you should be able to apply at least one of these tips to your life. Start making changes now by cutting out activities, saying "no", delegating, hiring, or consolidating and combining activities. You'll find that as you implement these changes, you'll have greater balance and peace of mind.

*Kathleen Barton is a keynote speaker, workshop presenter, and life coach specializing in life purpose, career success, and work-life balance. She is the author of **Finding Your Purpose and Passion in Life** and **The Balancing Act: Managing Work & Life** audio/workbook. Kathleen can be reached at www.YourLifeBalanceCoach.com.*