

**LIVING**  
**A SIMPLE LIFE**

in a  
Complicated  
World



By Amanda Ashley

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## CHAPTER 1

### WHAT IS A SIMPLE LIFE?

Living a simple life is a term that has been tossed around frequently in recent years. It sounds nice, but what exactly is simple living? And how does one achieve a simple life? Is it even something we should strive for? How can we know if it is something we even want or whether it would enhance our life?

Ideally, living a simple life is to live with more peace and calmness and less stress and chaos. Living simply involves learning to live with less. Living a life less cluttered, getting rid of things that don't matter to make room for the things that do.

### WHAT IT MEANS TO LIVE A SIMPLE LIFE

Living a simple life gives us the desire to live within our means. To simplify our budget. When we live within our budget we live with a sense of freedom.

It means to learn to be more self-sufficient. To gain new skills that allow us to do more for ourselves, relying less on stores or government.

It means learning to "breathe." To look at our schedules and minimize our busyness. To take time for those moments with our family and friends and even ourselves that otherwise get lost in the noise of our busy lives.

It means having a spirit of gratitude and thankfulness. To see the blessings in our life, and to be thankful for each new day, even if trials come.

I don't pretend to have perfected the art of a simple life, but over the years I have strived for more peace, more simplicity, and more positivity. I often felt lost in the commotion of a complicated world. Most of the time I didn't feel like I quite fit into the box society told me I needed to be in, and I couldn't help but feel like less would be more in my life.

Our family now lives a quiet, simple life out in the country. We are happier when our home and our life is filled with less clutter and less noise (though the kids make their own share of noise!). We are always learning new ways to be self sufficient, and making do with what we have. Though life is always busy with a growing family, our schedules are not. We enjoy spending time being

creative at home, or out in the woods on the trails, or on the water in kayaks or paddleboards. Simplifying our schedule allows for this.

But don't think you have to live in the country to live a simple life. You can learn how to turn down the noise of this complicated world and live smack dab in the middle of a large, buzzing metropolitan city. You may just have to work a little harder at staying focused when making big changes to your life while everyone around you continues their lifestyle.

Before I end this opening chapter I want to point out what simple living is not. Do not confuse a simple life with an easy life. To live simply you will have to work hard learning new skills and putting them into practice. It will take effort to stay the course when others around you may question your new life direction. There will be days you will want to throw your hands up in the air and quit. But please don't. Anything worth doing takes work. And in the end, a life that cultivates peace, and allows you to slow down and enjoy those precious moments with your family are always worth it.

## CHAPTER 2

### LIVING WITH LESS-OWN YOUR STUFF, DON'T LET IT OWN YOU

The thought of living with less can be really hard for someone who is used to having a lot of stuff. You may be a person who enjoys some good retail therapy. But let's be honest. Isn't that high temporary? Sure, it felt good when you bought it. And even for a little while after. But over time our new purchases lose their shine. Sometimes your new purchase is quickly forgotten. There are even instances where you look in your closet to find clothing hanging there with their tags still on, never to see the light of day.

And then it just becomes clutter. and clutter can stress us out.

Don't worry, I am not going to tell you to get rid of all but 100 items. I am not going to tell you that you can't own 20 adorable shirts or 10 pairs of cute shoes. That is all for you to decide.

But what I am going to tell you is that you should start the process of getting rid of SOME things. Why? I promise you, there is purpose in it. To live simply you need your home to be a place of life-giving peace. You need to come home from work, or running errands, or driving the kids around and you need to feel a sense of calmness come over you as you enter your home. It needs to be your refuge, a place where you can escape the noise and busyness of this world. Where you can catch your breath and feel strengthened and revived before you head out into the commotion again. A place where you can just "be."

When we have too much stuff, our homes can feel cluttered. Not to mention it is just harder to keep a house clean when you have more stuff. And all that stuff requires attention.



Take for example a shed, garage, or basement full of storage. Have you ever spent a weekend sorting and cleaning it out? At the end of the two days you are exhausted, missed out on enjoying that time with your family, and probably haven't used over half that stuff in at LEAST a year, maybe more. BUT- if you didn't have so much stuff it would have been an easier, quicker job that would have allowed you more time to just enjoy life.

It's true what they say, our stuff can own us.

I know what you're thinking. "But what if I need (fill in the blank)? Isn't it a waste of money to get rid of something I may need down the road? That doesn't seem to be wise."

I get what you are saying. Living within your means is definitely a part of the simple life and in theory it would make sense to keep something so you don't have to buy it again.

But there are problems with that line of thinking.

I know many people who have kept something "just in case" only to discover when they actually DO need it they can't find it because they have so much stuff. So, they end up going out and buying another one anyways. After they've wasted hours upon hours looking for it, that is. So in the end, they not only wasted money buying a replacement, but they also wasted time.

Years ago we started working towards a more minimalistic life. We still have more stuff than I'd like, but we don't hang on to things. I can honestly say since we started that journey 6 years ago that there have only been one or two instances when we've wished we had hung on to something we had gotten rid of. And let me tell you, we got rid of van loads upon van loads of stuff.

So, how do you decide what to keep and what to get rid of? That answer is going to be different for everyone. First you have to decide what is important to you, and what your priorities are. For us we really pared down our kitchen dishes, as well as those appliances we use once and never again. Our sandwich maker and punch bowl were sent on their way. Our clothes were hugely minimized. I remember getting rid of 9 garbage bags of clothes at one time many years ago! But, on the other hand, my book collection was only pared down minimally. I love a good book and I go back to them time and time again. So I kept many of them.

Also, can I just point out, when we are minimizing our stuff it isn't really fair to run to the kids toys as the first thing you get rid of. We did get rid of many toys AFTER we had downsized much of the rest of the house. We also took into consideration what they played with, what they might like to play with in 6 months (as children are always growing and changing their tastes) and what we hadn't seen them play with in over a year. Things such as Lego and matchbox cars, no matter how many there were did not get downsized. To me those were classic toys that could be used for a long time as well as the fact that they fostered creativity and are, in my opinion, a great kind of toy for the simple life.

And while we are on the subject of downsizing stuff for other people in our homes, let's talk about spouses. I would encourage you to NOT throw out your spouse's belongings. Relationships are more important than how many items you get rid of. Sometimes it takes our spouses a little longer to come around to the idea of decluttering and downsizing. In the meantime, you can get creative in an effort to downsize your spouse's belongings. When my husband was a little apprehensive about getting rid of our many cds, even though I felt most of them weren't used or listened to, I didn't argue. Instead, I put all the cds into cd sleeve binders and got rid of the cases. None of the cds got thrown out, but they take up a lot less room being tucked away in binders in a drawer. But the best part? No arguments about the issue. Always put your spouse first before the need to declutter. The simple life is about adding more peace in your life, and there isn't much peace in fighting with the one you love.

The other thing people struggle to part with are family heirlooms. That is completely understandable. When it comes to family heirlooms, you need to decide what ones are truly important to you. Don't feel like you have to get rid of everything sentimental, but maybe consider just paring down the amount



you do have if your house is cluttered with too many! Sometimes we hang on to family heirlooms not because we feel attached to it, but because we worry we may upset a family member if we don't keep it. If that sounds like you I would suggest offering the heirloom to another family member who may feel a certain attachment to it. If you can't find a family member who wants it and you don't want it, then you should feel free to sell or donate it.

I also find it is easier to hang on to "functional" heirlooms, instead of something like a knick knack. For example, at our house we really cherish our afghans and quilts that have been passed down or lovingly made by family members. Not only do they keep us warm, but they hold precious memories.

Okay, so maybe you've decided it is time to get rid of some stuff. You agree that you would feel better if you just owned less stuff. How do you go about getting rid of it? Should you donate it, sell it, or trash it? That is up to you and the quality of what you are getting rid of. It also depends on how much stuff you have to dispose of. While selling each item by itself on a sales site can bring in some extra cash, you don't want it to take you years to downsize! There is something to be said for how much time it will cost you. You might sell some stuff, but donate most of it to save yourself months of aggravation. There are many thrift stores you can donate your stuff to if you don't want to be bothered with the time it might take to sell it. This option can be particularly good if you have a lot of small stuff that wouldn't bring you in a whole lot of money anyways.

If you have some items you want to sell, particularly bigger items or ones that are in excellent condition, you can either do a yard sale, or advertise it on an online market ad site. Here in Canada our popular options are Kijiji, Craigslist, and Facebook Market. Just remember to be safe if you are selling on those sites. I never allow someone to come to the house to pick up an item if my husband is not at home. I also know that some communities have created "safe spots" to meet up with a potential buyer, which may be in a Police station parking lot, or somewhere similar. Be sure to check into what your area has for safe spot options.

So when should you trash an item you are getting rid of? If it is too worn out or beat up to be sold.

Once you have decided to live with less, you need to remember to continue on that journey. Do not get caught up in consumerism, only to find yourself drowning in stuff again a year down the road.

The best way to avoid getting caught up in a spending spree? Stay out of the stores as much as you can. I can be happily living my simple life, walk into a store, see a red tea kettle, and all of a sudden I have a deep desire for the kettle. I didn't NEED a red tea kettle before this moment, but now all I can think of is how much I NEED that kettle. My life is empty without it.

Of course, we all know that is not true, and in a short time I will forget about it, but in that moment it's all I can think about.

If you get caught in that type of situation, tell yourself that if you really want it you can buy it in 30 days. Impulse purchases are the worst and often when we step away from that store and the item we just desperately need we discover we just don't want it as much as we thought we did. However, if you still want it 30 days from the first moment you laid eyes on that item, then it might be one of those purchases you feel is well worth the money.

So, let's just say for a moment you saw that red kettle, fell in love with it, and just had to have it. (Don't underestimate the beauty of a red kettle calling your name.) You practiced self restraint and waited 30 days before buying it. You still want it, you have the cash for it, and truth be told your old tea kettle is starting to break. You go buy it, and bring it home. But you don't want to add it to the clutter. So, what should you do?

For everything you bring into the home, another one goes out. First look at what you are bringing in. If it's a tea kettle, there really is no need for two. Get rid of the old one. If you don't have a tea kettle to start with, get rid of something else, preferably in your kitchen since that is where your new purchase will take up residence, but if you can't find something to part with in your kitchen, just pass on something from any area of your house. By following the "something in, something out" rule you will effectively manage your clutter as you go instead of letting it slowly pile up only to feel overwhelmed by it later.

As you make these changes in your life, do not feel overwhelmed and try to declutter your home and all your stuff in a day. It didn't take a day to pile up, and so it is going to take time to downsize. Start with one room, and each day do even just one hour of decluttering. You will be amazed at how quickly you start to see a change.

Living with less is not about a number. It isn't about living in an empty home. And it isn't about never purchasing something you might want. It is about clearing out some of the clutter to make room for what matters, and to allow you to feel at peace when you are in your home. It is about not allowing yourself to be a slave to your belongings.

William Morris says it well when he said *"Have nothing in your home that you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful."*

**Let's review some of the key points from this chapter.**

- **Keeping things we haven't used in years "just in case" can cause us to spend hours looking for the lost item among our stuff. In the end we often will have to buy it again anyways and we've wasted a lot of time.**
- **When downsizing our stuff, don't start with the kids' toys. And don't get rid of your spouse's belongings without their permission**
- **It is okay to pass on family heirlooms, but try to check with family members before you sell or donate it to see if they would like to have it.**
- **keep functional family heirlooms over knick knacks.**
- **Stay away from impulse buys. Think about it for 30 days.**
- **When one item comes into your home, another item goes out.**

## CHAPTER 3

### LIVING WITHIN YOUR MEANS

In the last chapter we talked about minimizing our stuff, and also learning to not allow ourselves to succumb to "retail therapy." Buying less and owning less will give you a good base to tackle learning to live within your means.

But why live within our means? Especially when so many around us are not? Taking out loans to get what we want is commonplace these days. I mean, is it really a big deal if we want to keep up with the Joneses?

The truth is, if you live with excessive amounts of debt, living a life you really can't afford, it just isn't sustainable. Eventually it will catch up to you. You may feel like you are living the high life for years, only to watch everything crash down one day.

Not to mention, it's really hard to get a peaceful night's sleep when your mind is filled with financial worries. It's hard to feel at peace if you are busy avoiding collection agency phone calls. Knowing you are one emergency away from financial disaster can cause your heart deep turmoil.

Living within your means is a huge part of living a simple life. While you may worry that living within your means will feel restrictive, it actually has quite the opposite effect. There is much freedom in not worrying about how you are going to catch up on all your bills.

So, how do you live within your means? It may require cutting some things out of your monthly expenses. It could mean downsizing in different areas of your budget. It really depends at what your financial picture looks like. If you are up to your eyeballs in consumer debt, you are going to have to make some big changes. If you don't carry a lot of debt but have no savings, the changes may be less. Of course, if you want to build up a savings fund faster, extreme changes in your budget can really help that along.

To make a monthly budget write out all your expenses. You will want to put in the basics such as mortgage or rent, electricity, phone bills, insurance, gas, groceries, etc. Then you can add in certain funds such as clothing, entertainment, eating out, and so on. Next you are going to plug in a "predicted" amount. Once you have paid for these bills you will put in the "actual" amount you spent on the category. Some of these items will have

fixed amounts that you pay every month, but others, like groceries and gas might vary a little.

If you come to the end of the month and your expenses are higher than your income, you need to make some changes. And let's just get real here. If you are in serious financial trouble you need to take out some categories. Entertainment and eating out should be gone for the time being. There is a thing to be said for temporary pain providing longterm gain.

So, you've done up your budget and you discover that your income is less than your expenses. What are some areas you can cut back, aside from the categories we talked about removing up above?

We'll start with cell phones. First decide who in your home actually needs a cell phone. In our home both my husband and I have a cell phone. He needs his for work, and I live in the country without a landline so I need one as well. What neither of us need is an expensive phone plan, or data. Unless you need data for work, I would encourage you to get rid of it. You can find WIFI just about anywhere these days. Keep your phone on a basic plan and save money.

What about saving on electricity? Turn off the lights. Unplug appliances that aren't in use. Hang your clothes on a line. The dryer is a huge electricity waster. Also, some areas have subsidy programs for electricity bills through their government. Check your area to find out if there are any you may qualify for.

Regarding home and vehicle insurance, shop around. We are currently in the process of changing our insurance companies as we discovered we could get it cheaper through another company.

What about vehicles? Our family is a one vehicle family. It isn't always easy, but we've made it work. I know this doesn't work for everyone, particularly if both you and your spouse work outside of the home. But if one of you is a stay-at-home parent, or has a workplace in walking distance to your home, it may be something to consider.

If owning just one vehicle is completely out of the question, what about downsizing your vehicle? Could you get something that is older and doesn't require a car payment? Could you downsize from a truck to a car to save money on gas? A reliable car can be a necessity, but remember, it's main

objective is to get you from point A to point B. You don't need all the bells and whistles for it to do that.

Groceries are probably one of the biggest areas you can save on. Always shop at the budget grocery stores. Make sure you shop the sales, and don't be afraid to price match. Price matching is when you take a flier from a competitor's store that has a lower price and you show it to the cashier at the store you are shopping for who will often match the price for you. Just be sure to check which stores your regular grocery store will price match with.

Coupons are an option too. Here in Canada you can save a bit with coupons, but definitely in the US you can find big savings by using coupons. However, just a word of caution when using coupons. Only use coupons for what you would normally eat or buy. It isn't a deal if you don't actually eat that food.

Find out what days your local grocery store discounts the aging meat and produce. We often buy meat that is set to expire in a day or two because they will discount it. We are going to freeze it anyways, so it is perfectly safe to eat. Honestly, I'm not sure stores would be allowed to sell something that could potentially make you sick. Also, while I don't buy most discounted produce, I do like to buy bananas that have been discounted because they are turning brown. I peel them and stick them in the freezer and use them for banana bread and smoothies. Find the deals and grab them when you can!

And, I'm sure you've heard this one before, but do not, I repeat, DO NOT go to the grocery store when you are hungry! It's a recipe for disaster.

The last category I am going to talk about when it comes to what we should downsize or cut back on in our budget is rent or mortgage. This may be a hard subject for some, but it is necessary. For most people this is not an area they will have to think about, but for those that are really in deep financial troubles, one of the biggest areas to look at downsizing is your home. Do you have a big home that you are paying extremely high mortgage payments on? Have you considered selling it to downsize to something smaller? Personally, I love the idea of small house living. Small homes are easier to clean, cost less in not only the mortgage but also electricity, are easier and less expensive to maintain, and bring families together due to the smaller space. I know it isn't easy to think about, but if you need to make some serious changes, this might be a benefit to you. This could be the step you need to make to work towards a simple life.

Let's also discuss those "extras". I'm talking about work bonuses or income tax refunds. Even gifts of money from family or friends is an extra you could use to help your financial troubles. If you are struggling financially, this is not the time to go on a shopping spree. I know, it stinks. I get it. But sometimes adulting stinks. It's just part of the gig. If you have a lot of debt I would encourage you to put this "fun money" towards that. If you are struggling, use the extra money for necessities. Every year when our tax return comes in I spend it on homeschool curriculum for my three children. I take a moment to sigh a little thinking of all the things I could have bought with it. Then I remember that things don't bring happiness and I go to bed without a heaviness over me knowing I made a good decision for my family.

MONTHLY BUDGET			
<b>Income</b>			
Income #1			
Income #2			
Misc. Extra Income			
Total			
<b>Expenses</b>			
<b>Utilities</b>	Predicted	Actual	Difference
Phone			
Cable			
Internet			
<b>Mortgage</b>			
Mortgage Rent			
Electric			
Insurance			
Water/Septic			
Property Taxes			
<b>Vehicle</b>			
Auto Payment #1			
Auto Payment #2			
Gas			
Oil			
Maintenance			
<b>Debt</b>			
Credit Card #1			
Credit Card #2			
Credit Card #3			
Credit Card #4			
Student Loans			
Line of Credit			
<b>Children</b>			
Childcare			
Clothing			
Extra Curriculum			
Insurance			
<b>Home</b>			
Utilities			
Groceries			
Phone #1			
Phone #2			
Cable/Satellite			
Internet			
Birthdays/Holidays			

If you are looking for a budget sheet to help you get started on living within your means and managing your finances, print off [THIS ONE](#).

Phew! Talking about finances is not very fun. But it is necessary.

**Let's recap some of the key points we talked about in this chapter.**

- **Living a life full of debt isn't sustainable and will catch up to you eventually.**
- **Remove data from your phone if you don't need it for work.**
- **Hang your laundry, and turn out the lights to save on electricity.**
- **Downsize your vehicle, if possible.**

- **Shop the sales, meal plan, and use coupons when possible.**
- **If you are in serious trouble, consider downsizing your home.**



## CHAPTER 4

### THE ART OF BEING "UNBUSY"

We live in a very busy world. But not only do we live in a very busy world, we live in a society that praises busyness. It has become a status symbol. Think about it, how often do you ask someone how they are doing, and they respond with "busy."

We all go through seasons of life that are busier than others, but overall, being too busy causes us to miss those moments in our life that we will regret missing. It can cause us to be stressed, short-tempered with our children and husbands, and frustrated with ourselves because we can't keep up with everything.

Our children, especially, can feel exhausted and anxious when they are being dragged from extra-curricular to extra-curricular, from meeting to meeting, etc.

Now, please, hear what I am saying. There is nothing wrong with extra-curriculars for our children, and many times they can enhance our children's lives. They can encourage self-esteem and exercise the brain. It can teach them co-operation, leadership skills, and confidence. It is when their life is consumed by them that it can become problematic.

Kids need some time to just be kids. They spend many hours in school a day, and often they spend their evenings filled with organized activities, right up till bedtime sometimes! There is something to be said for free time for a child.

The imaginations and creativity of a child come alive when they are given free time to just play. Have you ever seen a child out in nature with just a stick? It always amazes me how the stick can be a sword, or a torch to light up the night as they walk through the forest on their imaginary trek, or a horse to ride through the outback.

These moments are created when children are given some time and some space.

How about the rest of the family? When we clear our schedules a little more, how does it affect us as moms and wives and women?

When I have more availability in my schedule, it gives me more time for the things that truly matter. I am able to spend more time with my family, and am able to be present with them in the moment. It gives me time to read books with my children, go for a walk with my family, or spend time in the kitchen making a meal for them that I know they'll love.

Maybe cooking up a big meal for your family isn't your idea of a good time, and that's okay. But with more time for you and your family and less time rushing around, what would YOU use that extra time for? Would it be watching a movie with your loved ones, or going on more walks, or just curling up on the floor with your child to play some board games?

When our schedules are full it is these family moments or times of peace and rejuvenation for ourselves that often get pushed aside.

Maybe you are reading this and you don't have children, or a spouse. But maybe you can see the benefit of clearing your schedule to make more time to do the things you truly love.

As a homesteader I love to cook, craft, and garden. These are the things that give me peace and calm my heart. I feel more alive when I am elbow deep in ingredients or garden dirt, or craft supplies. Sometimes we are in a busier season of life and have to spend more time away from home. That is okay, seasons come and go. However, I always find myself longing for home in these busy times. A slower life energizes me.

There is only so much of us to go around. We can't do everything, and we can't be everywhere. However, it sure seems like we are expected to do just that in this day and age. Deciding to clear your schedule a little more can definitely feel like it is counter cultural.

But what if you are looking at your schedule and thinking to yourself "I just can't see anything I can let go?" Look a little harder, and don't feel like you have to make any major changes. Start with something small. Could you step down from a commitment for a short time? Could you cut back a weekly obligation to bi-weekly?

When my husband and I look at our schedules and decide it is too full, we often want to honour our commitments. Therefore, while it may be busy for a time, we decide we will finish out the year or month or however long the

commitment is, then take a break. We feel it is important to stay true to our word. But remember, just because you committed to volunteering or taking part in an activity for a time, doesn't mean you committed to doing it indefinitely. Give yourself a chance to breathe and rest.

There are times in life where we need to step back from a commitment early, though. If your health is failing, if there is an illness or emergency in the family, that is extenuating circumstances and is an understandable reason to step back from finishing out a commitment.

When we slow down we make time for things that fill our soul. We give ourselves the opportunity to be who we really are without the pressures of the world telling us that the busier we are, the better people we are which is simply not true.

**Let's recap what we discussed in this chapter:**

- **Being too busy can cause us to be stressed and short-tempered with our children and husbands.**
- **We can easily feel frustrated and angry with ourselves if we can't keep up with everything.**
- **Our children get exhausted and over stimulated when their own schedules are too busy.**
- **When kids have more free time in their schedule, it fosters creativity.**
- **When we have more time in our schedules, we can make room for the little things like spending time with our families, working on our own crafts and hobbies, and filling our hearts with a feeling of peace.**
- **If you feel like there is nothing in your schedule you can let go, start small. Cut back on one of your commitments by taking part every second week instead of every week.**

## CHAPTER 5

### BECOMING SELF-SUFFICIENT

Self-sufficiency is something that we can all benefit from, no matter where we live or what stage of life we are in. Self-sufficiency is a part of simple living because when we are able to do many things for ourselves, we no longer have to fill our days with shopping and services from other places. It allows us more time at home with the ones we love.

Preparedness is probably the greatest benefit of becoming self-reliant. We live in a world where we rely on grocery stores, government, and society to make sure we can always access what we need. But what if there was a disaster or emergency that prevented us from accessing these things? Self-sufficiency allows us to rely less on these establishments.

Self-sufficiency doesn't have to be an all or nothing kind of thing. While some people prefer to grow their own food, raise their own meat, sew their own clothes, and live completely off-grid as a way to be as self-sufficient as possible, other people will find too many changes overwhelming.

Even one or two adjustments in your life can help you become more self-sufficient. You don't need to completely overhaul your life to practice self-reliance.



One of the most satisfying self-sufficient skills you can learn is to grow some of your own food. The wonderful thing about gardening is that you can do it almost anywhere you live! While some of you are able to have a large space for a huge garden, others might only live in an apartment or home without a yard.

The great news is, you can grow a garden without a yard. Container gardening has become very popular in recent years. All you need is a few large pots that you can stick on a balcony and you can grow some fresh vegetables.

If you do have a larger sized garden, you can harvest your vegetables and preserve them to enjoy the bounties of your garden in the dead of winter. This means you will rely less on the grocery store, and more on what you have grown with your own two hands.

Some people raise their own meat by owning and caring for pigs, cows, chickens, or other animals. Others raise chickens for eggs. If you think you can't raise chickens because you live in a city, you might be surprised. Check your local by-laws, as many communities now allow backyard chickens.

Hunting and fishing are also ways you can be self-sufficient. Not to mention, fishing can be a great family activity you can do together.

Keeping bees for honey or tapping trees for maple syrup is a sweet way to be more self-reliant.

Other ways to be self sufficient is to learn how to cook from scratch. Anyone can learn how to make your own bread, muffins, and cakes by opening a cookbook or watching tutorials online on sites such as YouTube or Patreon.

Let's not forget the non-edible recipes you can learn. Cleaning products, soap making, and candles are all items you can make on your path to self sufficiency.

I wrote a great soap making tutorial and you can learn how to make your own soap by following the step-by-step process [HERE](#).

Learning how to fix your own clothes when they rip or break instead of buying new ones is another great example of self-sufficiency.

If you have the option, heat your home with wood heat or solar panels. Even here in Canada where half the year doesn't provide a great amount of sun, there are many that use solar panels successfully for their homes.

Learning how to fix and build things in your home are also a great addition to becoming self-reliant. Being able to build your own garden beds or chicken

coop, or knowing how to fix an old deck or leaky pipe means that you don't have to wait for someone else to do the job for you. You don't need to call and pay someone. When you develop these skills yourself, while still a possible inconvenience, it is an amazing feeling to be able to fix or build items with your own two hands.

You may be thinking, "but I don't know how to use tools, or sew, or preserve, or cook, or garden." Well, neither did I. These are not skills I learned growing up. The great thing about the age we live in now is that you can find step-by-step instructions on how to do just about anything on the Internet. Many of my learning happened by watching YouTube videos or reading tutorials.

Being self-sufficient also includes being frugal. You may have heard the popular saying "*use it up, wear it out, make it do, or do without.*" This is a motto many frugal, self-sufficient people live by. Not only does this help you become more self-reliant, but it also can assist you in saving money and paying off any debt you have.

Becoming self-sufficient is a great addition to a simple life. Being able to fix, create, and grow all that you need helps you live within your means, and gives you peace of mind in knowing that when something is required at your home, you can build, grow, or cook it to meet your family's needs.

**So, let's go over what self-sufficiency can look like.**

**-You can be self-sufficient no matter where you live, even in an apartment.**

**-Becoming self-reliant means you will be more prepared should an unforeseeable disaster or emergency occur.**

**-Some of the ways that you can become self-sufficient is to grow your own food, preserve your harvest, learn to build or fix things around the home, make your own cleaning supplies, and sew your torn clothes.**

**-If you don't know how to do these things, watch YouTube videos or read tutorials online to learn how to develop skills that will help you become self-reliant.**

## CHAPTER 6

### TAKING CARE OF OURSELVES

Simple living means creating a life that decreases the burden of over commitment, stress, and clutter that makes us feel like we are living in constant chaos. Of course, nobody's life is completely free of stress and anxiety, but when we live our life with intention we are more likely to limit the level of chaos surrounding us.

So what about taking care of ourselves? How does self-care fall into a simple life?

Well, what good is a simple life if you are too sick or exhausted to enjoy it?

When I was younger I could eat what I wanted without exercising and have little to no adverse affects. But as I age my body often tells me when it is unhappy. And it is not happy when I don't give it the care it needs.

Sometimes it can feel like adding exercise to our already busy life will add more stress. Trying to fit it in can feel daunting. But the truth is, when we make room for exercise it gives us energy to complete the rest of our day and get more done.

I have had times where I am very committed to exercising daily and I've had many times when I haven't committed to working out. I can tell you that I always feel better when I exercise, and I NEVER regret it. I never finish a walk or a run and think to myself, "I wish I hadn't done that."

Part of a simple life is to enjoy every day to the fullest. It is way easier to enjoy life to the fullest when we have more energy and feel good.

The same goes with what food we put into our bodies. For many people, their healthy lifestyle may look different than others. There are so many different ways to eat a healthy diet these days. From Paleo to keto, vegan to gluten-free, GAPS and SCD diet. The right eating plan will depend on your body, whether you suffer from any ailments, and your budget. But can we all agree on the basics? That more fruits and vegetables and less sugar and greasy foods is the way to go?

If you incorporate a garden into your simple life, those fruits and vegetables will be easier to come by. The satisfaction you will feel when you eat a tomato or cucumber you grew yourself will be unlike any other.

And can you say "FRESH". It doesn't get fresher than picking a vegetable off the vine and eating it right there!

Add a few chickens in the mix and you have another very healthy food to add to your diet. Eggs are one of the healthiest foods you can find. The difference in a farm fresh egg and a store bought egg are undeniable. If you crack a store-bought egg into a pan, and then crack a farm fresh egg into the same pan next to it you will be blown away at the difference of the brightness of the yolks. A farm fresh egg yolk is much brighter.

Aside from exercise and what we put into our bodies, taking time for rest is also an important part of taking care of ourselves. While the simple life can still get quite busy with work to do at home when making things from scratch, caring for animals, and gardening, it is essential to take time when you can to take a breather.

Take a break from the noise. Read a good book. Go for a walk in nature. Or if you need an extended break, get away from it all. Find a place to go, away from the responsibilities of everyday life, at least for a few days.

When you get the chance to recharge every once in awhile you will find it easier to persevere through the busier times.

Taking care of ourselves means trying to keep balance, and keep our stress down. We aren't always in control of what happens in our life, but we can take steps to reduce it's effect. Our bodies get sick when we are overloaded with stress and anxiety. Be sure to take time to manage the burden that weighs on yourself.

**So, let's recap:**

- **Make time for exercise. It will give you more energy to get through your to-do lists.**



- **Feed your body healthy foods like fruits and vegetables. Grow a garden if you are able for easy access to healthy produce.**
- **Limit the stress on your body. take time to recharge and slow down.**

## CHAPTER 7

### UNPLUGGING FROM TECHNOLOGY

There is NOTHING simple about technology. However, for many of us it has become quite necessary in our everyday life. It's how we keep up to date on events and activities. It's how we communicate with those we love who live far away. It's how we obtain information and news.

While some are able to live a life free of technology, for most of us that just isn't possible anymore. But sometimes we can get overwhelmed by the chaos constant technology can create in our lives.

Sometimes we reach a point where the constant dings of messages, emails, and notifications cause us to feel like life just needs to slow down.

When you start to feel that way, it may be time to take a break from all your devices.

That line alone may have caused some of you to feel anxious. We are so reliant on our phones, laptops, and ipads that the thought of not being able to check in can cause us to feel panicky.

The truth is, the first day you take a break from technology you WILL most likely feel a little worse, not better. But as time goes on you will feel a sense of freedom, like a weight has been lifted off of you.

You might feel relief that you don't need to respond to every single message the moment you receive it. Or you might feel happier not reading all the negative news articles.

You don't need to take a huge break. You can decide what works for you. You can take a break for a week, or even a month if you are really brave. If a whole week doesn't work well with your lifestyle due to work commitments or other things that require you to have access to the internet, you can decide that at certain hours of the day you will take a break from the computer or phone.

But, what will you do during that time? If you are anything like me, you may have gotten used to holding a cell phone wherever you go. Browsing at a

moments notice has become second nature. You might be used to answering people's messages the moment they come in.

Instead of using that time for the internet, you now have the freedom to enjoy time with your kids, take a walk in the park, or a read good book. Yes, there is nothing like a real book in your hands. I realize the irony of that statement as I write this e-book. While I love e-books, I absolutely adore a real, hard-copy book. There is nothing as wonderful as the feel and smell of a good book in your hands.

The most amazing thing you will notice when you unplug from technology for awhile is that so much of what you thought was important wasn't as necessary as you thought. The truth is, the world keeps turning whether you are connected or not. If people can't reach you right away they will be just fine. If you don't know what happened in the news today, you will still be okay. You might even be happier.

I'm not suggesting we bury our head in the sand and ignore what is going on around us. But sometimes we are overloaded. We take in too much information. We don't take a break and start to feel discouraged under the burden of it all.

That is why it is so important to take time away from the overload of social media and the Internet from time to time.

Recently our family went off-grid to a cottage where there was no internet, no electricity, and very spotty cell-phone service. I found myself being present with my children and my husband. There was nothing else calling for my attention. I felt rejuvenated by the 5 days we spent off-grid.

Going off-grid isn't always possible though. We can't get away from it all anytime we feel like it. But you don't need to go away to get away from technology for a short time. All it takes is the switch of a button and you can take a break from the online distractions right in your own home.

Sure, it will take a bit more will-power to do it at home. You may need to download an online program to temporarily lock you out of social media or your browser. But there are apps and programs to help you manage your time spent online.

Technology has come a long way. We are so fortunate to have as much information as we do at our fingertips. But sometimes it is beneficial to take a break from it.

**So, what are the key points we can take away from this chapter?**

- **Technology is necessary for most of us, but when you are feeling burdened and overwhelmed by information overload, it's time to take a break.**
- **It's okay to not respond right away to messages and notifications you receive.**
- **Taking a break from technology takes a bit of adjustment since we are so used to being connected.**
- **You will most likely feel a sense of relief as you can now use that time to just "be" with your family, or spend time doing hobbies you haven't had the chance to do in awhile.**

## CHAPTER 8

### HOLDING ON TO FAITH

For me personally, my faith is such an integral part of living a simple life. Every day that I live out here on my homestead I try to have a heart full of gratitude. It isn't hard when I look out my big dining room window to see only trees, fields, and blue sky. Sometimes I get really lucky and see deer or turkeys. And my heart often responds with a prayer of thanksgiving to God.

A simple life is full of amazing, beautiful moments, but it also includes hard, downright ugly times too. When those hard times come, holding on to faith can help us get through.

When we came home to discover we'd lost 6 chickens, I prayed for strength. When we discovered some serious housing issues in our very old farm house, I prayed for comfort. When the power went out for 31 hours and we had no water because we weren't prepared as new homesteaders, I prayed for perseverance.

It is by the grace of God that our family remains intact through some of the mountains and trials we have been through. Simple life or not, hard times will come. We have never been promised a life without difficulty.

So, what are you going to do when those hard days come? When a family member becomes ill, when there is job loss, when your vehicle breaks down? Who do you turn to when the garden you planted to harvest food for the winter fails, or the chickens you rely on for eggs die, or the old farmhouse you've come to love has serious problems that will take a lot of money to fix?

In our house, we hold on to faith in those moments. Because life is full of times that are out of our control. But even if we don't have control, we always have prayer. We always have God. and we can take comfort in knowing that He is in control.

When we slow down in the simple life, it gives us more opportunity for prayer. Prayer is just conversation with God. It doesn't have to be fancy. It doesn't have to be scripted. Actually, it's better if it isn't. But I find that being out in nature makes me feel closer to God. After all, He created all of it. I

love to admire His handiwork and thank him for allowing me the chance to enjoy it.

Prayer and thanksgiving gives me a sense of peace. It calms my heart. It slows me down. Holding on to my faith allows me to enjoy the simple life on a deeper scale.

**So, how can we hold on to faith in the simple life?**

- **Offer a prayer of thanksgiving for the blessings in your life.**
- **When hard times come, go to God for strength, comfort, and perseverance.**
- **Remember that God is in control.**
- **Prayer is just simple conversation with God. It gives us the chance to slow down.**

## CHAPTER 9

### A SIMPLE LIFE IS YOURS FOR THE TAKING

It doesn't matter where you live, or where you are from. You can make a decision to live a simple life. You don't need to be on a homestead, you don't need to live in the country, you don't need to have a full-scale farm. You can live a simple life right downtown of a major city in a one bedroom apartment. That is because a simple life is the decision to live your life more slowly, more intentionally, and with a deeper sense of self-sufficiency. While that will look different for everyone depending on your lifestyle and where you live, the amazing thing is that EVERYONE can add more of a simple life into their home.

There are so many benefits to slowing down your life. We've heard the quote by Gretchin Rubin said again and again, "*the days are long but the years are short*" and there are so much truth to that. Not only if you are parent, but as well as we get older time flies by a lot quicker. Don't you want to spend those days enjoying your life?

I don't want to look back on my life and wish I had slowed down and taken the time to enjoy it. I want to look back and see that I didn't take one day for granted, that I counted my blessings, that I enjoyed the little things. I want to look back and see that I spent time doing the things I loved. I want to look back and see that I enjoyed time with my children and my spouse. Yes, there are responsibilities that must be taken care of. We can't just stop working, or doing the laundry, or making dinner. But we can say no to so many outside responsibilities. We can say no to living above our means so we don't have to find ways to work extra hours to pay for all our "stuff". We can learn to be more self-sufficient so we can work together as a family, at home rather than all going our separate ways every day.

So what about you? Is a simple life something you want to strive for? Do you see the benefits off slowing down in your own life? What will that look like for you?

Making changes will take time. it won't be an overnight thing. Some people like to make drastic changes - downsizing their homes, moving to their own little piece of land, quitting their job, or aggressively paying down debt. Your

journey may or may not look like that. Don't compare yourself to those around you. Living a simple life is not a one size fits all. You need to look at your life, evaluate what is important to you, and then make a change to get where you want to go. But, if you don't do something different, your life will remain the same.

Albert Einstein once said:

*The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.*

If you want your life to change, you have to do something different. If you want a simple life, you need to take the steps that are needed to make that dream a reality.

So what's it going to be? The choice is up to you. If a simple life is what you desire, you won't regret the changes you make to get there. Make a decision to take your first step today.