

Seeking Simplicity



“The only thing you have to do to simplify your life is to decide what is most important to you, and let the rest go.”

It’s January....and you are not alone if the Christmas decorations are still up, there are holiday leftovers crammed in the darkest corners of the fridge and your family holiday letter sits there in a pile, unsigned and unstuffed. The chaos and clutter of the holiday season--which now extends from Halloween to Super Bowl weekend--can get the best of us. It leaves us with a yearning for simplicity.

Simplicity holds the promise that less...is more. We know simplicity when we see it because it causes us to instantly relax and we find ourselves able to take a long, deep breath. We slow down and find more meaning in the things we do. As Leonardo Da Vinci once said, “Simplicity is the ultimate form of sophistication.”



There are “simplicity gurus” out there who will tell you that to lead a more simple life you have to raise chickens in your backyard and make your own dish soap. In truth, the only thing you have to do to simplify your life is to decide what is most important to you, and let the rest go. Once you have committed to your priorities, the rest will fall away.

We can apply this rule of the “most important thing” to every area of our lives. What is the most important way to spend your time? What are your most important possessions? Who are the most important people to you? What is the most important way to use your money or resources? Once you have defined what’s most important, write it down in a diary or journal and visit the list often. Make it your compass for times when you feel stressed. Ask yourself—is this [thing, event, activity, person] more important than the ones on my list? Are they more important than my peace of mind?

Several words that start with the letter “D” can get us moving on a path toward simplicity— define your priorities, de-clutter, down-size, decline unwanted invitations or requests, delete unnecessary tasks from your to-do list, and be direct by saying what you mean and meaning what you say.

Moving toward simplicity will have its challenges. It puts us in a position to say “no” to shopping sprees and volunteer requests. It means we have to deal with feelings of guilt when people around us feel let down by our decisions. Sometimes it involves the hard physical work of filling bags and boxes and carting them off to the thrift store.

The payoff of living a simplified life is great. Simplicity offers the gifts of clarity and focus. When we force ourselves to decide what’s most important, we focus our energies and become more productive. We eliminate the distractions and become more efficient in doing the things we really want to do. Simplicity frees up time and allows you to feel less stressed and fatigued. It can make your sleep more restful and give you more time for exercise and self-care.

For more information about reducing stress and developing positive health behaviors, contact Southeast Health Group at (719) 384-5446.