

Leo Babauta, zenhabits.net.
10 important steps we can take to live a simpler life.

1. **Make a short list.**

Make a short list of the 4 or 5 most important things in your life. What's the most important to you? What do you value most? What 4 or 5 things do you most want to do in your life? Simplifying starts with these priorities, as you are trying to make room in your life so you have more time for these things.

2. **Drop one commitment.** Think about all the things in your life you're committed to doing, and try to find one that takes up time but doesn't give you much value. Perhaps you're on a team, or coaching something, or on a board or committee, or whatever...something you do each day or week or month that you don't really want to do. Now take action today to drop that commitment. Call someone or send an email telling the appropriate person or people that you just don't have the time. You will feel relief. Mr Babauta recommends eventually dropping all commitments that don't contribute to your short list, but for today, just drop one commitment.

3. **Purge a drawer.** Or a shelf, or a countertop. Not an entire room or even an entire closet. Just one small area. Use it as your base, and expand from there. Here's how to purge -

- a. Empty everything into a pile
- b. From this pile, pick out only the most important things, the stuff you use and love
- c. Get rid of the rest. Right now. Recycle it, or put it in your car to give away or donate
- d. Put the stuff you love and use back, in a neat and orderly manner.

4. **Set limits**...for things you do regularly and try to stick with those limits. Today all you have to do is set limits for a few things in your life. Tomorrow, try to stick with them. Focus on the few things that get you the most benefit.

5. **Simplify your To-Do List.** Take a look at your to-do list. If it's more than 10 items long, you can probably simplify it. Try to find at least a few items to eliminate, delegate, automate, outsource or ignore.

6. **Free up time.** Simplifying your life in general is a way to free up time to do the stuff you want to do. Unfortunately, it can be hard to find time to even think about how to simplify your life. If that's the case, free up at least 30 minutes a day to think about simplifying. Or alternatively, free up a weekend and think about it then. How can you free up 30 minutes a day? Just a few ideas: wake earlier, watch less TV, take a walk for lunch, disconnect from the Internet, do email only once today, shut off your phones, do one less thing each day.

7. **Clear your desk.** Here are the basic steps:

- a. Clear everything off your desk and put it in a pile
- b. Process the pile from top to bottom, one item at a time. Do not defer decisions on any item—deal with them immediately & quickly.
- c. For each item:
 - i. file it immediately;
 - ii. route it to someone else;
 - iii. trash it;
 - iv. or note it on your to-do list and put it in an "action" folder. If it's a gadget or office supply, find a place for it in your desk drawers or get rid of it.
 - v. Repeat until your pile is empty & your desk is clear Be sure to get rid of any knick-knacks. Your desk should have your computer, your inbox, perhaps a notepad & maybe a family photo.
 - vi. From now on, put everything in your inbox, and at least once a day, process it in the same way as above.

8. **Clean out your email inbox.** This has the same psychological effect as a clear desk. Is your email inbox always full of read and unread messages? That's because you're delaying decisions on your emails. If you have 50 or fewer emails in your inbox, you can process them all today. If you have hundreds, you should put them in a temporary folder and get to them one chunk at a time (such as 20 per day). Here's how you process your inbox to empty—including emails already in your inbox, and all future incoming emails:
 - a. Process them top to bottom, one at a time, deciding and disposing of each one immediately
 - b. Your choices are to delete, archive, respond immediately (then archive or delete), forward (then archive or delete), or mark it with a star and note it on your to-do list to respond to later (then archive).
 - c. Process each email like that until the inbox is empty.
 - d. Each time you check your email, process to empty.
9. **Move slower.** We rush through the day from task to task, appointment to appointment, until we collapse on the couch, exhausted, at the end of the day. Instead, simplify your life by doing fewer tasks and doing them more slowly. Eat slower, drive slower, walk slower, shower slower, work slower. Be more deliberate. Be present. This isn't something you're going to master right away, but you can start practicing today.
10. **Single-task.** Instead of multitasking, do one thing at a time. Remove all distractions, resist any urge to check email or do some other habitual task like that while you're doing the task at hand. Stick to that one task, until you're done. It'll make a huge difference in both your stress level and your productivity.

Listful Thinking...Using Lists to be More Productive, Highly Successful and Less Stressed by Paula Rizzo. (ListProducer.com)

The act of writing something down is powerful. Some of the benefits:

- List making will reduce anxiety
- List making will boost your brain power
- List making will improve your focus
- List making will increase your self-esteem
- List making will organize your thoughts
- List making will enable you to be prepared

How to make the ultimate to-do list:

- Just write it down
- Organize your list. Break it up in categories – work, home, kids, play, etc.
- Prioritize
- Rewrite
- Repeat
- Be realistic
- Focus

You can make lists either on paper or digital. Ms Rizzo recommends Evernote for digital lists.

Stephan Rechtschaffen, the author of *Timeshifting*.

5 ways to expand your sense of time:

1. **Honor the mundane.** We often treat our days as a series of highlights—the big meeting, a good meal, an outing with the kids—while ignoring the time in between. But the in-between moments are the bulk of our lives. As Buddhist teacher Thich Nhat Hanh puts it: “If I am incapable of washing dishes joyfully, if I want to finish them quickly so I can go and have

dessert, I will be equally incapable of enjoying my dessert. With the fork in my hand, I will be thinking about what to do next, and the texture and flavor of the dessert, together with the pleasure of eating it, will be lost.”

2. **Find quick, easy ways to break a rhythm and enter into a deeper one.** Let the telephone be a bell of awakening. When it rings, stop and take a deep breath instead of snatching it up to answer. You'll find yourself becoming calmer and better able to respond to the call. You can do the same thing when booting up the computer or leaving your home in the morning. The simple act of pausing can help change how time feels.
3. **Create time boundaries.** Each of us needs some time that is entirely our own. Preferably, it should be the same time every day – a half hour after dinner; 15 minutes before the start of work; or an hour in the afternoon. Make this a time for contemplation, for enjoyment of the things around you. Take a walk, listen to music, mediate, read, drink a leisurely cup of tea, or don't do anything. Just make sure your time alone is not interrupted by your to-do list, or anyone else's.
4. **Create spontaneous time.** Remember what a joy snow days were as a child? Adults should create their own snow days—a time for unplanned, unexpected events. Pick an afternoon three weeks from now, write your own name into your appointment book, and leave work early for an unplanned outing. Go wherever your whim takes you. Or pick a Saturday and leave the house with no particular destination in mind. (I did this one day a few months ago in the middle of the week...went to stores I've never been in...it was good to just be by myself).
5. **Create time retreats.** Once a year or so, spend a week or more doing something out of the ordinary that allows you to shift into a different rhythm. It might mean going to the woods, the shore, or some other beloved spot. Choose consciously to go somewhere and be still, and watch time open up to you. Learn to simply be present without the need for anything to be happening.

Breathe... <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2YY8PWHNkYg>

Office Yoga ... darrinzeer.com

Jay Ellard in *mindful* magazine.

Powerful productivity tool of saying “No”

Mr Ellard says “when you give a mindful no, you contribute even more to your team by being clear about what is realistic, which allows the organization to better understand needs, plan for resources & set priorities. This is especially important for companies operating with limited resources.”

It's also important how you say no. Use a respectful tone & provide as much context as possible to the person making the request.

A phrase to experiment with is “that's not going to work for me because...”

If you know you can get to the request, but just not right now, set expectations up front on a timeframe. “That's not going to work for me right now, can we talk again in 3 weeks?”

Another option is to offer help in whatever way you can: “I know this is important to you, but right now my core priorities are X,Y,Z and I'm not able to support this request. Can I help you find someone else who might be able to help?”

Most times, when people feel respected, they are willing to work together to find a solution that is realistic & supports the team even if the conversation begins with No.

Julie Perrine, *The Organized Admin* (organizedadmin.com). Her focus is on organizing and creating systems. She has a newsletter you can sign up for and offers webinars.