

Life is Overwhelming...Choose to Simplify

Buy more, do more, be more! Those are the messages that bombard us today. But what if...what if we chose to slow down and simplify? Could we live with enough, rather than live to excess? Could we slow down and re-learn to single-task rather than multi-task? Is it possible to live more balanced and healthier lives *and* still have more time for our passions, family, friends and ourselves? I do believe the answer is ‘yes.’

I have learned that if I want to successfully manage my life, both personally and professionally, I can more effectively accomplish this by remembering my acronym of “C.O.P.E.” which stands for cutting-back, organizing, planning and engaging.

C – Cut-back: If we cut back on spending, it is amazing how much money we can save. I challenge you to see how many days you could go without spending one dime. Could you make it one day? Two days? Three days? What about a week? My guess is if you have a commute of longer than fifteen minutes to work one-way, one week is likely the longest you can make it on one tank of gas.

O – Organize: It is amazing how much more focused we can be when we are organized. Being organized for me means things are in a particular place and when I want something, I know where to go to reference it or get it. I decided to re-organize my office over this past holiday weekend. Over the last several months when I have been traveling to speak, I haven’t been as disciplined as I know I should be and began to stack materials, documents, files and books around my office. Over the course of the last week, I was struggling to find certain documents that I needed. In only about 45 minutes, I successfully went through piles of paperwork and ended up recycling a huge bag of unnecessary files. I feel as if a tremendous burden has been lifted. I once read, and I wish I remembered where it was, that the average American adult spends roughly one year of our life looking for lost things. Can you even believe it?

P – Plan: When was the last time you carved out time in your schedule to relax? In our hectic lives, we often don’t have time to simply relax and unwind. I find that if I am sitting still, I feel unproductive and sometimes even feel a bit guilty. When that thought enters my mind, I remember that if I want to stay healthy, I need some downtime...time to recharge my battery, time to do nothing, time to daydream. Planning to relax has not been an easy task, but a necessary one. If you haven’t ever tried this before, consider a timeframe of 30 minutes of relaxation for your first week. Whether you enjoy a hot bath, smell a fragrant candle, watch it rain, or sit on your patio listening to soft music, building relaxation into your schedule can be very invigorating.

E – Engage: Being engaged is about being present, living in the moment, realizing the ‘now.’ Being engaged is about being connected to those that are around us, rather than mentally being someplace else. We’ve all experienced a situation when we are talking to someone and he/she seems a million miles away. In our family, my husband and I believe in disconnecting the

numerous devices we have during family time, meal time, time in the car, and anytime we are talking to someone. I like eye contact when I'm communicating with someone, because I tend to feel more connected then. Do you talk when typing on the computer? Do you write yourself an unrelated quick note when you are on the telephone with someone? When your spouse or child is trying to get your attention and you are watching a fun television show, do you turn it off, or partially listen to both? Try disconnecting and truly engaging. Try this activity of discipline for one week and then ask your loved ones and colleagues if they have noticed any differences in your behavior. You just may be surprised by how many people notice and enjoy and enjoy this new, engaged behavior.