

S I M P L E R I V E R

J U L Y 2 0 0 4 – V O L U M E O N E – E D I T I O N S E V E N

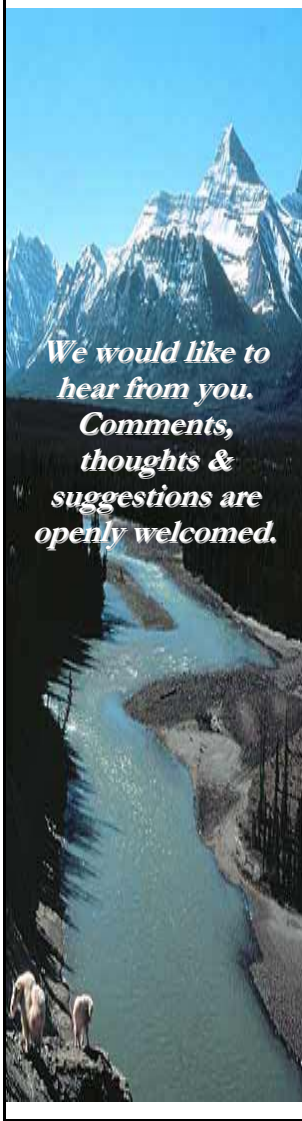
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Lost in Abundance

Peter Jennings, the anchor of ABC's World News Tonight, once said, "Abundance has now become the enemy." His statement brings to light a dangerous truth - having too much can literally ruin us. In today's world we are encouraged to accumulate more and more. Our houses have become storages sheds. Our time is consumed with maintaining what we own. Our garages are seldom used for our cars, our closets get filled up with boxes, and our dining room tables become second offices. There are entire companies now that specialize in selling in-home storage systems. The underlying message is if you could just pack it in a little bit better, then you could keep it all.

To make matters worse, we are inundated with messages to acquire more. Last Christmas season, financial experts were stressing the importance of making purchases to help stimulate the economy (i.e. "Do your patriotic duty to save the world – go buy a blender!").

What no one is selling though, is the idea of simply having fewer possessions. Does this idea resonate with you? If so, here are some possibilities to consider.

1. Get rid of everything. This may sound drastic, but how freeing would it be to literally sell everything you own? How many of your possessions have you really used (or seen) in the last year? Try putting all your belongings in a storage unit, and whatever you haven't pulled out in six months, consider selling or donating. There is a fascinating web site worth visiting at www.allmylifeforsale.com. It's about a guy who sold almost everything he owned, and then traveled across the country to visit his sold items and their new owners. What an opportunity for relationship building!

2. Use your space well. Try to create empty-space in your home. There is a natural tendency to fill up the space given to us. This is bad news for everyone regardless of how big your home is. It means that you will eventually fill it all up and then it will be too small. Simplicity, however, is often more about what is not present, than what is. Compare the current square footage of your house to what percentage is being covered with items. Make a goal to cut it by 10%, 20% or 50%. Re-check it yearly to make sure you are within the allotted space. You could also try downsizing your space. Get a smaller home. Don't want to move? Consider maximizing your space by living in community with others.

3. Stop the inflow. Its one thing to reduce the amount of belongings you have, but it's easier in the long run to reduce the flow of new stuff coming in. Force yourself into choices about what you own. Set a goal that for everything you purchase, you will give away something you currently own of equal size, value, etc. Make yourself wait a few weeks before buying anything big. Big sales that only last one day are seldom all that big, and usually come around again. Ask your friends and family to give you experiences instead of gifts. Most of us would rather have a nice meal with a few good friends than a new pair of pants.

Eco-Notes

If you have a decent washing machine and your clothes are not soiled, try using just a little laundry detergent on a short wash cycle. For items that you wear once and don't get too dirty, this should be sufficient. If you are not satisfied with the cleanliness, add a tiny more detergent the next time. Also, try to hang-dry your wet clothes. They will last longer and you'll use less energy.