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simplicity

as an act of worship

To live more simply is to live more purposefully and with a minimum of needless distraction. The particular expression of simplicity is a personal matter. . . . To live more simply is to unburden ourselves — to live more lightly, cleanly, aerodynamically Simplicity of living means meeting life face-to-face¹

I live in an area badly hurt by the “dot.com bust.” The company I worked for, when faced with declining revenues, decided that my job was “not essential.” Suddenly, after working steadily for decades, I found myself joining the ranks of the unemployed. The shock was deep, even more so since I had no forewarning and had recently left both my partner and the house we had purchased together. I got through the first month by telling myself my skills were valuable, that I’d be snapped up in a moment and be back at work. As it turned out, I was out of work for nearly two years.

This was not by any measure a fun time, but I was able to live frugally on my savings, and during this time I wrote a book, cultivated friendships, and focused on developing my spiritual nature. From being overworked and lacking time to do much of anything, I was given the gift of having almost too much time. My writing flowed at its own pace and long afternoons were spent watching the hawks fly on the thermals outside my apartment’s porch, my inner rhythm reset to follow the sun, not the clock.

For many of us, the desire for a simpler way of living is compelling. Not only because we are overwhelmed by so-called “modern life,” but also because it speaks to a need to nourish our souls. The virtue of simplicity is that it brings about clarity. Those who have made progress in the realm of simplicity have an inner light. It is as if you can see the love of Goddess shining straight through them. They are free to be themselves and, in their presence, you feel free to be yourself.

*I light the flame, burning
all in service
Burning alive*

This poem, which I wrote in 2005, expresses how I feel we all are feeling: burnt-out. It is sometimes difficult to see that we are running on fumes. Burnout tells us we are doing too much. It is a chance to return to a place where we can live our faith, fulfill our life’s purpose, and manifest our will.

We can consciously choose simplicity by staying focused, diving deep, and rejecting consumer culture. We can practice economic simplicity to achieve financial independence, freeing us to live a life of personal purpose. We can purge our possessions, bringing simplicity into our lives by freeing ourselves from distractions.

Many of us spend a lot of time wanting things. Agitated, thrown to the edges, we grasp objects like rafts in a stormy sea. But we can lose sight of an object’s beauty in the obsession to own it for ourselves, and if we invest our Selves into our possessions, we open ourselves up to feeling worthless if they are lost, stolen, or destroyed.

A simple life, a life full of time to see the joy and beauty all around us, is the Goddess’ gift to us. By slowing down, seeing what is truly around us, and, yes, smelling the flowers, we move more deeply toward understanding Her presence in the world. By slowing down, we connect. We connect with the Goddess, with our Selves, with others.

I believe that in honoring the Goddess, I honor myself; by honoring myself, I honor the Goddess — an infinity loop of respect. Simplicity allows me the freedom to honor Her with my full attention. It allows me to live life with my full awareness, from the core of my being. My core creed of “harm none” becomes easier, and I can concentrate on simply being my best in every circumstance.



ambition. brevity. caution. constancy. decisions. dedication. delays. details. duty. efficiency. facts. foundations. patience. permanence. reserve. respect. restrictions. severity. silence. simplicity. stability. abstinence.

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CREATE YOUR INDEPENDENCE

What is at the center of your life? Carefully examine where you spend your attention, your time. Look at your appointment book, your daily schedule... This is what receives your care and attention — and by definition, your love.²

One of the first things you can do to simplify your life is to create financial independence for yourself. Living simply does not require being destitute. Instead, it asks that you get control of your money and make it work for you instead of against you. Having the right attitude and practice when it comes to money can buy an enormous amount of freedom.

If I hadn't had savings prior to being laid off, I would have been forced to take any job that was offered to me. Now that I am back at work, I am re-building those savings. At the core, to free yourself from the money trap, follow a simple rule: Live under your means. This means spending less than you take home from your paycheck. By spending less than you take home, you can begin saving. By saving you give yourself more options for the future.

MAKE GOOD CHOICES

What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us.³

Simplicity means making active, ongoing choices about what is important — in the moment, just ahead, and about what the future will bring. One of the most profound changes I ever made in my life was one of the smallest: I stopped wearing a watch. What began as a symbolic gesture has become a daily practice. I honor the Goddess by acknowledging that in Her presence I am truly outside of time; by not wearing a watch, I am *always* in Her presence. My spirituality entwines my simplicity, and in acknowledgement of Her gifts to me. Although there are times when it is hard to manifest my spiritual nature, that only happens when I have lost contact with Her in my rush to meet external demands — I forget to listen to my Self.

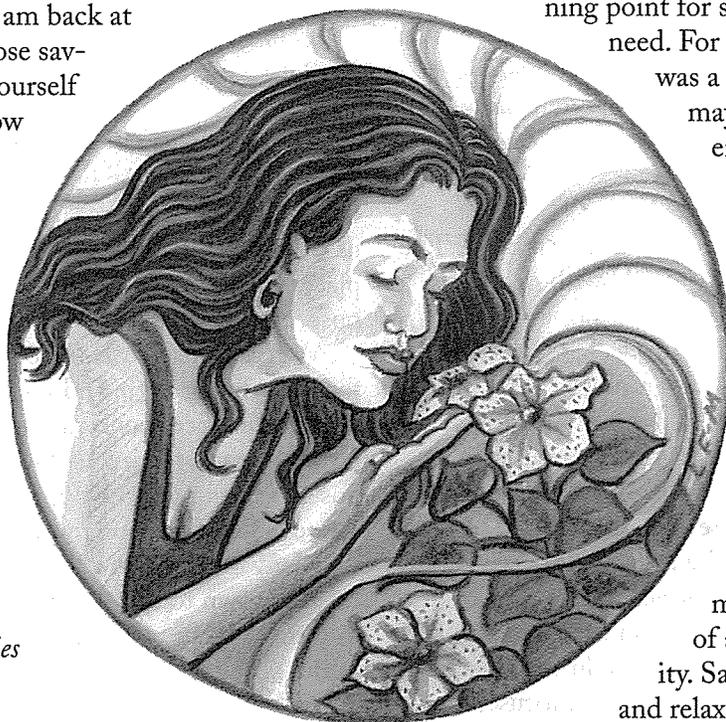
Simplicity within our working life is a matter of achieving a balance. In my own life, I acknowledge my

work as being an important part of my life, but not the only one. I am a director, writer, crafter of beautiful things to bring joy to my friends and family, lover, dreamer, occasional singer, priestess, and teacher. All of the things I manifest in my life have a conscious purpose. Although I am open to inspiration, I am not waiting for it to come to me — I am actively searching for ways in which I can court inspiration and a soulful attitude. I recognize that I am the one in charge of my life. For each of us, this realization can become an empowering step towards achieving simplicity.

A RITUAL OF ASSESSMENT

This is a simple ritual I created to help me assess who I am and what I need in my life. It is a beginning point for shedding that which I don't need. For me, the energy of Saturn was a powerful impetus, but you may find that other deities or energies will work better.

Symbolic words for Saturn are abstinence, ambition, brevity, caution, constancy, decisions, dedication, delays, detours, duty, efficiency, facts, foundations, patience, permanence, reserve, respect, restrictions, severity, silence, simplicity, and stability. Saturday is Saturn's Day, a day of manifestation and structure, of assessment and responsibility. Saturday is a good day for rest and relaxation, forming goals, and for giving and receiving recognition.



On a Saturday, at a time that feels appropriate, cast a circle and seat yourself within. (The first time I did this, I spent more than four hours in circle. Later rituals were much faster.) Have your journal and a good pen in hand. An appropriate incense to burn is amber, or a combination of sandalwood, myrrh, and cypress. (Heating drops of essential oil in water over a candle is a smoke-free alternative.) If you prefer working with herbs, rosemary, dill, St. John's wort, comfrey root and Solomon's seal root are all herbs traditionally associated with Saturn. Light a black or indigo blue candle.

Spend as much time as feels correct contemplating the energies of Saturn. You may want to write the keywords down in your journal and brainstorm with them.

(The first time I did this ritual I wrote them on index cards and played word games with myself.)

When you feel the time is right, ask yourself: *How am I doing? Am I consciously heading in the direction I want to be going? What have I learned?* Journal your responses without censorship.

When you are ready, acknowledge your accomplishments as well as shortcomings. A piece I like to read aloud until it becomes an unending chant goes:

I speak clearly, I speak consistently, I speak lovingly.

I speak from a point of connectedness of all existence.

I speak from the consciousness of I AM.

I AM all these things.

I AM everything.

I AM the points of connectedness of all things.

I AM Love.

I AM Light.

I AM Life.

I AM creation.

I AM the soul, an element of, a projection of, an integrated part of creation.

I AM simply I AM.

Repeating it for as long as I need to, I clear my mind and deepen my connection.

Thank Saturn and any other energies invoked. Open the circle.

RESOURCES

Dominguez, Joe and Vicki Robin, *Your Money Or Your Life*, Viking Penguin, New York, 1993.

Elgin, Duane, *Toward A Way Of Life That Is Outwardly Simple, Inwardly Rich*, William Morrow, New York, 1992.

Luhrs, Janet, *The Simple Living Guide: A Sourcebook for Less Stressful, More Joyful Living*, Broadway Books, New York, 1997.

Nearing, Helen, *Loving and Leaving the Good Life*, Chelsea Green, New York, 1993.

ENDNOTES

¹ Duane Elgin, *Toward A Way Of Life That Is Outwardly Simple, Inwardly Rich*, William Morrow & Co, New York, 1992. p. 24

² Wayne Muller, *How Then, Shall We Live? Four Simple Questions That Reveal the Beauty and Meaning of Our Lives*, Bantam Books, New York, 1997, p. 87.

³ Oliver Wendell Holmes, quoted in *The Simple Living Guide* by Janet Luhrs, Broadway Books, New York, 1997. ©

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13 STEPS TO SIMPLICITY

Sometimes our lives are so complicated that we do not know where to begin to start simplifying, we only know that we need to. The great pioneer of simple living, Helen Nearing, offers eleven wonderfully wise tips for living in a more connected and organic way.

1. Do the best you can, whatever arises.

2. Be at peace with yourself.

3. Find a job you enjoy.

4. Live in simple conditions; housing, food, clothing; get rid of clutter.

5. Contact nature every day; feel the earth under your feet.

6. Take physical exercise through hard work, gardening or walking.

7. Live one day at a time.

8. Share something every day with someone else; if you live alone, write someone; give something away; help someone else somehow.

9. Take time to wonder at life and the world; see some humor in life where you can.

10. Observe the one life in all things.

11. Be kind to the creatures.

To these I would add two of my own:

12. Begin at the beginning, and then go on from there.

13. Choose to keep only those objects that: bring you joy, you use frequently, and are beautiful. Put the rest away. After a period of time, either bring them back into your life, or give them away.