



Too busy? **Simplify.**

Fifty years ago, Anne Morrow Lindbergh wrote a book called *Gift from the Sea*. It fascinates me that she was writing about “leading lives of multiplicity” back then. Yet, even in the last ten years the pace has increased exponentially. Think back ten years. Did you have a cell phone? Did you Google to get information or did you go to the library? Could you open your car door at the press of a button?

These modern conveniences have increased the pace. Americans expect speed, we want what we want, when we want it. We become easily distracted and seem to need more stimulation to avoid being bored. Partly because we have more time on our hands than generations past, there is a pressure to involve our children in more activities and involve ourselves in political and charitable events. Which leads to the constant running from event to event until we feel as if we will collapse in a heap.

Anne Morrow Lindbergh warned that “multiplicity leads not to unification but to fragmentation. It does not bring grace; it destroys the soul.” So, how do we manage the family schedule and avoid over-commitment?

- 1) Set limits.** Decide what’s important to you. Pick one cause. Let your child pick one sport and/or one instrument that they are interested in playing. Prioritize. Pursue the things you really care about.
- 2) Say no.** Once you are clear about the things you care about, it will be much easier to turn down opportunities that aren’t as important to you. Be kind, be gentle, but be firm. Saying no can be a very powerful experience.
- 3) Live with intention.** In the words of Goethe: “Things which matter most must never be at the mercy of things which matter least.” Once you start living consciously you will eliminate the excess and will still find the time to meet your commitments and have time left over to follow your dreams.
- 4) Build *alone time* into your schedule.** Many people spend their days rushing from one activity to the next, without having any time to breathe. After spending time alone it’s easier to return to the demands of day to day life, refreshed.
- 5) Cultivate simplicity.** Practice. Read. Contemplate how you can remove some of the frenzy and add more harmony. Those who have gone before us offer their suggestions. We may not all be able to shed our possessions and go to the woods to live life deliberately, like Henry David Thoreau. But we could all do a little addition and subtraction to our schedules. And *that* could produce a richer life.

Recommended reading:
Gift from the Sea Anne Morrow Lindbergh
Walden Henry David Thoreau

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