



The Athena Wellness Podcast
Episode 235 – Simple Living, Part III – Personal Life
December 13, 2023

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[00:00:05] Kathy Robinson: Welcome to The Athena Wellness Podcast, the show that invites you to take a seat around the community fire and listen to stories that inspire. I'm your host, Kathy Robinson, author, coach and founder of Athena Wellness, a company that's dedicated to supporting you on your journey to live more wholeheartedly.

[00:00:30] Kathy: Hello, and welcome, friends. Thanks so much for joining me today as we continue to explore simple living.

So far in this series, we've had an overview of the concepts of minimalism and then a view into how simple living can positively impact your professional life. Today, we'll spend some time talking about applying simple living principles to your personal life.

As we've learned so far, simplifying your life is not about deprivation or austerity. It's about reducing physical possessions and mental clutter in order to create a more intentional and meaningful life. There are big benefits in doing this. By making conscious choices, we can experience reduced levels of stress and anxiety, increased clarity and focus, improved relationships, improved finances, and an overall sense of ease, and who doesn't want to feel that way in their life?



[00:01:35] A few years back, I saw a news story about wildfires burning on the West Coast of the United States. And I asked myself this question, “If you needed to quickly evacuate your home, what would you take?” Of course, there’s the basics: loved ones and pets go first, followed by phone, wallet, keys, eyeglasses, computer passport, important papers and photos. And if I had the time, I’d also take my writing journals, which span more than three decades.

What I found interesting in doing this quick mental exercise is that everything on this list would easily fit into my car. It made me realize that what I own and what I value are two different things.

This led me to a pile of boxes in my basement that remained from a house move I made years prior. The box contents were a mix of household items from the old house and items I bought when I moved into the new house. The boxes were a source of irritation for me, but I never made clearing them a priority until I saw those wildfires.

That weekend, I blocked off a Saturday morning and got to work. Here’s what I learned that morning:

- Clutter, even if it’s neat, organized and hidden in a basement like mine, impacts physical, mental and emotional well-being.
- The emotional attachment to our stuff is far reaching and can take many different forms:
 - Holding onto reminders of the past and how life used to be;
 - Keeping something “just in case;”



- Hoping to return to a hobby or a project;
- Keeping gifts or heirlooms out of obligation; and
- Giving into our “click and buy” impulses.
- It takes discipline to pause and mindfully let go of the past to trust in life's flow, to give up hobbies that no longer fulfill, to communicate boundaries and bring less things into the home. These are all ongoing practices.
- The feelings that come with letting go are real: sentimentality, memories, fear, guilt, perfectionism, and the realization that a material item is not going to help us be the ideal version of ourselves.
- There is stress associated with the clearing process beyond the task at hand. The realization of the size of the project, the embarrassment of putting off the task, the incongruence of current life and the past and the psychic weight can all lead to overwhelm.

[00:04:37] It all comes down to this. The stuff we own is not passive. It takes time and money to acquire it, and effort and energy to organize, repair and maintain it.

Here's the irony. The boxes that caused so much angst for so long were cleared in a matter of hours. Much of the contents were put in the donation pile, the boxes were recycled and the space was cleared.

What amazed me was how good I felt when it was done. And I have to admit, I kept walking by the cleared area for several days, basking in the empty space.



Now each December I look for opportunities to clear areas of the house and my belongings. I've already made an appointment with a local charity for a donation pickup on January 2nd. From now until then, I'll schedule some time to comb through old belongings and ask, "Does this still add value to my life?"

This process has led to less overwhelm and it frees up space and energy. The resulting serenity and presence makes me think of intentional clearing as a wellness practice, a holistic way to welcome the new year.

[00:06:01] And now your takeaway. What possessions do you have hidden away that are causing discomfort? What would it feel like to let them go? And how might you take a small step in that direction?

Creating a simpler personal life is more than just decluttering or downsizing. A great starting point is identifying what's most important to you and making conscious choices about how you spend your time and energy. This process will help you identify your values and priorities.

It's from this starting place that you can make decluttering decisions that align with your view of a meaningful and fulfilling life. Even so, it's helpful to prepare yourself for a variety of feelings that may surface as you navigate the clearing process, including:

- Overwhelm by the sheer volume of stuff you've collected;
- Fatigue by the sorting, clearing and decision making process;
- Fear of letting go of something you'll regret;
- Emotional attachment to certain items; and



- Recognition of habitual consumerism tendencies.

While it may take some time to work through these emotions, it can help to visualize the outcome of your clearing process – that is, the sense of ease, clarity and freedom you'll experience throughout your days. It can also help to find ways to curb impulse purchases by focusing on quality versus quantity.

[00:07:45] Once your physical space has been cleared a bit, take a look at your digital spaces. Backing up your computer and phone, deleting old files and apps and unsubscribing from unwanted emails can feel just as good as donating belongings that you no longer need.

The last thing to take a look at to simplify your personal life is your daily routines. How you choose to move throughout your days can have a big impact on your well-being.

A routine is just a sequence of actions that can add to our stress levels if we're not attentive to them. There are numerous ways to simplify your routines, including how you start and end your days, which tasks you will choose to do or delegate, how much you pack into your schedule, and how you recharge your energy.

The biggest benefit of being mindful with your schedule is you can redirect that time to connect with your loved ones and yourself. A life with fewer distractions is fertile ground for deep listening, engaged conversations and meaningful activities.



[00:09:04] As we wrap up, here are two things to keep in mind as you consider ways to simplify your personal life. The first is to start small. Find one small corner of your life to focus on and then enjoy that quick win. A kitchen cabinet or a junk drawer are great places to gain momentum because the emotional attachment will be far less than starting the process with something more sentimental.

The second is to be mindful of the inflow of what you're bringing into your life. This can include physical purchases, online habits, and time commitments - all ways you spend your time, attention, money and energy. As the inflow decreases, there will be less to clear over time.

Living intentionally is an opportunity to curate your lifestyle by carefully selecting your experiences, possessions, routines, and relationships. This is a process that takes time, effort and commitment. But the payoff of living a simpler life is profound - less stress and more happiness.

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[00:10:26] Kathy: Thank you so much for joining me today. I know there are many ways you can spend your time. Thank you for choosing to spend it with me. Until our paths cross again, be kind to yourself and show your Warrior Spirit some love.

If you know anyone who could benefit from today's episode, please pass it on. And many thanks for supporting the show by subscribing and leaving a review. It means a lot and it helps others find their way to our circle.



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Until next time, be well!

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[00:11:28] [END OF AUDIO]