



The Athena Wellness Podcast
Episode 236 – Simple Living, Part IV – A New Year
December 20, 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.

So far in this series on simple living, we've had an overview of the concepts of minimalism, how simple living can impact your professional life, and how to simplify your personal life.

Today we'll wrap up this series by exploring how to apply simple living principles to the holiday season. We'll cover:

- The gifts of simple living;
- How to bring a simplicity mindset into the holiday season;
- What I do at the end of each year to prepare for the next; and
- Questions for you to consider as you welcome your new year.



Now I realize that this podcast is being released the week before Christmas, and you may be in the middle of your usual holiday routine. But this is the best time to pause and take notice of the things that are working for you and where you'd like to make some changes for next year. It's also the perfect time to think about how you want to embrace the new year, which you can begin in January once the holiday commitments are behind you.

[00:01:44] I'll begin by stating the obvious. It's an odd time of year, isn't it? The gatherings and celebrations, the traditions and rituals, and then landing in a brand new year.

It can be a time of expectations from others to participate and from yourself to make some life changes. Those are just two examples of why this time of year can feel so heavy.

The antidote, as you may have guessed, is not about setting ambitious plans and resolutions. We've talked a bit about the benefits of simple living. But I want to take a moment for you to imagine what it could feel like to intentionally welcome a new year - that is, to focus on releasing rather than attaining.

A mindful approach like this can offer ease, appreciation and paradoxically, increased productivity. So let's take a look at each one of those:

- **Ease.** With a calmer mind, you're able to cut through the clutter, minimize the noise, and make fewer commitments. You can also create manageable routines that help reduce decision fatigue. And a mindful approach to the holiday season also improves well-being as you become



more aware of how you spend your precious resources of time and money.

- **Appreciation.** This time of year is full of opportunities to spend quality time with loved ones, whether having meaningful conversations, sharing favorite activities, or simply being together. It's a wonderful time to focus on all the things you already have and savoring the things that are meaningful in your life.
- **Productivity.** It could be surprising that operating from a place of ease and appreciation can lead to increased productivity, but I've found this to be the case. When I'm not mentally or physically distracted and have routines in place to allow my mind to wander, I'm more apt to be open to unexplored connections and waves of creativity that lead me to the next step - one that would not have been so obvious to me had I remained in perpetual motion.

[00:04:19] So how do we begin to invite these qualities? Here are three things I do each year that you may want to consider and incorporate at the end of your year:

1. **Reflect.** How do you find the things that innately light you up? At some point each autumn, I get a sense of how I want to spend the holidays or something surfaces that I'd like to try or experience in the coming year. So I open my journal and title a page with the number of the upcoming year, and over the weeks and months whenever I feel inspired, I add to it. What I love about this approach is I don't need to find journaling questions or set



aside an hour to contemplate. I'm simply gathering thoughts and ideas that energize me, that I'm excited to explore as I go about my days. Some years, I come up with a comprehensive list and other years I settle on broader themes. It's as if the elongated brainstorming process organically leads to ideas on how the upcoming season and year can be shaped. It keeps things fresh, and it keeps me engaged.

2. **Expectations.** How do you not get carried away by the holiday spirit and wind up in situations that are counter to the simple living mindset? This is learned by trial and error. So knowing you won't always strike that perfect balance is a great place to start. When you can set self-compassionate internal expectations with yourself, such as attending to your own well-being, then you can be more empathetic when navigating external negotiations, such as accepting invitations or continuing long-standing traditions.
3. **Experiment.** How do you begin to invite ease and appreciation? Try new things that focus on what matters most to you. Have conversations with those in your circle. You may get pushback, but you may also find that your suggestions are met with relief because you're giving voice to what others feel. If you find your family and friends are not onboard, you can still give yourself some of the things that you're longing for: a deeper connection, a wellness boost, or a quiet walk enjoying the seasonal weather.

[00:07:09] Now that we've established how it feels to embrace a simple living mindset during the holidays, I'm going to share three of my favorite ways to



bring the year to a close and welcome a new one, along with some takeaway questions for you to consider.

Here are three things that help me prepare for the new year:

1. **The power of retreat time.** This can vary greatly year to year depending on family plans. During the years when I'm traveling or there are commitments I agree to, I'll find periods where I can get some alone time to reflect and dream, maybe an afternoon in a coffee shop or during a drive or a flight. Anytime I can be undisturbed for a bit with my journal on my lap and earbuds in will do. But there are years, this one included, where I block out the time months in advance so I can be home near the fireplace for longer sessions. This year's retreat will also include a [five day ProLon fast](#) which will allow me to focus on resetting and restoring my body, while having time for reading and journaling near the fire and preparing my physical space for the new year.
2. **Looking back to look forward.** I love setting up my calendar for the new year during the week between Christmas and New Year's. Before I plan anything, though, I look back over the previous year, week by week and note things that worked well, what didn't work well, and where my actions fell short and didn't get me where I wanted to go. This exercise also gives me time to be grateful for all the experiences I had, for what I learned and how I grew. Once I integrate the current year, I create a new annual calendar, taking the time to finalize a few personal and professional priorities, including something that feels a bit beyond my reach,



something that challenges and scares me just a little bit. Last year it was doing a solo cross country trip and teaching my course for the first time. Once I have my priorities, I'll do a little planning for the first quarter and the first week of the year. As I write this, I'm having fun considering upcoming opportunities that will engage my curiosity, exploration, and sense of adventure.

- 3. Creating an overall theme.** I used to be all about New Year's resolutions. Not so much anymore; they kind of remind me of my Wall Street days when my resolutions were as detailed as my work plans. What worked really well for me last year was creating a theme for the upcoming year and seeing where it led. In 2023, my theme was inspiration and I made a little note in my calendar each day as a reminder. Exploring that theme throughout the year led me to new territory, personally, through things like the cross country road trip, hitting new CrossFit goals, and reestablishing my meditation practice. From a professional standpoint, I've gone to new places in my teaching, coaching, and up-leveling my business chops. Once I choose a theme for this year, I'll use the look back lessons I mentioned previously to determine what I'll continue doing because it's working, what I'll stop doing because it's depleting my energy in some way, and what I'll start doing because I feel motivated to do so.

[00:11:11] And now your takeaway. Here are five questions to work with so you can enter the new year feeling enthused and rejuvenated:



1. How can you find some quiet time to bring this year to a close and welcome the new one?
2. As you look back at the current year, what did you learn and how did you grow?
3. As you look forward, what activities or habits will you start, stop or continue?
4. What will truly nourish your mind, body and spirit throughout the year?
5. What calendar boundaries would be helpful so you can devote time to these activities every week?

[00:12:05] As we wrap up this episode and this series, I'm reminded that the more I pay attention to my body, mind and spirit, along with keeping my physical and mental spaces streamlined, the more attuned I become to my own inner compass, which allows me to make intuitive choices that align with my innermost values and desires.

Recommitting to a simple living mindset each year has become an annual holiday tradition for me. After many years, I'm now in a place where I enjoy the best of both worlds – quality time during the holidays with family and friends, as well as solo time to regenerate and welcome the new year with open arms and an open heart.

And that's what I wish for you – the feeling of embracing the new year with a sense of lightness and freedom, living your life, one that's filled with simple joys and brimming with purpose and meaning.



Have a wonderful holiday season. And Happy New Year!

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[00:13:19] 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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[00:14:21] [END OF AUDIO]