

breathing space

Small ways to simplify your life

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If you could undertake simple activities for the next couple weeks that would take a little effort but ultimately would enable you to have an easier time of things, would you do it? Good, because here are some tools of the trade when it comes to making your life simpler.

WHAT ELSE WORKS?

Ask yourself, "What else accomplishes the same ends?" Before you buy an electric can opener, for example, have you tested new mechanical can openers? Some are available for \$3 or less and work so well that lids practically glide off. If you have arthritis, the electric ones make perfect sense. If you're otherwise adept, the

low cost simple substitute does the same job.

The same principle applies when shopping for an alarm clock. Do you need a souped-up, overloaded, combination radio, alarm, snooze button, timer, extra large display, built-in phone, and who knows what else? So many gadgets, so many instructions, so little time. Identify your major need—perhaps a good quality alarm, with an overly large red, lighted display so that you can see the time without your glasses, and nothing more. If so, pay less, sleep just as soundly, and make your life simpler.

LOOK FOR MORE WAYS

Suppose that your postal carrier

frequently mis-delivers mail to your house. It belongs to previous tenants, or someone down the street. Why not put the names of all the residents on the inside of your mailbox? The next time a postal carrier might otherwise deliver someone else's, he or she will know better. Hence, one less item in your day that you don't need to deal with.

Post reminder labels. If lights or appliances need to be turned off at certain times of the day, and household members or co-workers frequently forget this, post a label on the spot to increase the probability that the proper action will be taken. Whether you use a computer and label paper, or simply hand write a note on a post-it pad, leave notes near the stations of your

life that help to simplify things.

Near the coffee pot at work leave a note that says turn off by 5 p.m. Similarly, around your home, create notes to help other occupants know the proper times to take proper action.

Change the appearance of labels to keep the message fresh. After a while, the notes become part of the environment, i.e., people don't notice them anymore. In that case, change their color, use stars or flare pens to draw attention to them.

When notes don't work use timers. If the item is crucial, install a timer so that an appliance or device automatically turns off. Timers are available for a nominal fee and offer a wide variety of options. As the mighty micro-chip gets smaller and more powerful, more appliances will have a built-in automatic shut-off feature. For now, simple electric timers, either with a hand dial or digital keypad, are widely available.

SPREAD THE SIMPLICITY

Whether at work or at home, let others in on your campaign. Though at first some may scoff or not take it seriously, your actions will speak louder than words. With many people, you'll win their silent if not vocal approval. After all, they have to make their way in this overly complex world as well.

Co-workers, family members, or those who simply spend time with one another can greatly simplify each other's lives by keeping communications concise, maintaining clutter free work or living spaces, and giving one another a moment here and there to pause and reflect. ■

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