

Simplifying

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Sometimes our attempts to be happy backfire. One of the ways we attempt to be happy is to maximize our choices. Here are some things to try as experiments to discover whether having too many choices might be making you less happy.

Make a "Not to Do" list

Notice what you are doing that is draining your energy, wasting your time or isn't aligned with your values and preferred life directions. If necessary, make post-it notes to remind yourself of what not to do (and why if that will help) and put them in strategic places in your life (for example, put one on the television if you have a habit you would like to change of watching mindless television shows and remind yourself to read a book, spend time with a loved one or just go to sleep earlier).

Get rid of one non-essential item per day

It could be some papers in a stack that has been sitting for some time; it could be an object that you no longer use or which no longer fits you or your life. Find one thing each day and donate it, give it away or toss it out.

One thing at a time

Stop multi-tasking and experiment with doing only the thing you are doing. Or attend only to the person or experience you are with at the moment. Listen to and watch the person you are conversing with (rather than texting, glancing at the television, thinking about what you will do or say next, etc.).

Slow down

Try driving the speed limit. This may mean you will have to leave earlier to ensure you are on time. Eat your food more slowly and consciously. And so on. Where are you going so fast you are missing the process and experience?

Say no to new projects or possibilities

Experiment with not taking on new projects or activities for some set period of time (a day? a week?). [Are you reading this Oprah?] Realize that enough is enough.

Baby steps

Try doing only one small thing each day or week or month that leads in the direction you would like to go or keep heading. This might involved building a new, more healthy habit or stopping an old, less helpful habit. Or it might be doing something toward a big dream or goal.