

Circle Session 2: **Less is More!**

Readings from *Less is More*:

- p.41: **Finding Real Wealth: Twice the Value for Half the Resources** by Dave Wann
- OPTIONAL: p.92: **Simplicity Isn't "Voluntary" Anymore** by Ernest Callenbach

More:

- **The Joy of Less**, a 2014 TEDx talk by Kim Coupounas:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iGHzqmnGH4A>
- **Downsize Your Life: Why Less is More**, a 2017 TEDx talk by Rita Wilkins:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eoFPJk4HsgE>

Materials:

- **Circle Session 1 Action Commitments** (from last session)
- **Reflection** form (small ¼ page form with the reflection prompt and room to jot down notes)
- Writing utensils (for the reflection forms)
- **Surpluses and Deficiencies** handout (¼ page)
- Tedx Questions (they should have thought about these)

To be completed BEFORE session 2:

Ideal Day Exercise

(taken from *Live Simply: A Simplicity Circle Study Guide for the Waterloo Region* available at:
<https://www.theworkingcentre.org/sites/default/files/live-simply.pdf>)

This exercise is meant to give you a sense of where you want to be, to help you understand what you are looking for in simple living.

Close your eyes and take some time to imagine a day in your life that you could live exactly as you like. This is an ordinary every day kind of day, not a vacation or special event, just you living your regular life. Imagine it in as much detail and color as you can, from the moment you wake up to the time you go to bed. Be as extravagant as you like, throwing in all the luxuries that you want.

Once you have written as much as you can, look it over. What is the most noticeable aspect of your ideal day? What surprises you?

Now it is time to pare it down a little. Separate the necessary aspects from the luxuries. What, who, and where is absolutely essential in your day? What would be great, but you could really live without? What does a revised ideal day look like?

Compare your present daily routine to your revised ideal day. What do you already have in your life? What's missing? What do you need more of? What do you need less of?

Tedx Questions

After you watch the Tedx presentations, take some time to think about the questions asked at the end of each – is there an action commitment that you might do related to these questions?

Start of Session 2:

Action Commitment Check In

Pull out last session's Action Commitments in case people need to be reminded. Remind group of the dialogue protocols and encourage sharing with minimal cross-talk to allow everyone a chance to complete their thoughts (if they want to):

- Were you able to follow through on your action commitments? (no judgments, it is okay if it didn't happen, people can share or not)

Reflection Session Starter

Hand out the ¼ page reflection form to each person. Ask them to take a few minutes to think individually about the reflection question before discussion begins. Ask them to jot a few notes down so that they can share with the group later – about 3 minutes. It is okay if they don't have everything written down, as long as they have thought about the questions.

Reflection

Remember a time when you felt you were living simply, as a child or adult. What were you doing? Where were you? Who were you with? How did you feel? Jot some notes down here, be prepared to share as you feel comfortable.

Once everyone has finished the individual part of the reflection, then you are ready to do a group share. If you have a large group, then I recommend that you split the group in half to allow for a better sharing experience (and to change up the setting and get people up and out of their chairs). Ask them to share their stories with each other – allow about 10 minutes or so depending on how engaged people are.

If you have split in half, then have everyone come back together for whole group discussion:

- What common elements or themes occurred in our stories?
- What makes it hard to live simply in your everyday life?
- How far is your daily life now from that time that you remembered?

Ideal Day Go-round

Divide in half again if necessary (maybe split differently, so that they get close interaction with different people, whatever you think). Each person will share their ideal day and their reactions to it – try to keep general discussion to a minimum until everyone has had a chance to share (maybe 3-5 minutes a person?).

Come back together for general discussion. If you are having trouble getting people to talk (or to not talk), one tactic you can take is to ask them to share someone else's idea, or to relate the questions below to someone else's ideal day:

- Do ideal days connect to voluntary simplicity?
- What roles do money, work, time play?
- What part of an ideal day do people already have in their lives?
- What are people missing from their lives (that is not ideal)?

Wann Essay and Agree/Disagree

Pass out ¼ sheet with lists of surpluses and deficiencies.

David Wann (essay on p.41-46) says that our North American lifestyle of overconsumption creates deficiencies in things that we really need. Here are two lists compiled from this essay detailing things that Wann considered us to have in surplus and things that are generally lacking.

- How do these lists match with what we have talked about so far?

Ernest Callenbach (essay on p.92-100) says that **“Happiness is more dependent on relationships than on goods.”**

- Do you agree or disagree?
- Can you give an example from your own life?

Surpluses and Deficiencies in American Lifestyles (from Wann essay, p.41-46)

Surpluses

Stress
Material wealth
Debt
Waiting in line
Long commutes
Junk mail
Household chores
TV / Screen time
Electronic gadgets
Pollution
Indoor time
Manicured landscapes
Fast food
Convenience Stores

Deficiencies

Good Health
Time for self
Time for family
Time for friends
Social connections
Relationships
Creative activities
Vacation time
Amateur sports
Exercise
Gardening
Experiences
Nature

Give them a minute to think about this individually, then discuss, maybe in pairs?

Tedx Talks and Commit to Action

They should have thought about the questions that each TEDx speaker asked at the end of their talk. Hand out the questions, to remind them about that. If there is time ask if anyone has a reaction to either of the TEDx talks, or to their questions, that they would like to share.

What step toward simplicity will you commit to today? Take a moment to consider what you would like to commit to doing before the next circle session. It can be something that will bring you closer to your ‘ideal day’ or something that you thought about in response to the TEDx speakers’ questions, or it could be something else that has been on your mind to do. **This circle is here to support you in whatever way you choose to simplify.**

When all are ready, ask each member to say what they would like to commit to doing, and have them record it in one of the circles on the **Session 2 Action Commitments** form. Remind everyone that one aim of the circles is to provide support and encouragement as we try to simplify, so if you don’t get your action done, that is okay – in other words don’t skip the next session if you don’t get your action done – everyone is welcome and everyone is valued no matter what state of simplicity they find themselves in.

Rita Wilkins Questions

Is there an area of your life that is totally out of control?

Are you willing to disrupt that part of your life that’s preventing you from living more?

What’s one thing that you will do today to begin living the life you love?

Kim Coupounas Questions

What is that abundance, that joy, that your heart aches for?

What can you have less of to make room for it?