

Circle Session 3: **Where Did the Time Go?**

Readings from *Less is More*:

- p.64: **Like Corn in the Night: Reclaiming a Sense of Time** by Rebecca Kneale Gould
- p.180: **The Speed Trap** by Jay Walljasper
- OPTIONAL; p.142: **Culture as a Guidepost to a Balanced Life** by Cathy O'Keefe

More:

The second essay in the *Less is More* book is by Wanda Urbanska (p.8-17). She created a series of ½ hour programs for PBS called 'Simple Living with Wanda Urbanska.' Curious about these programs, I did some internet searching and found that the first episode of her 3rd season had to do with time. I could not find the entire episode, but here is a 4-minute teaser:

- **Overcoming Overload** video clip from Simple Living with Wanda Urbanska, episode #301 (first aired January 2007): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZTmiDxyPhV4>

Materials:

- **Circle Session 2 Action Commitments** (from last session)
- **Reflection** form (small ¼ page form with the reflection prompt and room to jot down notes)
- **Give One, Get One** chart (should bring with the first row of this chart already filled out)
- Writing utensils (for the reflection forms and Give One, Get One)
- **Steps to Restore Balance in Time-Starved Lives** handout
- **Steps to Reduce Carbon Footprint** handout
- **Circle Session 3 Action Commitments** forms for this session

To be completed BEFORE session 3:

Complete the first row of the *Give One, Get One* chart

You have read a couple of essays and watched a short video clip all about time and balancing time in our lives. Fill out the first row of the *Give One, Get One* chart and bring it to session 3 (chart should have been distributed at the end of session 2, or you can get it on the website). Leave the second row blank, you will use that row during simplicity circle session 3.

Track Your Time for One Week

(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>)

Choose a week to track your time. Just before bed at the end of each day of that week, make brief notes about what you spent the day doing. Don't worry about being precise, just give a general figure to each of your activities. If doing a whole week seems too onerous, then at a minimum choose one typical weekday and one typical weekend day to track.

Start of Session 3:

Initial Business and Action Commitment Check In

If needed, schedule the next session; also remind people of the rules of engagement as needed. Pull out last session's Action Commitments in case people need to be reminded.

- 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)

Opening Reflection – Tracking Time

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 5 minutes. It is okay if they don't have everything written down, as long as they have thought about the questions.

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 circle into groups of 3 to 4 to allow for a better sharing experience (and to change up the setting and get people up and out of their chairs). Ask the group(s) to share their stories with each other – allow about 10 minutes or so depending on how engaged people are.

If you have split into groups, then have everyone come back together for whole group discussion:

- What common elements or themes occurred in our timelines?
- What makes it hard to balance time in our lives?
- What are some ways to slow down?

Give One, Get One – Time and Simple Living

Everyone has hopefully filled out the first row of the *Give One, Get One* chart prior to this session. As they read the essays and watched the 4 minutes video clip they should have written down at least one idea that resonated with them, or one personal connection that they made, in each of the three boxes. The purpose of Give One, Get One is to have one-on-one dialogue with 3 different people, and then return for whole group discussion with ideas to share from the paired dialogues.

Procedure:

1. Pair off (**Partner A** and **Partner B**)
2. Person who has the most siblings begins (you are **Partner A**)
3. **Partner A** shares ONE idea or connection from their first row with Partner B (it doesn't matter which idea you share, but once you share that one you will not share it again).
4. **Partner B** paraphrases back what was shared and jots it down on their chart.
Paraphrasing is important here because it establishes that you understood what the idea was and its connection to the time and simple living theme (and also shows that you were listening and value your partner's idea)
5. **Partner B** now shares ONE idea or connection with Partner A.
6. **Partner A** paraphrases back what was shared and jots it down on their chart.
7. **Find new partners**; decide who starts first and repeat steps 3-6 with a different idea
8. **Find new partners one more time** and share your last ideas (steps 3-6)
9. Return to the big circle for whole group discussion!

Reflection

Looking back on your week of tracking time, where did the time go? Do you feel good about how you use your time? Is there something that you might change? How can you find enough time to do all that you want to do? Are there some ways that you can slow down? Are there links between time and relationships? You do not have to answer every question! Jot some notes down, be prepared to share as you feel comfortable.

Whole Group Discussion

Ask each person to share at least one idea that came from one of their three partners (preferably one of their partner's points, not their own). Allow time for follow-up discussion of each point as needed. Note any patterns, key points, or common areas of concern.

If discussion isn't happening, then here are some possible discussion questions

- How many of you take the time to do nothing ("grow like corn in the night")
- At the end of Rebecca Gould's essay (p.64-73) she says that we can make taking back our time a public conversation and a public movement. Any ideas as to how we can actually change our culture of overwork and time famine?
- Do you feel like the pace of your life has 'cranked up' to a higher level than 30 years ago? Has there been a 'dramatic speed up of society' as suggested by Jay Walljasper in his essay (p.180-190)?
- Do you know anyone who has slowed down their lives (including yourself) – what did they do and what were the positive/negative outcomes
- In his essay (p.180-190), Jay Walljasper asks: How do we begin to apply the brakes in our lives when the world around us seems to be stomping on the gas pedal?
- How can you start a 'slow is beautiful' revolution in your own life?
- We could ask the same questions that Wanda Urbanska asked people in her episode on **Overcoming Overload**: Do you have enough time in your life? *and* Why do you think that you don't have enough time?
- How can we go about restoring balance in our 'time-starved' lives?

Commit to Action

Pass out: *Steps That Some Have Taken to Restore Balance to Their Time-Starved Lives*
Some Steps to Reduce Carbon Footprint

Many of the participants in our simplicity circles have expressed concern about the environment and a desire to take climate action by personally reducing their carbon footprint. So, Barb has included a handout related to that (urls for the information on this handout are posted on the website). If anyone has other sites to recommend for individual climate action, let Barb know. There is undoubtedly more that can be done than what is on this list. The other handout includes ideas for time simplification.

What step toward simplicity will you commit to today? Take a moment to consider actions that you can take to restore time balance to your life by potentially slowing down and investing time in what matters most to you.

What you would like to commit to doing before the next circle session? It can be something that will restore balance in an overbusy life and/or something that puts you further on the road toward climate action. **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 3 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.