

Summer a Time to Simplify Life

Before the summer is filled with activities, it is a good time to think about your families' lifestyle. Consider taking some time to evaluate your family schedule. Are you doing what you really want to be doing? Are you letting life get filled with too many things that do not bring meaning to your family? Some things cannot be changed, some things have to be done, but there are other things that could be eliminated from your life.

Consider the following and then spend some time deciding if your family life is what you want or if there are other things you could do to lead a simpler life. An off-course test pilot once radioed back to the control tower, saying, "I'm lost, but I'm making record time." Many families are like that test pilot, moving faster, doing more. With little time for reflection, one activity after another is squeezed into frenzied lives. But are you really getting anywhere? What would it take to put your family on course to a simpler lifestyle, an uncluttered, focused, and rich life?

According to University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension specialist Sam Quick and Robert Flashman, it is important to let go of nonessentials so that your family can embrace what's most meaningful. This involves clearing away things that clutter your life and detract from what you really want. It means taking a fresh look at what you value and making sure you're spending your time, energy, and money to support your goals. Voluntary simplicity doesn't mean a bare-bones budget or shunning the wonders of modern technology. It may mean buying new technology to be able to keep in contact with family members. It may mean splurging for a family vacation you have talked about for years before the children are away from home. Because every family has different values, gifts, and dreams, the ways of determining what is best for your family will be unique to your family. There is no one right way. Each must follow their passions, listen to each family member's thoughts, and create your own lifestyle.

Think about your dreams, values and life goals. List the five most important things you want to do with your family. Look over your answers. Of all the things you listed, put a star by the three most important. What steps toward your dreams and goals do you want to begin taking this summer?

This is a good first step to making sure your lifestyle is what you want it to be. Spend some time soon reflecting on your family's lifestyle and determine if you are heading the direction you want to be.