

Simple Living Workshop

Background

Genuine spirituality has always had a component of caring for the relationship we have with matter and the way in which we use physical resources. This concept has been at the heart of many traditions. For example, Catholic monks take a vow of poverty, and many of the indigenous people from America would never kill prey unless the animal was to be used by the community.

Added to this concept of 'care', many traditions uphold the consciousness about the importance of restriction, independence, simplicity and freedom from desires.

Today, due to over consumption, and our consumer attitudes, we have reached a point of overload on the climate, and the Earth. Therefore, the relationship we have with all natural resources has become an emerging, essential and popular issue.

The overriding question is, "What will happen to our climate and matter if we carry on this way?"

By consuming less we will free the Earth and matter from needing to adapt to this burgeoning demand, prevent it becoming barren and in a state of ecological crisis. If you wish to learn more about this you can look at the Footprint Theory: <http://www.demesta.com/ecofoot/eng/introd.htm>

Food for Thought

- The aspects of things that are most important to us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity — Prof. Ludwig Wittgenstein
- The ability to simplify means to eliminate the unnecessary so that the necessary may speak — Hans Hofmann, artist
- Any intelligent fool can make things bigger, more complex, and more violent. It takes a touch of genius—and a lot of courage—to move in the opposite direction — E. F. Schumacher

Two suggested workshops formats follow. A detailed, minute-by-minute version is also available if you would like to have more specific instructions.

Workshop 1: (70 mins duration)

Note: This workshop requires three facilitators, one for each group.

1. Introduction (5 mins)
2. The participants could be divided in three groups and reflect on one saying per group. (5 mins)
2. Then the facilitator of each group could read the sayings and the participants could be asked to remember a story where it has been proven right in their life. (10 mins)
3. Then they could share the fruit of their reflections and stories in pairs. (15 mins)
4. They could then be asked to reflect on the impact of simple living in groups of four. (15 mins)

*Let's imagine we have to cut in half our consumption. What would we choose to be free from?
How would we then use the spare resources and energy we have not used in consumption?*

5. The result of the group discussions could then be shared in the plenary by a designated rapporteur for each group. (15 mins)

6. Conclusions. (5 mins)

Workshop 2: (95 mins duration)

1. Introduction (5 mins)
2. The participants may sit in a relaxed manner with background music playing while the facilitator slowly reads this question to them...(15 mins)

Remember a moment in your life where things were simple and easy...Where you did not need much to be happy...share this experience with someone in your group who you have not met before today.

3. Then ask participants to sit quietly again and slowly read them the following questions, allowing them some time to reflect between each question (during which they could write down their answers) (12 mins)

What do you feel you don't need in your life at this moment in time and that you could free yourself from?

What would you gain from freeing yourself from this, what benefit in kind, energy and relationships?

What difference would it make in your life if you were free from this?

What inner change would you have to undergo?

Would it make a difference for those around you and/or the people of the world?

4. Ask participants to form a new group of four and listen to each other's answer...then choose a reporter to share the essence of all answers later in the plenary (see step 5). (20 mins)
5. Then, in each group, ask them to reflect individually and then calculate for their group. (15 mins)

If you were to measure this at the scale of a year, what difference would it make for the world, how much money, energy and resources would be saved per year? Try to calculate it and add the amount for the four members of the group.

6. The result of the group discussions could then be shared by a designated rapporteur to the plenary. (5 mins)
7. Conclusions and visualisation (10 mins)

Visualisation about Simple Living

The facilitator can ask the participants to sit in a relax manner and play soft ambient music and start speaking in a soft (but audible) voice.

We can all seat peacefully and allow our mind to rest and send also to our body cool and soft vibrations...By thinking that life or things are complicated for ourselves, we become fearful, rigid and unable to find solutions...On the contrary, when we are simple and trust that solutions to problems is only a thought away, we allow our capacity to find solutions to emerge from our inner wisdom by freeing ourselves from complications; I become free. The true needs of a human being are very few. The complexity of greed and desires make life very complicated. In silence, I allow myself to come back to the essential of what I really want to experience beyond the 'have' and 'have not'; I just want to be maybe peaceful, maybe happy, maybe content, maybe free. Whatever may feel right, experience it now.

The belief that we need things to be happy is very deeply instilled in our sub-conscious beliefs, but for a minute or two, I can allow myself the luxury of simplicity and just simply be happy with nothing, just know my own inner potential to experience contentment and these strong vibrations... I can dissolve within the power all my needs and dependencies.