Disclaimer: These are rough notes we use to prep for the show. Please excuse typos, etc.

Simple Life Together Episode 56: Beware of the Comparison Trap!

"Hi and welcome to Simple Life Together, a podcast dedicated to leading a simpler life in the modern world"

I'm Dan Hayes.

And I'm Vanessa Hayes.

Hi and welcome back to Simple Life Together! On the last episode of the show we shared 7 habits that you can develop to help make your life simpler. Today is all about the comparison trap.

Thesis Statement

Whether we're hard-wired for it, or it's learned behavior, we all fall victim to the comparison trap from time to time. Whether it's houses, cars, paychecks, toys (I'm not just talking about kids' toys here, I'm talking grown up toys

like boats, motorcycles, gourmet kitchens, tech gadgets, you name it)...from time to time we find ourselves comparing what we have against what others have. And it's not just when you have less, but we tend to compare just as much when we have more than others too.

Major Takeaway (Introduced)
So what does comparison do for us? Does it make us jealous, like we've been slighted? Are we envious, like we deserve something too? Or maybe we feel proud and superior because we have more or better quality things? Maybe the something to strive for is, when it comes to "stuff", to try and stop comparing altogether?

That's not to say that there's no place for comparison. When used as a tool...and when used objectively...it can be a good thing.

Take for instance when it comes to determining who is the right fit for a job or position at a company or on a team. Comparison is ok when strictly used to determine a person's skills and qualifications to perform a job or fill a position.

Sure, and Comparison is also good when determining the quality of products or services that we invest in. For

instance, comparing prices, materials used in a product, where we'll get the best value for an education or the experience level and ratings of a service provider...those are most definitely legitimate reasons to compare. These may actually be considered healthy reasons to compare.

But comparison becomes a trap when we use it or succomb to it to determine our value and self worth….or even worse...the value and worth of others. You see, when we compare ourselves to others it leads to nothing but discontent and unhappiness. And here's why:

- Comparison is one of the negative side effects of our over-consuming society that tantalizes our subconscious with the false notion that our success is based on being rich, famous and having more, more, more.

- That "gotta have more" mentality automatically puts us in the race of "trying to keep up with the Joneses." But Dan...you have said in past episodes, where does that really lead us? Do we ever achieve enough? There will ALWAYS...I repeat ALWAYS be folks with more stuff. Dan, can you repeat that saying about stuff and happiness?

- If you're not happy with the stuff you have now, would you be happier with twice as much? How about 10 times as much? Chances are, you'd be happier with half…

- Have you ever found yourself in a situation or conversation where everyone kept "one-upping" each other? Listen to kids...or your friends and peers. I know this happens constantly with children.
  - Tell story about Jr and Drew
  - Tell story about military peers

  The problem is that this always leads to envy, jealousy, and sometimes resentment. I know I've often been guilty of this in the past...and even sometimes today. Like :

  - when I was overweight and none of my siblings were. I kept thinking they were so much better off than me and it led me down a path of feeling like a victim and feeling helpless. I resented the fact they were all skinny and I was the one that got the bad genes!

  - I've also been guilty of comparing someone else's success at work. I was jealous at how "easy" some of

my peers “seemed” to have it at work. I thought they were smarter and more successful...and happier...and I was usually wrong.

- Which leads us to another reason why comparing ourselves to others is unhealthy. It can lead us to feelings of inadequacy.

- Use quote: “Comparisons are always unfair. We typically compare the worst we know of ourselves with the best we presume of others." Joshua Becker...Clutterfree with Kids

But, bringing it back to “stuff”, sometimes we aren’t much better than we were when we were kids, comparing what kind of tennis shoes we had or what kind of jeans we have. As we get older it just manifests itself differently if we don’t put it in check; what kind of car, boat, suit, purse, house, shoes, etc. What kind of job, what’s your title, benefits, perks…what your kids have, where they go to school… I’ve even seen adults one upping each other over what their adult kids do, drive, live...just perpetuating the cycle.

The bad news is it’ll always be there. But the AWESOME

news is, for us, it ends when we say it ends.

Oh, and we can't end it for anyone else...they'll always compare. But we can end it for ourselves.

How to to combat it:
- Experiences and people will always make you happier (good friends and family of course)
- Try celebrating other's success instead of envying them.

Major Takeaway (Reinforced)
So what does comparison do for us? Well, it can certainly be helpful for some things, but when we use a tool like comparison to gauge our worth, status, or standing based on things that we have or don't have, comparison leads us down a slippery slope. But, much like Dorothy's Ruby Slippers, each of us has the power to escape the choke hold that comparison can put on us. Where comparison can be our kryptonite, simplicity can be our superpower.

Question for the Listeners/Readers:
So, do you find yourself comparing what you have against what others have? If you do, how does it make you feel? If you've stopped, what made you stop and how does that feel differently? We'd love to know.

So, be sure to leave a comment and share at SimpleLifeTogether.com/056.

Qs and Comments: Where we get to answer or talk about what you write to us!

Our first one is from Claire-
I heard you talking about small house living and thought I'd share a tiny bit about my downsized home ... Dan you were talking about 500 sq. ft and Vanessa you said you couldn't go lower than 750 ...I have 950 sq. ft of living. (Claire also shared some photos w/us and her place is beautiful) I've also lived in a 400 sq. ft unit in my previous property (a 3200 sq. ft house that included the 400 sq. ft unit).

I'm in San Diego and my property has three units: A small 950 sq. ft craftsman bungalow - 2 bedroom/1bath - where I live; a 187 sq. ft studio where my 18 yr old son lives for now and I rent when he's gone, and a 2 bedroom/1 bath 1200 sq. ft. (!) rental unit in the back. I also have 20x30 converted garage/studio - where all my clutter goes!

My space is very sweet, but I'm finding my 11x12 bedroom is pretty small, even for 1 person (and I'm only 5ft tall). A queen bed would fill the room - a king would be out of the question. My closet is 5 ft. wide by 24 deep- I don't have a ton of stuff - but it needs to be constantly pruned and rearranged (need to start the 333 course!) - and it's only me! The main living spaces feels spacious because I've made it pretty open ... but after two years here, I'm suddenly feeling a little crowded in my room. From being in other bungalows, I think another 3-5 feet of width in my room it would make all the difference.

If you're building from scratch, you can work around some of my limitations : I..e, my dining room is lovely and I use it, but I couldn't steal space from here for the bedroom side of the house ... ditto for the living space.

I rented the house over the summer to a delightful couple with big 2 teenage boys. Come to find out they are 5' 10" and 6'3". When I finally met them, I remarked they must have felt like they landed in munchkin land! That's when I started to realize that with two people, you really need a little more room for a queen bed, maybe a chair, and more closet space.

I love my home and I bought with similar thoughts to yours... but honestly, I wouldn't mind just a tiny bit more room, especially when my kids are here or I have guests. Not to mention if I get a boyfriend one of these days!

Anyhooo .... just thought you might like a tiny insight into smaller living.

You guys are doing a great job with your podcast. Congratulations on making it such a success.

So, Don wrote and said-
You guys have such a GREAT chemistry and energy. I really enjoy the philosophy you two preach and the general lifestyle. Since the new year, I've been getting rid of a lot of my stuff and it feels great. Being a single graduate student living in a university campus apartment, having too much stuff is a total waste of money and effort to maintain them. I do have a question though. What is your approach to home decor? I've always liked a simplistic home design but I also don't want to be too American-psycho with nothing but a table and a bed. So how do you guys strike a balance between minimalism and still having a "homey" place to live? Cheers!

And finally we have a note from April-

She writes: Hi, Vanessa,
Thanks so much for all that Dan and you do for the SLT Podcast! I love listening to your husband and you and appreciate your hard work and willingness to share your lives. You all are very brave.

My husband and I have a 6-year-old daughter and we want her to be able to play and create but need to set up better boundaries. We don't want to be a child-centered family with kid stuff strewn from one end of the house to the other.

I was looking through your boards on Pinterest and noticed the one with pictures of your house (which is lovely by the way). I was wondering, what do you do with your daughter's toys? Does she play in her room? Also does she do crafts at home and if so, do you do that on the kitchen table and just clean up for dinner? I didn't see anything specifically about toys/kids's stuff on getsimplifized.com so I thought I'd ask you directly.

Thing: Joshua Becker's Book: Clutterfree with Kids. I love all of Joshua's books and I honestly a little skeptical at how this book would be any different. But of course he delivers. What I like most is that it's a simple 200 page book that has very practical advice on how to raise your kids to live clutterfree. It's not an organizing book...it's a book about intentional parenting. Joshua gives a compelling reasons for minimalism in all of his books, but having read his books...in this one it feels like he's writing more with conviction. It's definitely worth the read. You can find out more at simplelifetogether.com/clutterfree.

Announcements:

So Dan is working with our friend Joel Zaslofsky of Value of Simple on a “simplicity summit” of sorts, called SimpleRev, short for simple revolution. SimpleRev will be 200+ passionate simple-living advocates. Joshua Becker of Becoming Minimalist will be there, and even others like Brooke McAlary of Slow Your Home and Mohamed Tohami of Midway Simplicity will be supporting from afar.

Date/Location: October 3-4, 2014 | Minneapolis, Minnesota | University of St. Thomas Downtown Campus

To learn more, just go to SimpleRev.com or SimpleLifeTogether.com/rev

Special thanks to all of you who’ve left reviews for us on iTunes. It really does help people find the show. So here’s a quick sample from each and a quick shout out:

OrthoMonkey from United States wrote: Dan and Vanessa are a "rising tide floats all boats" sort of couple

Hikerbird from United States said: I have been a listener since this podcast started. It never gets old!

CajnIndian from United States found us through Farnoosh Brock's site, started listening this week and has already listened to 14 episodes!

Rebbie4274 from United States wrote: All caught up! I love this podcast! I found it maybe 5 weeks ago, and over a three week break from work, I have listened to all 54 episodes. How's that for approval?

and finally, NRamsland from United States said: Vanessa and Daniel Hayes consistently produce fresh and useful podcasts on topics of simplicity. As co-hosts, they bring a warm, open and light dynamic that I look forward to week after week. I started listening for their subject matter, but honestly, at this point I would keep listening to them if they started podcasting about the social lives of pugs in post-Industrial Pacific Northwestern cities.

You can't make this stuff up folks! Thank you so much for taking the time to share your comments. We really, really appreciate it!

We're trying to stay accountable with you guys as we go through Courtney Carver's Project 333 and her little Dress With Less course. We're still going strong, but if you have any questions or just want to learn more just go to SimpleLifeTogether.com/dress.

CONTACT INFO: Remember...if you have questions or comments you can always reach us at Dan@SimpleLifeTogether.com & @DanielHayes on Twitter, or Vanessa@SimpleLifeTogether.com & @GetSimplified on Twitter and there are links to our Google Plus profiles on the website.

Wrap Up:

OK, so that's it for Episode 56 of Simple Life Together. Remember, don't fall victim to the comparison trap and if you do, turn to simplicity as your superhuman power to combat it. And our thing this week was Joshua Beckers new book Clutterfree with Kids...You can find out more at simplelifetogether.com/clutterfree

And if you haven't already, be sure to sign up for Edit & Forget. Just go to SimpleLifeTogether.com/edit and

interact with you on the Facebook Page.

As usual, you can find all the links and info from today's show at SimpleLifeTogether.com/056.

So let us know what you think of the show and how you're simplifying your life, too! Either way, we'd absolutely love to hear from you.

So, until next time, we hope you enjoy your...

SIMPLE LIFE TOGETHER

Resources and Links:

Dress With Less
Clutterfree with Kids