



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

Simple Life Together Episode 46: The Random Show! (music)

“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.

On the last episode of the show we challenged you to pick the top 5 items that YOU would save from your burning home. [That was a pretty cool exercise](#) and we heard from a lot of you right away on that show.

Today... we’re going completely random on you! We have a bunch of short, unrelated topics that have been simmering for a while or just been on our minds and we figured it was time to put them out there.

Thesis Statement

Yeah so we figured that maybe a few short bursts of ideas or tips might be helpful. A lot of these things we've been wanting to discuss but they aren't something that would fill our usual topic segment length. But, we still wanted to get them out there. So, Vanessa suggested "Let's do a completely random show!"

Major Takeaway (Introduced)

So, the cool thing for you is you get a bunch of random tips...all solid in their own right, but boiled down into a few simple points! It's like a pot luck dinner!

Or like the box of chocolates Forrest Gump had that we talked about a couple episodes ago! Yep, you never know what you're gonna get. So, at the end of the show you'll have:

- A couple of new things to think about regarding simplicity
- Probably a new tool or two in your toolkit
- And maybe you'll even get a laugh or two out of the show

TOPIC:

Dan:

- ***It's not the tools, it's the work:*** Every once in a

while I have to remind myself of a lesson I first learned long ago from my older brother, Kevin. I think I've mentioned before that I'm from a family of 7 kids, 5 boys/2 girls. My brother Kevin and I are the younger of the boys and he's 5 years older than me. Our big job in the Winter time growing up in the Southtowns of Buffalo NY was shoveling snow. Sometimes we used to have to shovel off the roof of the house so it wouldn't cave in after big snowfalls, but we always had to shovel the driveway so our dad could get to work.

- Kevin always seemed to be getting lots more done than me
- We had 2 shovels, the long push-type shovel that plows the snow and the typical square type shovel for shoveling the snow
- Didn't matter which one Kevin had, he always got more done than me
- I was convinced it was the shovel and always asked him to switch
- He always chuckled, but always switched with me. It didn't make a difference.
- What Kevin was teaching me was that it's not about the tools, it's about the work.
- Occasionally, as a gadget guy, I have to re-learn that lesson.

- Once it sinks in though I realize it's my big brother teaching me the lesson again, 40 years later and 1600 miles apart. Thanks Kev.
- So, maybe you can learn from my mistakes and take a lesson from my brother, too. Next time you go to buy that new tool, that fancy new laptop, download that next app that will supposedly solves all your problems...consider whether or not you need a new tool, or just need to master something you already have.
- ***It's natural to nest...yes, even for guys.*** But it can easily get out of hand and then it's time to draw the line. Eventually, it's time to simplify.
 - So, over the years I've spent over:
 - 2 years living in tents
 - I've lived in abandoned/bombed out buildings
 - About 6 months living in wooden huts
 - And 8 months living in a shipping container
 - Each time, I and everyone that I lived with in these places, went through a bit of a nesting phase. I've seen:
 - Guys built complete dressers and nightstand sets out of MRE boxes
 - Leave extra stuff home so they could fit hanging canvas shoe organizers in their

bags to hang up

- Fight for foot lockers
- Or meticulously pack their rucksacks to the point where the seams were ready to burst.
- There was also a certain “hierarchy of needs” that Maslow might even find puzzling. Of course it differed by your job specialty, but the order of precedence I typically saw with my guys was this:
 - Make sure Combat gear was organized to grab and go (#1)
 - Ruck/pack (#2)
 - Evolve from sleeping on the ground to sleeping off ground (#3)
 - Find a spot to hang your toiletry gear since you’ll be using that ever day to wash your squishy parts or dangly bits (#4)
 - Pogeys, bait, gedunk, lickey chewies (#5)
 - Comfort/chill gear (#6) (music, cards, books, etc). Depending on how long it took you to get to your destination and the immediate tactical situation...this could go up as far up the list as #1!
- We’ve talked before about learning to “embrace the suck”. I think that’s a skill that everyone should be able to call on any time they deem it

necessary. But like a pendulum, sometimes we overcompensate for those moments of suckage and let things get a little too comfortable. I always force myself to remember that too much of any positive yields a negative. As some of our parents and grandparents dealt with living through the Depression by saving everything for “Justin Case”, sometimes when we feather our nests too much we lose ourselves in the fluff. As the saying goes, if you want fluff, pet a bunny. Trade in Justin Case for “Justin Huff”.

- I can totally relate. It’s my natural tendency to nest too...whether it short term or long term.
 - Look at how Sunshine wants to bring every single doll, toy and blanket when we go out.
 - Living in Korea...Saudi Arabia and Qatar...although I knew I would only be at each location for 4 months to 1 year, I wanted to make each place cozy...but I totally got a little crazy with buying things to ship home....many of which I didn’t really need or eventually got rid of...it was just the thing to do.
 - I also have a tendency to want to nest and have a “home-base” as opposed to RVing for the rest of my life. Although I’m warming up

to it....

- OK, this is another one about communication....Sometimes, it helps to question your actions and reactions to accepted norms and authority. Lemme rephrase that, ***don't let fear or pride get in the way when you need clarification.***
 - A couple episodes ago I talked about my time as a Drill Instructor. Someday, I have to sit down and write out all these stories before I lose them, but here goes:
 - The first few weeks with your recruits is vital to make sure they are catching on to the fire hose of new tasks that are being thrown at them
 - Reality is that you get to work around 3-3:15 AM and don't leave until around 10 PM for the first few weeks. It's a pretty grueling schedule
 - During one training cycle I had all the female recruits and one of my fellow instructors had male recruits.
 - So, at the start of the day I walked through and checked her barracks and she walked through and checked mine.
 - Now, my partner was not even 5 feet tall, she was maybe about 4'10". But she was mean. Professional, for sure, but you wouldn't want to

mess with her because she was harder than woodpecker lips. We'll call her Sgt Jules.

- So, I think it was about Day 2 of the training cycle, so these recruits are still brand new to the military. Most of them are still burping up food that mom cooked them, so they tend to be a bit on the nervous side.
- Well, I went in and had the dorm guard to go kick the Dorm Chief's bed to wake him up. The Dorm Chief, is the senior recruit. He's still a recruit, mind you, and just as new as all the others, but he's the one who has been picked to be in charge. Usually, you made the biggest, meanest recruit the dorm chief at first to make sure things didn't get out of hand when you weren't around.
- So, I would take the Dorm Chief around and inspect night displays. Uniforms had to be just so, their study materials had to be flush with the end of the chairs, boots and shoes had to be loosely laced so you could jump right into them in case of fire, etc.
- Well, as I'm leading the Dorm Chief through and showing him everything that is wrong and the few things that were right, I noticed that under every bed there was a duffle bag, nastily folded

and just laying on the ground under the bed. 60 beds, 60 nasty duffle bags!

- Dufflebags are the hardest thing a recruit has to fold. When new, it's like folding up a 3 foot metal spring. It has a mind of its own.
- Eventually, the dufflebag would end up in a perfect trifold or e-fold, we called it. All the edges lined up and smooth like the pages of a book (like that underwear I talked about in the previous episode).
- But to get it like that takes a LOT of effort. Again, this is all to instill the ability to follow simple instructions and pay attention to detail.
- Now to flatten out the dufflebag and get it to be flat as a pancake, we used to tell the recruits to put it between their mattress and the steel springs of the metal bed, and sleep on it.
- After a few weeks, it would be very flat.
- Well, obviously something was lost in translation because all of these dufflebags were on the floor under the beds!
- I asked, Dorm Chief, "What the blank are these dufflebags doing on the floor?" His reply was "Sir, Recruit So and So reports as ordered. Sir, that's where Sgt Jules told us to put them." "Sgt Jules told you to put them under the bed? Why

would she say that?” “Sir, she said they would get flatter under the bed. I said, “Dorm Chief, stand at ease and look at me. (They’re not supposed to look right at you during this phase of training). Do you really think that putting the dufflebags on the floor under the bed is going to make it any flatter? Seriously? Don’t you think it would be smarter to put it between the mattress and the springs so your weight is on it?” He thought about this for a split second. I think he realized he misunderstood Sgt Jules but he certainly didn’t trust that I wasn’t trying to trap him. “At this he snapped right back to Attention and said, “Sir, Sgt Jules said they would get flatter under the bed, so yes sir, I think they’re getting flatter!”

- And that, ladies and gentleman was one scared kid who blindly followed what he thought he heard and was afraid to ask a question.
- Truth is, we’ve all been that kid before.
- I know I certainly have!
- But over time I’ve learned that sometimes it helps to question your actions and reactions to accepted norms and authority...at least enough to ask questions, for crying out loud!
- So I developed this techniques for myself...one

of my favorite phrases to use when I need info about something out of my area of expertise is “Talk to me like I’m 3.” Even if it’s a subject I do know a bit about, I’ve come to the point where I don’t want to blindly trust my assumptions, so I tell the sales person, customer service rep, or whoever, “”Do me a favor, I want to make sure I completely understand you, talk to me like I’m three.” Here’s why I think this works:

- It empowers the person you want to learn from
- It gives them a sense of responsibility that they are teaching you something and in my experience they tend to be more thoughtful
- Breaks down any pretenses of prior knowledge for both the sender and receiver
- Instantly relieves me of any responsibility for “you should have known this”
- So, if you find yourself not having as much of a clue as you think you’re supposed to have about a subject, try my “Talk to me like I’m 3” technique and I’ll bet you find yourself glad that you did! If nothing else, you’re more likely to end up with a presentable dufflebag!

- My last one is this: Given the option, I **choose**

reductivity over productivity

- Just like any other aspect of simplifying your life, first you need to edit
- It makes no sense to organize the deck chairs on the Titanic. That ship is going down
- Focus on the things that need to be done and work to eliminate the unimportant. That way your full effort goes to what IS important and isn't spread out among myriad tasks.
- Another aspect of reductivity for me is to identify the most important tasks first. For example:
 - With our new website design at SimpleLifeTogether.com I wanted to go back and make some improvements to older posts and shownotes
 - I wanted to make them all in the same format.
 - I diligently started at Episode 45 and started working backward
 - When I got to 30 I realized that it would have made a lot more sense for you...those who come to the site...if I had first started with our top 10 most popular posts! Those are the ones that are getting read the most.
 - Plus, I have a widget installed on the site that tells me what the top 10 posts are and it

even displays them in the sidebar of the site!

- Why didn't I just start with those? I don't know. What else am I just doing by habit? I wonder...
- So, once again, take some time to figure out what the most important or core tasks are for your big rocks. When you can, take care of those first!

Vanessa:

- ***Can we change?*** I'm sure you've either heard the saying or maybe even said it yourself that: "You can't teach an old dog new tricks?"
 - Well, I've been thinking about this more and more lately; especially as we try to simplify our lives.
 - While we've never pretended to be minimalists, I am very much drawn to the idea of becoming one....yet I feel so far away from reaching a point where I would even consider myself an "aspiring-minimalist."
 - *(Dan disclaimer....Ok Vanessa...we just edited 3000 things from our lives so far this year....we have no revolving debt...we just sold our land...we have very little clutter in*

our home....and we're preparing to move into 1000sq ft or less....we're not doing too bad).

- The reason I feel so far away from becoming minimalist is because I still struggle with fighting the temptations of buying and wanting things...which caused me to wonder...*"Have I changed at all?"*
- I also started to ponder this question more as I worked with my clients that struggle with getting and staying organized.
- As I started to feel like it was hopeless...I woke up from my contemplative haze and realized...wait a minute! Yes! Yes we can change....I've done it myself and I've seen others do it!
 - Like with my fitness...that was actually a ***lifestyle change***. (tell quick story)
 - I also changed my spending habits and improved my personal finances...*mama doesn't do credit anymore...and if she does...she pays the card off in full!*
 - And of course, how could I forget my road to getting organized myself...I was a mess for the first 10 years of my adult life!
- I've also seen change in others:
 - Folks who were drug addicts or alcoholics

and then became and stayed “clean”

- I’ve seen the faithless become faithful in different faiths.
- Even seen folks switch from being selfish to selfless...devoting their lives to charities and helping others...Scott Harrison the CEO of Charity Water is a great example.
- And of course I’m reminded often by my clients and loved ones of our ability to change like when:
 - Clients send me pictures or status updates of how they’re maintaining their organized spaces
 - Or when they proclaim their newfound love for their scanner and how they’ve transitioned from paper to paperless...a major shift for many of my clients.
 - And I definitely became a believer when my mom sent her first text message and FB post to me....that was huge coming from a woman who cursed computers for years and years (and now she has her own iPhone and iPad)!
- So Yes! We can change, but we probably don’t appreciate the concept of change because it doesn’t happen as often or as fast as we’d like:

- One reason might be because change usually takes effort and quite honestly, it seems like mankind is totally opposed to effort some times! We will take the path of least resistance whenever we can...its our nature, *if we have that luxury*.
- Another reason might be because, changes that are worthwhile usually don't happen overnight, which can be discouraging:
 - Take Simplicity for example...shifting from “wanting more” to “having enough”...or better yet....”wanting much less” is a huge mental shift
 - Or lets say Fitness...starving yourself to lose 10lbs in a week is different than slowly losing that same weight and keeping it off.
 - I also liken it to the difference between graduating from high school vs graduating from college. Sure high school was an achievement but graduating from college and getting commissioned after working 30 hours a week, completing a 4 year ROTC program and going to school full time was a much bigger accomplishment for

me.

- I also think one of the challenges we face with change, is that we fail to properly identify the core reasons for needing to change
 - For example: wanting to lose weight to improve your health is a much different motivator than doing it because you feel pressured....by a loved one or society.
- So where am I going with this? Well, I think where I'm going with this is that if and when you want to change, you need to:
 - First identify the reason for wanting to change. Is it an internal or external motivator.
 - Also identify if you really **need** to change. If it ain't broke, why fix it?
 - Realize that significant change takes time, effort and commitment. You've got to beware of hitting the easy button...it's not always what it's cracked up to be.
- ***Beware of the Easy Button....***
 - So speaking of the easy button....that's my next random topic. This may be why there isn't a whole lot of change going on!

- I usually ask “Can I hit the easy button” when I’m too tired, overwhelmed or not looking forward to doing something myself:
 - at dinnertime
 - or work or home related tasks and chores
 - or when our daughter wants to play and I’m too junking tired!
- I used to think that hitting the easy button was the smart thing to do....like knocking out tasks with little effort...or outsourcing things I didn’t want to do myself. But come to find out, the real reason I was hitting the easy button was because I wasn’t managing my time well or keeping my priorities in check.
- But the easy button is so tempting....heck, that’s what American consumerism is all about...how to make your life easy right!
- We’re so easily drawn to things that are easy...or promise to be easy, but in the end it can be a waste or even detrimental to you in the long run. Some random ‘easy button” scenarios I thought of were:
 - Instead of taking time to edit your

possessions you put your excess in a paid storage unit to deal with “some day”. Well, “someday” rarely comes but the rental statements sure do!

- You know you should take care of your end of life documents, wills, estate, etc. but you hit the easy button and shove everything in a drawer with no rhyme or reason, leaving it for your loved ones to deal with.
 - Caving into your children’s begging and letting them eat their pudding before they eat their meat (tell story of Jordan with meat and pudding). Or doing the dishes, laundry and meal prep without getting them involved...potentially missing out on teaching them about independence and responsibility.
 - Or my personal easy button...going out to eat instead of planning a healthy meal. This is usually a case of not prioritizing and getting wrapped up in other tasks. So what happens is we end of eating a fast food or unhealthy meal at a hefty price...GO MOM!
- The interim fix for this is that if we don’t have plans, we eat at TDB. You have to get the salad (what my food eats to become food)

- And the list can go on and on...easy loans...easy diets...easy pay...easy online degrees....etc.
- Now, there are certainly times when it's ok to hit the easy button, like hiring a cleaning service or lawn service, or using online banking and deposit mobile to save you a trip to the bank. Some things really do make life a little easier and it's usually because the cost pays in the time you can devote to something else.
- So that's why I say...we all just need to *BEWARE of the Easy Button* and when we use it!
- ***What An Organized Person Is...or Isn't:***
 - Someone posted a fill-in-the-blank question on Facebook the other day. It said, "An organized person *is* _____." Naturally I had to check it out. And the most popular responses went something like this:
 - *An organized person is....calm,*
 - *less-stressed,*
 - *able to multi-task,*
 - *a problem solver,*
 - *confident,*
 - *and my favorite response...."someone I*

desperately need in my life!”

- I have to admit, I would agree with pretty much all of these assumptions about an organized person...that is *in general*.
- But then I thought, what about asking the opposite of that question...what an organized person is **not**. I would expect some responses to be:
 - *An organized person is not...*late,
 - stressed,
 - messy,
 - an adventure fiend,
 - procrastinator,
 - very creative,(for some reason people equate organized as being boring)
 - a total mess!
- I can't say that I agree with all of those...but I think they represent some actual perceptions about organized people.
- So I kinda wanted to explore that further and thought, what if you asked that question to an actual organizer? Let's say...ME! Here's what I

would say:

- *An organized person is not...perfect,*
 - anal-retentive (well...not with everything)
 - Martha Stewart
 - boring
 - a know-it-all
 - magician
 - completely stress-free, or
 - completely fearless
-
- And the reason I mention this is because I think we give too much credit to being organized. I know that sounds like heresy coming from me, but I think this idea of being organized is somehow linked to being perfect...or too boring...or too difficult to achieve, which can be such an inhibitor.

 - I've actually witnessed this with clients:
 - One woman desperately needed some help but thought that being organized would be too orderly and inhibit her creativity and flow!
 - Another feared that having too many routines might be too militant for her kids.
 - One thought the answer was buying a

bunch of plastic bins to organizing everything...only to give up realizing it was going to be more work.

- And yet another client wanted me to organize an area that was already organized...but she didn't think it was perfect-enough.
- So you can see how these false perceptions of organized being boring, too strict or perfect can be intimidating.
- But the reality is, that while being organized is definitely a good thing, we need to have a better understanding of what it is and is not. Lets start with what it's not...
 - It's not the answer to all your problems
 - It's not going to make everything in your life easier...we all struggle in different areas of our lives.
 - It's not an easy process and can't be achieved overnight
 - It doesn't mean boring or predictable
 - It's doesn't automatically equate to simple
 - Take a cruise for example? Boarding

and unboarding is a very organized process but it isn't simple...it's quite an intricate process.

- It isn't just a bunch of gadgets apps and bins:
 - An organized calendar doesn't mean you'll be on time to every event
 - An organized To-Do list doesn't mean it'll all get done.
 - And even the most organized homes, there's often still too much stuff to manage and care for.
- So what is being organized? It's definitely more than a bunch of labeled bins and color coded digital calendars. Instead of looking at the stuff, I think we should look at being organized as more of a tool for leading a simpler and potentially less stressed life. To me being organized is more of a feeling....as opposed to a picture perfect image of a space or person. It's creates a feeling of:
 - less stress
 - control
 - aware
 - confidence

- empowered
- problemsolve
- My point here is that being organized is definitely great, but that we should have a realistic idea and appreciation of what being organized is. It's not perfection, it's not always easy, and it's not the answer to everything, but it can be greatly beneficial to helping you live a simpler life.

Major Takeaway (Reinforced)

OK, so there you have it...some random thoughts, tips and stories for your simplicity journey...or to simply help you navigate through life.

Conclusion: Some of these things we've been dying to get out but didn't think they needed to be the focus of a topic all by themselves. Maybe you even saw yourself in some of these? Maybe all you got was a chuckle or two. Either way, hopefully you're able to use one or two of these tips to make your journey a little simpler.

Question for the Listeners/Readers: So, what random tips do have to share as you contemplate life? We always love hearing your feedback and ideas. Please feel free to share your thoughts with us in the comments at

THING Segment

Dan's Thing: Being able to share in my kids' hard work.
Sunshine riding the bike and Matt's band

Vanessa's "THING": Looks can be
deceiving...discovering a new "hole in the wall" food joint
just down the road! Good food, great price, breakfast all
day, and just one mile from the house! Who needs a
fancy looking restaurant with over-priced entrees when
you've got a diner right down the road?

CONTACT INFO: Remember...if you have questions or
comments you can always reach us at
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@GetSimplifized on Twitter and there are links to our
Google Plus profiles on the website.

Feedback:

Website Comments:

Tania from mauishopgirl.com commented on Episode 45:

Well, you just made me realize how unsentimental I am because my five things are primarily tech or camera equipment. Although I have a few sentimental things in my home like a Japanese jewelry box my grandmother gave me when I was five and my mother's copy of Little Women, if push came to shove I'd grab the things that bring me creative joy on a regular basis and that are expensive to replace. The MacBook, Time Machine, the DSLR + two lens and like Vanessa, my purse with my iPhone, iPhone camera lens and iPad in it. I think I'd also pull on a pair of boyfriend jeans, a black T and my knee length 3/4 sleeve black Eileen Fisher dress because I'd be ok wardrobe wise with those three minimal pieces for quite some time. The only sentimental piece I'd take is my wedding ring and I'm not even married anymore! But, I was with my husband for twenty years. That ring represents most of my adult life and although we don't talk much now, we still like each other. Your podcast did make me realize though that I need to store my camera/lens so I can just easily grab it and run out the door. Right now, I tend to just throw one of three camera bags in the closet with whatever lens I used that day so

my gear is sometimes spread out through multiple bags but I think now I'll always make sure the body, my main lens and my macro lens are always together in the same bag while stored. I'll keep all the gear that I use the most together so it's grab and go.

Toni Scott from hcgdietrecipesmadesimple.com also commented on Episode 45:

OMG! I LOVED this podcast and it was SO timely. This actually came up in a conversation I was having with my husband when we renewed our homeowner's insurance—what would be important to us if the house went up in flames. The first thing I thought of were our family pictures, not the ones from the past 20 years of our life together, but also the heirloom pics we have of our parents, grandparents, and great grandparents. I decided right then to start scanning those old pics and backed them up to an external hard drive. The second thing I had been contemplating is a box of about 20-30 VHS tapes (about 12 years worth of memories). In fact, they aren't even "tapes" they are the little cartridges that went to our now defunct video camera. Yesterday I started copying them to digital files using a Roxio VHS to DVD converter. After listening to the podcast, I'm going to complete my list of 5 things I would grab in a fire and make sure I'm

caring for those things and making them ready in case of an emergency. Love you guys!

Dan R. commented on my Thing segment Episode 45 where I talked about sausage making:

What? No link to the sausage recipe? Where's the love? Great episode!

iTunes Comments:

Eqjmr writes: It's good to be simple! Lots of great tips, entertaining, and path away from thoughtless consumerism.

AussieRachel from Australia writes: A joy to listen to each week! Dan and Vanessa Hayes bring fun, honesty and a pragmatic antidote to today's crazy busy world.

Ex-military, they bring a process-driven approach to simplifying things which have become unnecessarily complicated - things like holidays, organising kids parties, workflows and photo management. Their tips and tricks are grounded in the reality of raising a family and making a living, not some wavering ivory tower of idealised perfection. Vanessa's tips from a professional organiser's perspective, and Dan's clever tech tips are bound

together by a humour and mutual respect which provide inspiration for listeners. Regular guests add new perspectives. I would highly recommend this podcast not just to people who already like living a simpler life, but to those who feel overwhelmed and just don't know where to begin.

Zumacraig writes: Anything but simple -- 2 stars
What's absolutely ironic about all of the simplicity and minimalist blogs and podcasts is that, when examined critically, they are quite complex and obsessive. Numbering meals, working on this or that character trait, organizing...these are consumerist activities and antithetical to simplicity and minimalism. We might be better suited at looking at the systems that cause consumerism and infiltrate well-intentioned attempts at simplicity and minimalism.

And Sherry, from SherryLCarver.com writes: Simple and Fun! Nothing better than Dan and Vanessa speaking about their journey because it's real and from the heart. Their ideas about simplifying are contagious and easy to follow. At the end of each week's podcast, I feel energized and encouraged that life can be simple and fun while working hard.

Wrap Up:

OK, so that's it for Episode 46 of Simple Life Together. So today was the Random Show, we talked about a lot of short topics that impact us and that we wanted to share with you, too!

My Thing was sharing my kids' hard work and Vanessa's thing was our Bose Soundlink Mini

As usual, you can find all the links and info from today's show at SimpleLifeTogether.com/046.

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

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

SIMPLE LIFE TOGETHER

Resources and Links: