
Welcome to SIMPLICITY AND SUCCESS™ — THE E-ZINE
A Newsletter About Creating What Matters Most in Life & Work
Bruce Elkin, Personal/Professional Coach
<http://www.BruceElkin.com>

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WELCOME!

Again, thanks to all who forwarded the newsletter to friends and colleagues. We now have 1350 members who regularly receive this newsletter — an increase of nearly 200 in the last month or so! Your help is essential and MUCH appreciated.

I'd like to welcome all the new subscribers, especially those who heard about us in Debi Taylor-Hough's "Simple Times" e-newsletter. Thanks, Debi! You can check out Simple Times by writing Debi at dsimple@aol.com.

I'd also like to welcome all those new subscribers who heard me on the CBC, Village 900 Radio, or saw me on The New VI. Thanks for signing up.

Please keep forwarding the intact newsletter to those you think would value and appreciate it. That's how we grow. Thank you!

Special thanks to those who called your local library and bookstores and asked if they had copies of Simplicity and Success. It's working. If you haven't done so, please do. If they don't have a copy, ask if they will stock it. You don't have to order one for yourself, just ask them to bring the book in so that others may benefit.

In Canada the book is available through Dempsey Distributors.

In the US, it's available through Baker and Taylor, or Trafford Publishers.

In the UK or EU, it's available through the Trafford office in Crewe, England. Their number is +44 (1270) 252-889, fax +44 (1270) 251-609 or you can email Andrew Smith at andy.smith@trafford.com.

NOTE: You can add yourself or remove yourself from this list by going to: <http://www.bruceelkin.com/newsletter.html> Click on "Subscribe to Simplicity and Success Now" and then select sub or unsub as you wish.

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QUICK TAKE: Three Kinds of Lives

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Last issue, I discussed the three different yet interrelated kinds of lives we can create. Each complements yet appears to be an evolutionary step beyond the previous one.

First, there is the rich, pleasant, and materially full life. It is rich in things, pleasures and the comforts and conveniences that make life pleasant.

Next, the focused, fully engaged and masterful life enables us to challenge ourselves, to discover our strengths and use them to generate mastery, flow, and deep gratification.

Finally, there is the purposeful or meaningful life. In such a life, we draw on strengths developed in the earlier lives to undertake challenges and causes that are larger than ourselves. We expand our sense of self and see ourselves in service of the greater good: the community, the nation, the environment, the planet, and goodness itself.

Such an expansion in perspective and action results in a diminishment of our ego even as it increases our connection to the world beyond ourselves. It also produces a profound sense of purpose and meaning.

All three lives are important. Moreover, integrating them into one harmonious whole leads to the emergence of what I call an authentic, integral life — the life for which, I believe, we all long.

FEATURE ARTICLE

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CREATING A RICH, SIMPLE AND PLEASANT LIFE

This life is rich in pleasures and small satisfactions. It contains things that we use often and from which we derive immediate enjoyment. A sharp, easy-to-use kitchen knife. A mountain bike that molds to your body. A fluffy, warm organic cotton robe to wrap around yourself after a shower.

For me it's the old Saab that I hardly ever drive but, when I do, I appreciate it's careful engineering, it's tight tolerances, and its 20 years of almost cost-free durability.

The rich life is also a sensory life. Pleasures can be appreciated without being consumed. Think about music. Bird song. Art. Sunsets over a meandering river or ocean islands. A big part of a rich life is that it is rich in appreciation of the beauty and usefulness of the things in our lives and steeped in gratitude for what we have. Healthy pleasures — like a good laugh, a hug, a walk in the sunshine, even watching our favorites sports team play — can actually improve our health and extend our lives.

In this life, our primary standard for measuring how "good" we're doing is positive feelings. If we feel good, we think we're successful. It is important to meet our material needs for food, shelter, and transport. Enjoying pleasures can greatly improve the quality of our experience. However, because good feelings are so often temporary, it is easy to go overboard on this aspect of life.

Thinking that material pleasures provide the only route to success and happiness, we become enamored with accumulating things, experiences, and good but fleeting feelings. Instead of deeply appreciating what we have (which seems to be a higher level skill than accumulating) we collect material stuff that fails to provide lasting value.

Moreover, a large part of our focus in the materially full life comes from comparing ourselves to others. Keeping Up With the Jones used to be what our parents aspired too. These days, however, we're more inclined to try to keep up with Frasier, the Friends, and other well to do TV,

movie, and media characters. We lose track of our authentic desires. We feel compelled to want what the TV folks have.

To make things worse, we act as if the pleasure we get from stuff was inherent in the objects and experiences themselves. So we constantly want more. But a successfully rich life is about sufficiency, not excess. It's about enough, not an endlessly undefined "more." What's more, it's not just good feelings that we want. Deep down, we want to earn those feelings, to feel entitled to them.

"Positive emotions alienated from the exercise of character," says Martin Seligman, author of *Authentic Happiness*, "leads to emptiness, to inauthenticity, to depression, and, as we age, to the gnawing realization that we are fidgeting until we die."

However, for some people, the rich, "feel good" life is all they know. Instead of putting in place the comforts and conveniences that give them security and pleasure and then stretching for the next level, many get stuck. Thinking that if basic riches bring a pleasant life, then more riches should bring them a good life, many forgo crafting a fully engaged life in favor of mere accumulation of more stuff.

But it doesn't work. Research shows that beyond a fairly simple level of sufficiency, neither more money nor stuff brings significant increases in pleasure or happiness to those who sacrifice their lives for them. Indeed, it often causes more stress than pleasure just to maintain, pay for, and store the stuff we accumulate.

When this happens, the material life deteriorates into a hedonistic life, a kind of rat race in which we chase after fleeting pleasures and feelings, desperately seeking more, more, more.... People surround themselves with the material symbols of a kind of success that might look good but often don't make them feel very successful.

If we recognize what we're doing, many of us choose to simplify. We get rid of our excess, clear away the clutter, and cut back our consumption. However useful and pleasant it is to clear out all the junk we've accumulated and pay down our credit cards to zero, this reactive kind of simplicity is what Oliver Wendell Holmes called "the simplicity on this side of complexity." It's a start but it's not enough.

This is a simplistic form of simplifying, driven by a focus on things we don't like and don't want. All too often, it merely results in temporary relief from an overcrowded and complicated life. Challenge, engagement, flow, and meaning and purpose are often tossed out along with excess. And, almost inevitably, the clutter comes back!

However, for some, this kind of simplifying leads to the next step. It opens space in their homes and in their lives in which they're able to see another kind of simplifying. They see that there is a higher form of simplicity that is based on freedom and challenge and personal growth. They also recognize that there are two forms of freedom: "freedom from..." and "freedom to...".

Achieving freedom from that which they don't want and don't like offers them a glimpse of the freedom to do what truly matters to them. Free from the concern and anxiety of not being able to satisfying material needs, free of the life-long accumulation of clutter that kept them tethered to stuff, they find that they are now free to engage life fully, develop mastery, and enjoy the deeply gratifying sense of flow that ensues.

[In the next issue, I'll discuss the other two kinds of lives — the Fully Engaged, Masterful Life and the Purposeful, Meaning Filled Life. I'll also show how all three lives can be integrated into an authentic, integral life.]

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER UNDERSTANDING

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My book SIMPLICITY AND SUCCESS: CREATING THE LIFE YOU LONG FOR continues to receive rave reviews from readers around the world. Here are some examples:

" Thank you for Simplicity and Success. It's so inspiring yet practical. I love it!"
- Glenda, NM, USA

"Simplicity and Success is the best of this type of book I've seen. It's great to see someone practicing what they preach. I've read through it twice and each time I learned a great deal. Excellent. Highly recommended!"
— Victor, Ontario, Canada

These are just a couple of examples of the feedback I've been getting. If you'd like a personalized, signed copy of Simplicity and Success, they're available from me at \$23 plus \$3.50 shipping and handling in Canada. In the US, send \$17 plus \$3 shipping and handling.

For more information about SIMPLICITY AND SUCCESS: CREATING THE LIFE YOU LONG FOR, go to: <http://www.bruceelkin.com/simplicity-book.html>.

If you can't afford to purchase a book, you can download a PDF copy at <http://www.bruceelkin.com/whats-new.html>.

FROM MY BOOKSHELF

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Much of my inspiration for the series on Creating An Integral Life came from Martin Seligman's Authentic Happiness. Seligman is the author of Learned Optimism and one of the founders of Positive Psychology, an approach that fits closely with my "creating" approach. Authentic Happiness is about how to match your signature strengths to daily challenges in ways that produce gratification and flow. You can do Seligman's Values in Action: Signature Strengths Survey at no cost. Just go to his website at <http://www.authentic happiness.com>. The survey takes about 20 minutes and you get a printout describing your top five strengths.

THE SMALL PRINT: Copyright and Getting On and Off the List

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THE LAST WORD: QUOTABLE QUOTES

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"The aspects of a thing that are most important to us are hidden to us because of their simplicity and familiarity."
-- Ludwig Wittgenstein

" Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us.

"We ask ourselves, 'who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you.

"We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of god that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.
— Marianne Williamson

Well, folks, that's it for this issue. I hope spring is making at least an effort to appear in your area (if you live in the Northern Hemisphere). And for those down under, I hope you're looking forward to fall and winter. Thanks for reading and forwarding the newsletter. I appreciate it. All the best.
Cheers!
Bruce

Bruce Elkin: High Performance, Full Potential Coaching
Author of SIMPLICITY AND SUCCESS: Creating the Life You Long For
< A book about organizing life, work and relationships
around what most matters to you.

<http://www.bruceelkin.com/simplicity-book.html>

" Find what you really care about and live a life that shows it."
— Kate Wolf

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