

“Fear is a reaction. Courage is a decision.”

– Author Unknown

Wow! This quote really struck a chord with me. I came across it on X, paired with a picture of a wolf. It immediately resonated, though I’ll admit, I would’ve preferred a lion to a wolf. But I digress. What caught my attention most was how fear was described not as a weakness, but as a *reaction*. That framing makes perfect sense. Fear is rarely rooted in facts. It’s an emotional response to uncertainty. Take COVID, for example. Think about how many people, (maybe even yourself), made decisions out of fear. Whether it was hoarding supplies, isolating unnecessarily, or blindly trusting unverified information, much of what we saw was reactionary behavior driven by fear, not reason. Courage, on the other hand, is a choice. It requires presence, conviction, and often, discomfort. It’s the decision to stand firm when fear tries to pull you in another direction. That’s what sets true leaders apart from followers. Firefighters, police officers, and those in the military don’t act because they *lack* fear, they act *despite* it. They run *toward* danger, not *away* from it. I’ve always defined FEAR in two ways:

- **Forget Everything and Run**
- **False Evidence Appearing Real**

Both are true in different contexts. The first is how many people instinctively react when they feel overwhelmed. The second became painfully clear during COVID, when misinformation was rampant and countless numbers of citizens worldwide trusted what they heard without question. But truth has a way of rising to the surface, and I’m hopeful that the lesson learned was to think critically, to do your own research and to not follow blindly. We were told to “*trust the science*”, but it turns out the “*science*” wasn’t actually based on facts. Yet, it made people fearful. At the end of the day, courage is what transforms fear from something that controls us into something we can overcome. It’s rarely the easy path, but it’s always the right one.

Yours in health,

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Simplify Your Life



I recently returned from a two-week adventure hiking the Tour du Mont Blanc, a stunning 110-mile trek through the Alps of France, Italy, and Switzerland. The scenery was so breathtaking, I often felt as if I were living in a postcard. Being immersed in nature for days on end gave me the rare chance to fully disconnect, reflect, and reset. Altogether, my fiancé and I spent 16 days abroad, my longest vacation ever. It was the first time I truly “checked out” from work. That distance gave me clarity. One of my biggest takeaways? Simplicity. I lived out of a suitcase the entire trip. For someone who usually unpacks the moment she arrives at a hotel, that was a challenge. But it made me realize how much we overcomplicate our daily lives. Stripped of my daily routines and comforts, I adapted, and probably actually thrived, with less. It reminded me that we often hold on to things, habits and stressors we don’t really need. So in order to encourage you to take a step back from your day-to-day hustle, I want you to ask yourself two things: “*Where can I simplify and what small change can I make that might help me breathe a little easier and sleep a little better?*” Sometimes just one shift, however small, can reduce the mental load you carry and improve your emotional well-being. I hope you’ll give yourself permission to find that space. Here are a few suggestions to help you get there.

1. **Choose a Healthy Lifestyle.** Sadly, less than 30% of Americans get enough regular exercise and yet living a healthy lifestyle doesn’t have to be complicated. The problem? We’re bombarded by noise. Social media, magazines, TV ads, and influencers constantly push the latest fitness trends, diet fads, or miracle quick fixes. But here’s the truth: living healthy is simply about making small, consistent choices. The best workout? The one you’ll consistently do. The best diet? The one you enjoy and can sustain. I’m a big believer in *moderation*. I love dark chocolate and while I don’t eat it daily, I found a low-carb, no-sugar version I *can* enjoy guilt-free when I want a treat. One of my hiking friends recently lost 50 pounds in six months, not through gimmicks, but by cutting sugar, drastically reducing carbs and exercising. No tricks. Just choices. The key is to choose a healthy routine that fits YOUR life and make it a habit. It only takes about 21 days to build one and once you do, you’ll miss it if you skip it.

2. **Work-Life Balance.** In the past, any time I took a vacation, I felt compelled to check in: responding to emails, answering TEAMS messages, ultimately staying plugged in just enough to never fully disconnect. It was like an invisible tether to the office that kept me from truly enjoying time away. If I had to guess, I'd say at least 75% of people feel some degree of burnout. There are countless reasons for this, but I believe the solution starts with reflecting on the role work plays in our lives. For some, work becomes their entire identity simply because they haven't made the time or effort to invest in life outside of it. What I realized on this trip, far from the daily grind, was how much joy and peace exist beyond the 9-to-5. Surrounded by the incredible beauty of nature, I was reminded that life is meant to be lived, not just worked through. Most importantly, I realized that if my mind were stuck on work, I couldn't be truly present in the moment. So, for the first time, I made the conscious decision to completely unplug. I trusted that the work would still be there when I returned, and it was. I also trusted that my team would step up in my absence, just as I would do for them...and they did. Here's the truth: Work will always be there. But the beauty of the moment right in front of you? That's fleeting and if we're not careful, we'll miss it entirely.
3. **Eliminate the Excess.** Nearly five years ago, I downsized to a much smaller home, and with that move came a major purge of "stuff" I thought I needed. It's wild how much one person can accumulate over time. As I sorted through a decade's worth of belongings, I came to a powerful realization: the more things we own, the more they own us. Every item, whether it's used or not, takes up physical, mental and emotional space. The clutter wasn't just in my home; it was also in my mind. As I let go of things I'd held onto for far too long, I discovered it wasn't just about cleaning out a closet, it was about learning to find joy in having less. Decluttering doesn't have to be overwhelming. Start with one room, one drawer or one shelf. You might be surprised how freeing it feels to lighten the load and how little you actually need to feel content.
4. **Lighten Your Schedule.** I recently read that 60% of Americans feel too busy to truly enjoy life. Does that sound familiar? If your calendar is jam-packed with commitments—weekdays, weekends, even evenings—you're not alone. Many of us wear our busyness like a badge of honor, equating it with importance or success. But the truth is, a full schedule doesn't mean a full life. Of course, there are times when life gets hectic and we can't avoid it. But during those times we CAN control, we need to give ourselves permission to say "no," not out of guilt, but by CHOICE. Simplifying your schedule isn't about doing *less*. It's about making space for what truly matters. For me, that's hiking. I dedicate almost every Saturday to unplugging and immersing myself in nature. That's my time to recharge. After our trip to Europe, I was so inspired to choose things that matter I decided to start learning Italian. Now I've carved out time each day to study and learn. That means fewer wasted evenings scrolling through social media or watching Hallmark movies and more time spent doing something meaningful to me. When you lighten your schedule, you give yourself the gift of choice, replacing noise with purpose and stress with joy.
5. **Reduce Spending.** Here's a shocking stat: average Americans spend about \$20,000 a year on things they don't actually need. Most people don't *mean* to waste money, but it happens more often than they realize. The first step to changing that is self-awareness. Before you hit "Buy Now" on Amazon, pause and ask yourself: *Do I really need this or do I just want it?* One trick I've learned is to put items in my cart and wait a day. If I still want them after a good night's sleep, I'll likely purchase them. But sometimes I don't and occasionally I forget about them entirely. We've become an instant gratification society and because everything is so easily accessible, we've lost the pause that used to come with shopping decisions. Want a wake-up call? Go back through the last three months of your credit card statements. Track where your money went. You'll probably be surprised how many purchases you don't even remember making. Reducing spending isn't about depriving yourself, it's about being intentional. When you spend less on things that don't matter, you free up resources to invest in the things that *do*.

These are just a few small, but meaningful ways to begin simplifying your life. The beauty is, you don't have to do them all on at once. If you're inspired to simplify, start with just one or two areas and see where that leads. Progress begins with intention, not perfection. At its core, simplifying is about clearing away the mental, physical, and emotional clutter that keeps us from what truly matters. It's about creating more space for the things that bring joy, purpose, and peace to our lives...and less space for the things that don't. Remember, the journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. Any one of these changes can be that first step toward a more intentional, more fulfilling and simpler life. As Henry David Thoreau wisely said, "*As you simplify your life, the laws of the universe will be simpler; solitude will not be solitude, poverty will not be poverty, nor weakness weakness.*" He also had some very straightforward advice: "*Simplify, simplify.*" I couldn't agree more.

Have a wonderful month.