

Shortcuts to Guilt Free Living, Right Now

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So you want the key to better living, it's simple. All you need is more time to do things you really want to do. The question is how do you get that? Read on and you'll learn the secrets and shortcuts right now.

Make Dining a Delight

On food, you don't have to cook! I mean you don't even have to microwave. I always figured that if I could have dinner ready in 3 minutes or less that was sufficient, but now I've learned I can eat rich and even right with no effort at all. Locate a favorite gourmet takeout, some cities and areas have a takeout taxi with a group of restaurants being served. Another popular option today, especially for couples and families is to consider hiring a personal chef. These professionals come to your home and cook up a storm for a week or two at a stretch. You get a gourmet smelling home for a night, and great meals with no repeats for a week or even two. Today even your favorite grocer has ready-made meals for those on the go or just those without the know-how. Check out the local gourmet deli and takeout for delicious solutions to any hunger.

Consider a Lifestyle Concierge

Give someone else your errands. That's right, you can get your dry cleaning picked up and delivered door to door. Many pharmacies also offer delivery, or online ordering. You can even order your postage online these days, saving those agonizing trips to the post office, and missing the chance for a truly postal experience. There are also concierge services independent of the luxury hotel chains, but that do the same sort of errands, ticket ordering, reservations and such. Giving up the so-called loose end activities can really be a time saver.

Get Clean Without the Hassle

Hire a maid service or a cleaning person. You deserve it! Surely your time is worth more than the \$55-\$100 it takes to have someone else spend 3-5 hours a week vacuuming, dusting, polishing, and scouring. Besides given the choice between time with friends and cleaning, I'd be with friends, wouldn't you? If it seems hard to justify because it is just you, have it done biweekly. Be sure the person you use is bonded and insured and you've checked their references first.

Keep It Live and Looking Good

Greenery, you've got to have it to add life to every room, but oh the maintenance can be a challenge. It is also an important factor in your exterior invitation. Call in Blossom Boxes or any other quick fix solution for your live plant needs both indoors and out. They can establish the right mix of plants, attractive containers, and all you have to do is water (or have your maid water inside and your gardener water outside.) You'd be surprised at what a difference this will make both visually and physically (plants clean the air), and how inviting your place will look. If you really are reluctant to do live, silk is fine, just make sure that the cleaning service of choice knows to spray these monthly with silk floral cleaner (no wiping necessary), so that they don't wind up being dust trees.

Get a Handy Husband or Hire Help

The next shortcut for a better life involves hiring a handyman to get those nagging shores done! You know you've wanted to add crown molding to the bedrooms upstairs, but you haven't got the time or the talent; call for help. You know you need the deck restained and sealed; call for help. The shower is badly in need of regrouting, ugh. And, you've got to address that leak in the garage. You don't have to do it yourself; you just need to get it done. There are any numbers of individuals ready to help, including Handy Husband services in many locations. You can also use online services or thumb through the old fashioned yellow pages for the like of Good Neighbor or Service Magic. They guarantee their work and only allowed bonded and insured talent.

Keep Your Pets Secure and Happy

Do you get anxious every time you travel about leaving your favorite Fido or rover home alone? Or perhaps you wrestle them into the pet carrier (often a traumatic experience for you both) and haul them to the vet?? Well, no more, find a pet sitter that you like and who likes your pets. It is much

simpler to get them in to take care of Rover or Fido, than taking them to the vet every time you travel. Not to mention there is less chance they will pick up any illness in the kennel, and they aren't stressed by a strange environment. It also is a way to have someone pick up your mail, and water your plants! Worry free travel is hard to come by; this step can make a big difference.

Simplify for Cost Savings and Time Benefits

Shortcuts can be about streamlining, about simplifying. Consider eliminating a phone line. That's right; in this age of technology do you really need a cell phone, a home phone, and a work phone? Okay so you can't eliminate work, what about consolidating your home phone to your cell phone? You'll never be stuck in a power outage, and you'll have to check one less location for messages. Besides are you ever home to answer anyway? While you are at it, consider consolidating your multiple email addresses, it isn't necessary to have more than two unless you are playing with aliases. And at the very least have those all dump to the same location. You'll also want to be sure you have a spam washer/blocker in place to eliminate the tedium of wading through hundreds of junk mails.

Get Your Time Back and Your Life Is Yours Again

Better living means hiring others to do what you don't have to. Use a courier service to ease both your workload and personal errands, there are also concierge services mentioned earlier in this article that can help. It is often amazing how much time we lose to running errands, just to pick up a prescription, get film developed, take care of shoe repair, and more. Explore ways that will save you the time, while being a reasonable exchange of dollars for your savings. Once you put a dollar value on your time, you will suddenly realize that if it takes you an hour at \$100, and you can hire someone to do it for \$20, the economics just make sense. And you'll have your time back for more valuable work, or necessary play.

Celebrate with Event Planners

Better living is about celebrating this life we are in everyday! And when you really want to blow it out, do it the easy way, avoid all the dirty work and hassle of a party. Hire a butler, party planner, or caterer. These talented specialists can do it all, from facilitating your food presentation and clean up, to actually bringing it all in and doing it for you. As a designer I often work with clients on party set up, décor and even refer the caterer and butler. Just ask! Don't wait to have a party because it's too much work, know who to call to make it easier.

Low Cost Labor for the Basics

Sometimes shortcuts mean giving up something you might even enjoy, but just don't have the time. Like gardening or landscaping, while I do find it relaxing and fun, it also gobbles an incredible amount of time. So consider taking the parts that aren't as fun, like mulching and hire a high schooler or even a college student to take care of basic landscaping. I'm not talking about the stuff that needs a trained eye, but essential weeding, mulching, laying of pine straw or bark bits can all be delegated. You can still do the pruning and planting if you have the time and inclination, but the rest can be farmed out. Think carefully about the mix of plants you have or want, and go for easy maintenance, low care, but big impact. It doesn't have to be difficult to look good.

Time to Pursue Your Dreams

Now you've implemented some of the shortcuts, you should have more time to pursue your personal dreams and visions, and just time to relax and enjoy life. We only get one chance at this, make it count, and make it fun.

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