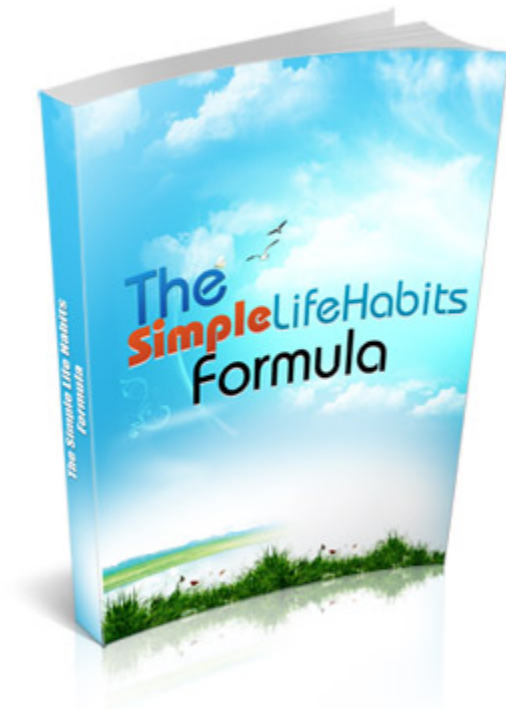


The Simple Life Habits Formula



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I have always had a deep, down craving to be better in life then I currently am. Whether it is my walk with God, my relationship with my wife & kids, or just how I handle my time. I want to be better today than yesterday. Life can get extremely busy and I am always looking for ways to *simplify my life*.



That being said, I have tried many things in my life (most of which did not work). I have tried all of the gadgets and tested every theory imaginable. I have read every time management book that has made the NY Times Bestsellers List. While I did gain new insights and little distinctions along the way, everything I tried seemed to have a gap or just did not fit right. I thought

that something must be wrong with me. Why does everyone else seem to have it all together? I used to chalk it up to a lack of self discipline and that I just needed to “try harder.” Have you been there?

So, you know what I would do? Go extreme! Out of my frustration I would try to create all this discipline and manage my time down to 10 minute increments (don't forget bathroom time) only to become absolutely miserable in the process. It is not that I was not organized, but that I was bored in that organization. After 2 or 3 days of strict discipline I would unravel and go back to my old ways.

We see this a lot with people who are on diets. You restrict yourself for so long with “boot camp mentality” only to come to a crashing halt several days later. So, what do you do?

3 Simple Actions to Simplify Your Life Now

1. Reduce the Intake

We are bombarded on a consistent basis with information overload. Don't get me wrong, information is power, but too much information is robbing us from being great and doing great things. I have a bent for learning. In fact, when I took a Strength Finders test, learning was at the top. I am not saying that you are better off to remain ignorant in life.

All I am saying is that how you simplify your life is to reduce the volume of information that you are allowing yourself to take in. It is no different then eating too much. We walk around with brain indigestion and bloated thoughts. Find an area in your life where you taking in too much information and do something refreshing instead.

2. Reduce the Distractions

If you haven't noticed, life does not stop so that you can figure out life. Many times I have wished that I could just put the pause button on life so that I can catch up with all the things I need to do. Ever felt that way?

Unwanted distractions come up and take us off track. What makes it difficult is when the unwanted distractions are important things. Most of the time they are important things that we have avoided for so long that they are now demanding our full attention. Distractions and interruptions can be quite frustrating at times. It robs us of our mental energy and it dominates our thinking. With all of these "open loops" in our brain no wonder we never do the things we want to do. We are too tired and don't know how to find the time.



The ability for you to focus on a single task is absolutely critical if you are going to be successful. Do you find yourself constantly pulled in many directions? I know that I do. If you are going to simplify your life you have got to figure out how to reduce the distractions that surround you. Now, it is not always easy to do, but it can be done.

The first step is awareness. Most of do not realize how many times we are stopping a task to start another one. We are like the circus act of “spinning plates.” We operate everyday in emergency mode. Whichever plate is wobbling the worse gets our attention and then onto the next plate and the next plate. It never stops until our work day is done.

Grab a notepad. This particular technique has worked well for me. Basically, whenever something comes to my mind with the potential to distract me, then I write whatever is nagging me on the notepad and determine to forget about it until I am done with what I am doing.

Get a timer. This is the one tip that has absolutely catapulted my productivity and kept me from distractions. I bought a simple time management software called [The Action Machine](#). It has a nice interface and it is super simple to use. Every morning I put in the task that I want to accomplish for the day and how long it will take me to do the particular task. Then, when you hit go, you are on a race with the clock. Being a super competitive person, I want to accomplish the task before the timer goes off. It helps me to focus and avoid distractions and just simply take action. You can find a demo video of how the actually software works here: [Demo Video](#).

3. Reduce the Output

Now this is the one that many people fight against. We think that the more things we are involved with the more things we are getting done. However, a divided focus never stands. When your mind is cloudy with too many priorities at the same it is difficult to see any significant progress.

It is so easy to live life in the reactive mode. After all, setting goals and planning my schedule seem like so much extra effort. Yet, what happens is

that we never get to the actual habits that we want to create because we are busy doing too many other things.

For so many years people and organizations have praised those who are masters at multi-tasking. Being able to juggle many things at once was seen as super productivity. They were envied by so many. However, recent studies have shown us an entirely different story. What may have worked well in the Industrial Age does not work so well in the new Knowledge Workers Age. Making a 1% improvement on 20 things does not feel like progress at all.

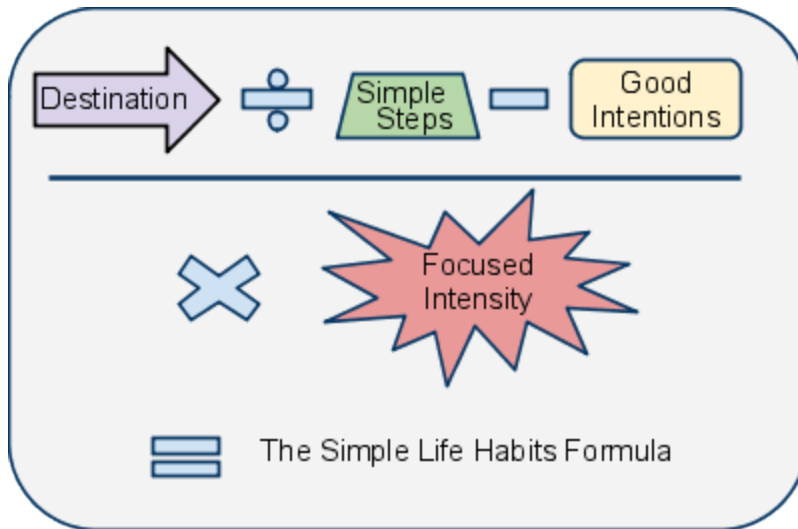
That is why so many people get to the end of their day and then scratch their head and say, "What did I actually get done today?" Now, think about how much more powerful it would be to focus 100% on your major task and make 20-30% progress on it in one day! That is the power of focus. I also refer to it as "focused intensity" and I am going to show you how to make it work in your life when creating new Life Habits.

We mistakenly believe that the more we are multi-tasking the more we are getting done, but that just isn't true. Jumping from one unfinished task to the next will actually drain you mentally. Instead choose one major task that if you put 100% focus and you will see unbelievable results. It just feels better to move one thing from 0% completion to 30% completion than it does to see a 1% increase on 10 different things.

Give yourself a personal challenge this week and choose to sharpen your focus and resist the urge to multi-task and you will see what I mean. These are the exact steps that I have used to simplify my life.

The Simple Life Habits Formula

I want to share a basic formula with you that I have personally used over the last year to get my life going in the right direction. This formula will give you a lot of freedom in life and pull you in your desired direction at the same time. I am going to just briefly share the basics of the formula and will expound on each of them in a little bit.



It may sound complicated, but it is easier than it sounds. The Simple Life Habits Formula has four parts:

1. A Desired Destination
2. Divided into Small Steps
3. Minus Good Intentions
4. Multiplied by Focused Intensity

1. Select a Desired Destination

Do you know where you are heading in life? The truth is all of us are heading in a certain direction. Whether you want to or not you are heading toward a destiny. A life that is out of focus is constantly changing direction and this can lead to confusion and bewilderment in life.

You are the sum of your choices in life. You are where you are right now because of the choices that you made. You can try all you want to live a detached and care free life but you are still headed in a direction. God gives us the freedom to make those choices but through His Word he has given us guidance and help.

"Direction – not intentions, hopes, dreams, prayers, beliefs, intellect, or education – determines destination." - Andy Stanley

A person who lives with a life of purpose has a desired destination in life. The first step in the process is for you to get absolutely clear about the goal you are trying to achieve. For example, you might want to be:

- Debt free before you turn 40
- Find your life's work
- Have an incredible relationship with spouse
- Lose 30 pounds and gain energy
- Run a marathon

You need to get clear on the destination because whether you choose to or not you are already headed toward a destination.

2. Divide into Small Steps

Did you know there is a downside to having a lofty goal for your life? You can become quickly discouraged when you see the gap from where you are to where you want to be. Most people who set out with some lofty goal give up soon after because they do not see instant results.

We live in a microwave society where not only do we want results but we have to see it now. To be honest, this is my biggest struggle, I can by nature be extreme. I try to super-charge my goals and accomplish everything in one day.

Once you get clear on your goal. You need to then break it down into several baby steps. This is essential and most people miss this step altogether. Do not make that mistake! Figure out what your 1st logical baby step is and let that be your new goal. Write that baby step on several cards

and place it in different areas. That is your new focus. Forget everything else for the moment. If you need to stop reading right now and write down the first baby step goal for your new habit.

Dave Ramsey has perfected the baby step idea by getting his readers to focus on just one step in their financial life. The reason they were struggling in the first place is because they were trying to do everything at once. Instead he had them focus on saving \$1000 for a baby emergency fund. Don't worry about anything else until that is accomplished. Then move to the next step. It is similar with the habits that you want to create in your life. Don't just decide a goal and leave it at that. Determine your first small step and make that your new goal.

3. Minus Good Intentions

Good intentions can easily get in our way if we are not careful. How many times have good intentions led us astray? We want to be healthy and have really good intentions of being that way but then our daily choices do not add up. We want to handle our money correctly and get out of debt but our check register paints a different picture. Good intentions are not good enough.

Andy Stanley in his book [The Principle of the Path](#) talks quite a bit about good intentions. Good intentions can cloud our view if we are not careful. We mistakenly believe that if we mean well or have a good heart that somehow things will turn out all right in the end even if we make bad decisions. Good intentions actually cause us to deceive ourselves. Be very careful about leaning upon good intentions. Can God take a mess and turn it around for his good? Absolutely! However, He has given us a His Word that outlines for us how we should live.

The motto of the [The Principle of the Path](#) is: "Your direction determines your destination." I believe that to be true indeed. Andy mentions a prayer that he prays over his wife and kids on a regular basis. We have adopted this prayer as well for our family.

"Lord, help me to see trouble coming from a far way off, give me the wisdom to know what to do, and the courage to do it."

You have to pick one goal and decide that you are going to cut off all good intentions. The word decision means "to cut off." You have to literally decide that you are going to cut off any other possibility. You have a desired destination and a small step to focus on. You are going to be aware of "good intentions" and recognize them as lies that you tell yourself. Good intentions are not going to get you where you want to go.

4. Multiplied by Focused Intensity

Lastly, you want to give some power to this Simple Life Habits Formula and you do that by multiplying it with focused intensity. My biggest problem was trying to do too many things at once. I would see 9 areas of my life that I wanted to see dramatic improvement in so I would try to begin 9 new habits at the same time. That just simply does not work. Remember this: Multi-task to your own peril.

The truth is you can become quickly discouraged when you see one centimeter of improvement over several areas of your life. Instead I challenge you to just pick one and get momentum on your side. You will get to the rest in due time, but for now just choose one.

Then, have your small step in mind and attack it with a vengeance. Let it dominate your mind and make it a real habit. You will not believe the rush of adrenaline and momentum you will receive from this process.

6 Main Principles for Developing a Life Habit Plan



Once you understand the Simple Life Habits Formula, there are a few principles that you will need to apply to make it effective. These principles will give you the framework for you to work in for your new habit forming hobby. By applying these simple principles you will reap the rewards of your hard work at a faster rate.

Life Habit Principle #1: Organize & Prioritize Your Important Life Roles

Some of you may now exactly where you want start. You know the habit that you want to start with and that is fine. Others will want to have more of a game plan as they might feel that there are some many areas of their life they want to change that they do not know where to start.

Micheal Hyatt, the CEO of Thomas Nelson Publishers, shared on his blog a document that he called "My Life Plan." It was an interesting document and I enjoyed forming my own plan from the exercise. One area of the plan that I want to share with you was in regards to prioritizing your main roles in life. Yours might be different but his were listed in this order:

1. God
2. Self
3. Gail (Wife)
4. Children
5. Friends
6. Career
7. Finances
8. Ministry

By the way, he was not trying to be selfish by putting himself second on the list. The reason he is in second is because he can be the right kind of husband, father and friend if he takes care of himself.

If you are looking for a plan to start creating the right habits, then do a similar exercise and list out on paper all the different roles that you play. Then, prioritize that list from most important to least important.

Pick your first habit from the #1 area in your life. Then after 30 days, add a habit from #2 and so on.

Life Habit Principle #2: Choose Only One Habit and Make it Stick for 30 Days

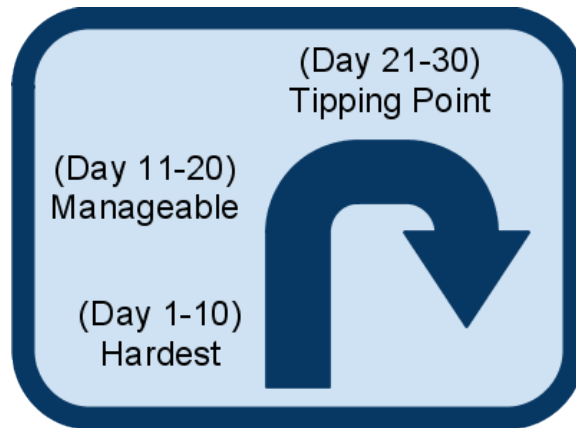
This is both the hardest and best thing you will ever do. Choose only one habit. Resist the urge to organize your whole life in one swoop. It is just not practical. You will fail and become quickly discouraged. Mini victories is the key to lasting momentum.

Decide that you are going to select one habit and that will be your one focus for the next 30 days or more. How will you know when it is time to add another good habit? When the first habit is a must in your life. If you start a second habit and then slack off the first, you are moving too soon. Pick one and attack it with focused intensity.

Life Habit Principle #3: Embrace Habit Gravity

What most of us fail to realize is that it is always the hardest in the beginning. Starting a new habit is no different then fighting gravity in the beginning. The sooner that you accept that it will be a uphill climb the better off you will be.

I learned this concept from Eban Pagan in his program "Wake Up Productive." The first ten days of any new habit will be the most difficult. Once you get to day 11-20 things will still be tough but more manageable. After Day 21 you will slowly start to feel like things are swinging in your favor.



Now while that might not feel encouraging on the outset. It does help you to mentally prepare for the tough times. If you expect them and know that they are only here for a short while (like the in-laws for the Holidays) then you know that it will not feel like this forever.

The hit show the Biggest Loser is a perfect example. They know the moment they step on the campus that they are not on vacation. It will be the most difficult few months they have ever experienced but the payoff is huge. They will enjoy the benefits of all their "upfront" hard work for years to come.

Such is true with anything in life. Embrace the struggle. Go ahead and decide that you are going to push through anyway. Expect the gravity to be there, say hello and make it your friend. The good news is the gravity does get lighter.

Life Habit Principle #4: Build on the Downhill Momentum

It is a beautiful thing to get to the top of the hill and start gaining some momentum on the way down. That is what will happen to you financially, relationally, and physically if you stay with it. That large boulder is hard but you will reach the other side. Momentum comes only with focused intensity. That is why it is so important for you to start with just one habit.

Dave Ramsey recently gave a speech in a conference about the power of focused intensity. I want to share with you some of his main thoughts and how you can build some momentum in your life.

1. To obtain momentum you must have focused intensity.

You see the problem with multi-tasking is that we spread ourselves out way too thin. It would be like taking an axe and swinging one time at several different trees. However, if we take all our daily swings at one tree we will see the change and that momentum will become addicting. Not only that but very tree no matter how big will eventually fall with that type of intensity.

2. Momentum doesn't happen overnight, instead it builds over time.

Momentum is not something that happens in a day. It is something you really see in retrospect. You will look back and be amazed at how much progress you have made when you have applied focused intensity. The problem is most people quit before they get the big ball rolling. They plant in the Spring, nurture all Summer and then quit before the harvest in the Fall. Momentum needs some time to get started so do not become quickly discouraged.

3. Momentum does not happen apart from God.

We need to make sure not to factor God out of this equation. If we want to do anything of lasting value, then we need God to intervene. Without God we are walking blind through life not really certain where to focus our energy. I don't know about you, but when God gives you a vision for your life, it is usual way beyond your own capabilities. You need God to get involved if that dream in your heart is ever going to come true. Or maybe you are under much debt and you wonder if you are ever capable of getting out from under this burden. You need God to show up. Momentum doesn't happen without God as He is the one directing your steps.

Proverbs 12:28 In the way of righteousness *is* life, And in *its* pathway *there is* no death. (NKJV)

4. Momentum is unstoppable.

Once you get that big ball rolling down the hill it will be impossible to slow it down. The difficulty is in the first half. Every new habit or goal has a tipping

point. A new habit will feel like you are fighting against gravity in the beginning, but just keep telling yourself that things will get easier (cause they will!). Dave Ramsey ended his speech with a Winston Churchill story. Churchill said:

“Never give in—never, never, never, never, in nothing great or small, large or petty, never give in except to convictions of honor and good sense. Never yield to force; never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy.”

May we all develop that kind of resolve when it comes to accomplishing all God wants us to be in this life. Find a goal and place focused intensity on that one goal!

Life Habit Principle #5: Add-on Gradually

You need to give yourself at least 30 days before adding on a new habit. Do not rush into this. Remember, that gradual change always has a better chance at being lasting change. Once you think you have mastered your new habit, add a new one. After a week, check your progress. If you have stopped the 1st habit already then it wasn't really a habit to begin with, That is a sure sign that you are moving too quickly. Back off and give yourself more time with the first habit.

If this is too slow for you and you really are a super acheiver and want to do more, then try this approach:

Must-Should-Could

The "must" is the one habit that you want to form in the next 30 days. You are determined that if nothing else gets done in a day's time, this one thing WILL get done before you go to bed. No rationalizing and excuses. The "should" is an additional habit or two that you really want to start right away as well. These are habits that you should do, but if you lay your head down at night and have not done them the world will not end.

Finally, you can have some "could" habits. I wouldn't suggest having too long of a list, but one or two "could" habits are those that you will get to if the "must" and the "should" get done and you have some additional time available.

Example List:

Must

- Read my Bible every morning

Should

- Exercise for 20 minutes
- Look at finances

Could

- Read one chapter from a book at bedtime

Of course, that is just an example, but I think you get the general idea. Remember, you do not have to do it this way. It is perfectly fine with just adding one new habit every 30 days. After one year you will have 12 new habits formed.

Life Habit Principle #6: You Must Be Held Accountable

Adding an accountability partner can be one of the most difficult (yet rewarding) things that we can ever do. We live in a “Surface Society.” By that I mean, we know many people but very few if any really know us. No one knows the deep parts of our life as we keep everyone at arm’s length. Finding someone to show you tough love can be just what the doctor ordered. Go buy two cans of dog food. Give one to your accountability partner and keep the other one in sight.

Set a goal to do one of your good habits in a consistent manner (like a week). If you do not fulfill your obligation, tell your accountability partner that you will open the dog food and take a bite. Yuck! I know this is an extreme example, but hopefully I got your attention. I guarantee one thing: the next time you want to roll over you just might be motivated to get out of bed and exercise (or whatever good habit you have chosen).

One great free resource that I would encourage you to use is [Joe's Goals](#). It is super easy to set up a new habit. All you do is visit the site each day and place a check mark. The site will then record it for you. It is set up to

the it is only viewable by you, but there is a share feature. Share your new habit with an accountability partner and they can view how you are doing. You can also view their progress as well.

Isn't It Time?

Ok, you have read the basic report. These are the principles that you can start applying today. Remember, do not try to do everything at once. Decide on your one habit and then break it down into one small step that is your new focus.

I have much more to share with you and I hope that you will join me on my blog as I expound on these principles and share more insights on how you can enjoy a rich, full life. You can also subscribe to the RSS feed as well. You can find the blog at <http://SimpleLifeHabits.com>.

Feel free to share this report with a friend!

Here is the formula once again:

