

STEPHANIE O'DEA

# Slow Down & Simplify

live a life of purpose and abundance



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SLOW DOWN & SIMPLIFY: LIVE A LIFE OF PURPOSE AND ABUNDANCE

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O'DEA [FACEBOOK](#) ~ [INSTAGRAM](#) ~ [BOOKS](#) ~ [CONTACT](#)

## DEDICATED:

to my husband, Adam. Thank you for spending more than half (thus far!) of my life with me.

## WITH THANKS:

to the hundreds of thousands of readers whom I've "met" since I began writing online in 2008.

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# Introduction

I am so glad that you are here, reading this book. My hope is that when you finish reading it, you are ready to embark upon your own journey to Slow Down, and live the life ***you've always dreamt about***: one filled with peace, purpose, tranquility, love, laughter, and abundance.

"THE SECRET OF HAPPINESS, YOU SEE, IS NOT FOUND IN SEEKING MORE, BUT IN DEVELOPING THE CAPACITY TO ENJOY LESS." ~ SOCRATES

## **An Invitation to You:**

I'd love to invite you to please join other like-minded people and support each other in their quest to Slow Down in the private facebook group.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/odeabookclub>

I love simple things.

I don't like complicated devices or gadgets, and I hate reading instruction booklets.

I like to be able to see something, immediately figure it out, and know what to do with it (this is probably why I was immediately drawn to the simplicity of the crockpot slow cooker).

I prefer to spend my days cloud-watching, day-dreaming, or gardening, rather than being stuck inside with harsh fluorescent lighting.

I'm also a bit of an introvert, and I'm prone to bouts of anxiety.

You and I may be quite similar.

I've found that when I take the time to go slow, to breathe, and to trust that everything is going to be okay as long as I keep taking teensy tiny steps forward towards the direction of my dreams and goals -- all will be right in my world.

Slow Living isn't about "making due" or "settling." That's not what I teach, and that is not what I'm suggesting in any way. It's not fun to feel or think "this is as good as it gets."

Instead, my definition of Slow Living is one where you **purposefully plan out the life you've always dreamt about** -- even if some of your desires seem a bit far-fetched or impossible to achieve.

You truly can “have it all” -- just by taking the time to Slow Down.

If you desire it, I believe you can achieve it.

~ ~ ~

There are only 5 steps needed to live a Slow Life. I’ve explained them in detail in this ebook, but if you’d like a cheat sheet to the 5 steps, they are:

<b>5 Steps to Living a Slow Life</b>
1: Declutter Everything (use the P.R.O.M. method)
2: Know Where You are Headed (set your GPS)
3: Surround Yourself with Positivity/Stay in a Grateful State
4: Take Action Daily (baby steps and 10 Minute Chunks)
5: Tweak and Fine-Tune as Needed

Thank you for being here.

# What is Slow Living?

I get asked this question a lot. Mostly I'm asked by people older than my current age (I'm Gen X), or by members of the media, who are looking for a nice and neat soundbite.

I've found that younger generations and those who are actively living in the trenches of life and work and parenthood know instantly and rather inherently what Slow Living means.

It's actually easier for me to explain what Slow Living is NOT -- than what it is.

Slow living is not minimalism. But it can be.

Slow living is not deciding to only have 100 everyday items. But it can be.

Slow living is not selling your home, all of your possessions, and moving into a Tiny House or an RV. But it can be.

***Slow Living means that you are consciously aware of what you are doing, what your surroundings are, and where you are headed in life.***

This means that you are actively living out the life that you have consciously and purposefully *decided* to -- one that is fulfilling, satisfying, and lived with intention.

In a nutshell, Slow Living is not accidental living.

I have three children, and I currently work in an elementary school. I hear children bickering an awful lot -- which means I hear the phrase: "but it was an accident!" more often than I'd like to.

And accidents? They really aren't ever a good thing.

That's why when cars bump each other, or when somebody falls off of a ladder, the term "accident" is used.

But "**on purpose**"? That's when you **consciously decide and plan** how things are going to happen. And that is what I'd like you to do in all aspects of your life.

Some people embark upon their path to Slow Living because of a recent medical diagnosis, or an upheaval in their life like divorce or a death in the family.

My hope is that you are here out of curiosity, not because of tragedy.

I'm going to share my own story with you here -- I've had a few noteworthy wake-up calls when my life was spinning a little too fast for me, and I got caught up in the hustle and drive to GO GO GO rather than following the gentle nudges of my own inner guidance and intuition.

# My Slow Living Story

When we first moved into the neighborhood in which we currently live, there was an older lady that lived up the street on a hill who came out each morning in her robe, slippers, and some sort of shower-cap looking hat to yell at the speeding cars.

I am not being insulting by describing her as a little old lady. She was in fact old. And appeared to be quite small in size.

Anyhow. This street in our neighborhood is a busy street — it leads straight to the freeway and the freeway leads either San Francisco or San Jose.

I'm sure you can imagine that during certain hours, drivers are speeding — either up the hill to get to the freeway for work, or speeding back down the hill to get home after a long day.

This lady came out with a homemade picket sign she shook at the cars. It read: SLOW THE %#&\* DOWN in dark reddish, almost purple magic marker.



The % # & \* was not on her sign. Instead it read the actual word that I'm sure your brain can figure out.

She was awesome.

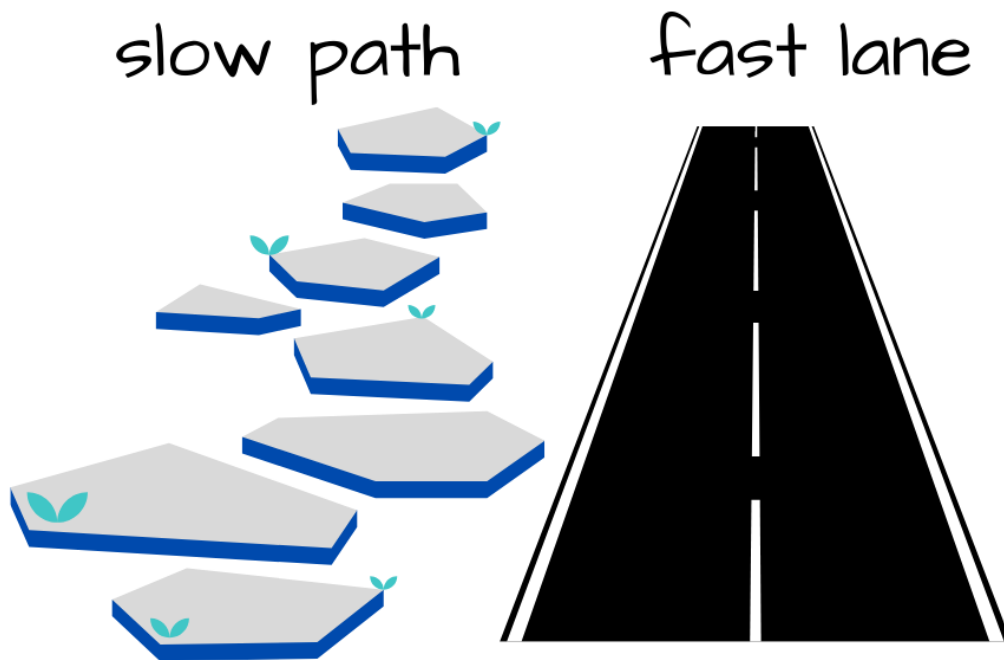
The sign was awesome.

and the sentiment?

TOTALLY AWESOME.

Whenever I find myself feeling a bit frantic or frenzied, I think about this older lady. She has since passed away, but I can see her clearly in my mind, and use this memory as a reminder that it's okay to go slow.

I'm still going to get where I want to go.



Because the fact is, the **end result** for each and every one of us is the exact same. There really is no other option, unless science finds a way to make cryogenics mainstream.

And if we are lucky?

Life is long. And meandering. And wouldn't it be wonderful to enjoy all of the twists and turns and bends in the road?

If you are rushing around trying to achieve the next big accomplishment at work but you miss out on attending the end-of-the year dance recital or the little league championship, is it worth it?

If you capture the absolutely perfectly-posed photo for Instagram which has the potential to go viral but in doing so you alienate all of your immediate friends and family in order to please strangers on the internet, is it worth it?

One of my biggest wake-up calls to Slow Down happened on a *literal highway*.

I ended up having a massive panic attack while driving my then 16-year-old daughter to a track and field event at Golden Gate Park in San Francisco.

We were driving on the freeway, and I felt my legs start to shake and black bars, like elevator doors, were beginning to close across my eyes.

Thankfully, I understood that I was having a panic attack and was able to carefully cross over the lanes of traffic and take the next exit safely.

After this rather large wake-up call, I spent some time reflecting on how and why this panic attack occurred.

I stopped living a life I designed on purpose.

Instead, I was trying to please too many people and I forgot to take care of myself and my own needs.

I blame it on the Instant Pot.

The Instant Pot hit shelves in the US in 2010, and reached fever-pitch cult-status in 2016, when over 215,000 pots were sold on Black Friday within a 24-hour period on Amazon.

Emails began flooding my inbox. I was told by many readers, friends, family members, and by my literary agent I needed to hop on the Instant Pot bandwagon.

I personally didn't get the appeal – I liked slow cooking. I liked preparing my family's nightly meal early in the morning while I was still highly caffeinated and coherent. I love being able to get on with all of my daily tasks and routine without needing to worry about the dinner hour looming ahead.

I didn't want to cook a frozen beef roast in 20 minutes – I already knew it was perfect and spoon tender when slow cooked for 10 hours.

But the emails and requests kept coming.

So I bought one.

And I played around with it and came to the conclusion that it wasn't for me. Although there was a slow cooker setting, the food turned out differently than when I used my traditional oval-shaped slow cooker. Each time I made hard boiled eggs according to the included instruction booklet, they burst. I had a rice cooker already that had a nonstick surface and knew how to make overnight yogurt in the slow cooker.

I simply didn't want another appliance on the countertop.

So I put it away.

I'm not usually one to get “wiggled out” or “haunted” by things – but I was beginning to feel as if the Instant Pot was taunting me, everywhere I turned. I saw commercials, neighbors started asking me questions, and my inbox continued to be filled with questions on how to translate slow cooker recipes to the Instant Pot or pressure cooker.

As time marched on, I figured I could let go of the *pressure* to produce a Pressure Cooker book and never think about the Instant Pot or pressure cooking again.

The Universe seemed to have a different idea.

The whispers and nudges bubbling from within were getting louder and louder until I could no longer ignore them and eventually had a hard time sleeping.

“Just because you CAN do something fast, it doesn't mean you should.”

“Faster is not always better.”

“When you do things too fast, mistakes happen.”

In the meantime, my inbox continued to be bombarded by readers asking for guidance and recipes for the Instant Pot. I began to feel like something was wrong with me for not liking the Instant Pot, since so many people were obviously in love with it.

Right around now is when my body decided to take matters into it's own hands -- and I had my panic attack while driving.

[I feel the need to place a caveat here: just because I don't like or use the Instant Pot doesn't mean that you should not like or use it. Many of my friends love their Instant Pot and continue to use it daily.]

I am not here to tell you to get rid of a kitchen appliance.

The Instant Pot was and continues to be a metaphor.

And for me, it was a very clear indication that the best strategy is to Slow Down and live a slow life with purposeful intention.

I don't want something like this to ever happen to you. I've learned an awful lot since that day and now teach the process I took to eradicate the "out of control, frantic and frenzied" feelings I was having.

The good news is that you do not need to ever feel this "crash and burn" sensation, if you haven't already.

***There is no need to "hit rock bottom" in order to take control of your life.***

~ ~ ~

I first got my start coaching and working with families when I worked at a childcare center housed within a homeless shelter before I had children of my own. Part of my job was to help teach parenting classes and map out a 3 to 5 year life plan for the people who lived there.

I still use the training and teachings I learned from that experience over two decades ago to help shape and guide my writing and coaching today.

From the work that I've done over these past twenty-odd years working with women (primarily moms) and families, I've learned that most humans are trying to achieve a feeling of inner peace.

A feeling of happiness.

I want this for you.

I don't believe that "balance is a myth."

I don't subscribe to the notion that "you can have it all, but you can't have it all at once."

I call BS.

What's the point of subscribing to such a defeatist attitude?

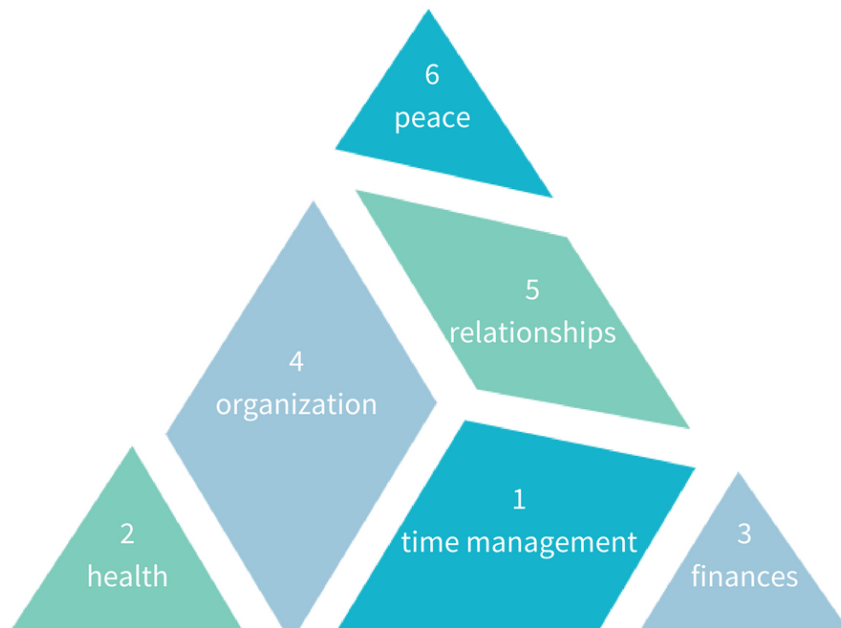
OF COURSE YOU CAN HAVE IT ALL!

That's what the American Dream is all about!

I teach the concept of the Peace Pyramid in my self-guided coaching course, [Simple Shortcuts to Peace](#).

The Peace Pyramid is designed to get all the Have-Tos of life completed effectively and efficiently -- starting from the bottom up -- you can finally feel as if there is enough time for the Want-Tos in life that you keep putting off.

As you can see in the following illustration, the bottom layer is composed of time management, health, and finances -- with the next level being relationships and organization.



All of these components need to be “in check” in order to feel at peace.

If you are struggling with any of these sections, it will be difficult to achieve the calm, cool, collected, and at peace feeling you are after.

It’s pretty difficult to sleep well at night and feel relaxed if you are concerned about paying off debt or lowering your blood pressure.

The good news is that you really CAN take care of all of these Have-Tos --- and it’s not that difficult.

All you need to do is Stop. Take a breath, and Slow Down.

~ ~ ~

# Let's Get Started

The following image is sometimes shared in time management seminars or workshops, but I want to share it with you as a way to prioritize your life -- once you have a big vision of what is important in your life, and what isn't, we can start to provide structure in your day-to-day life.



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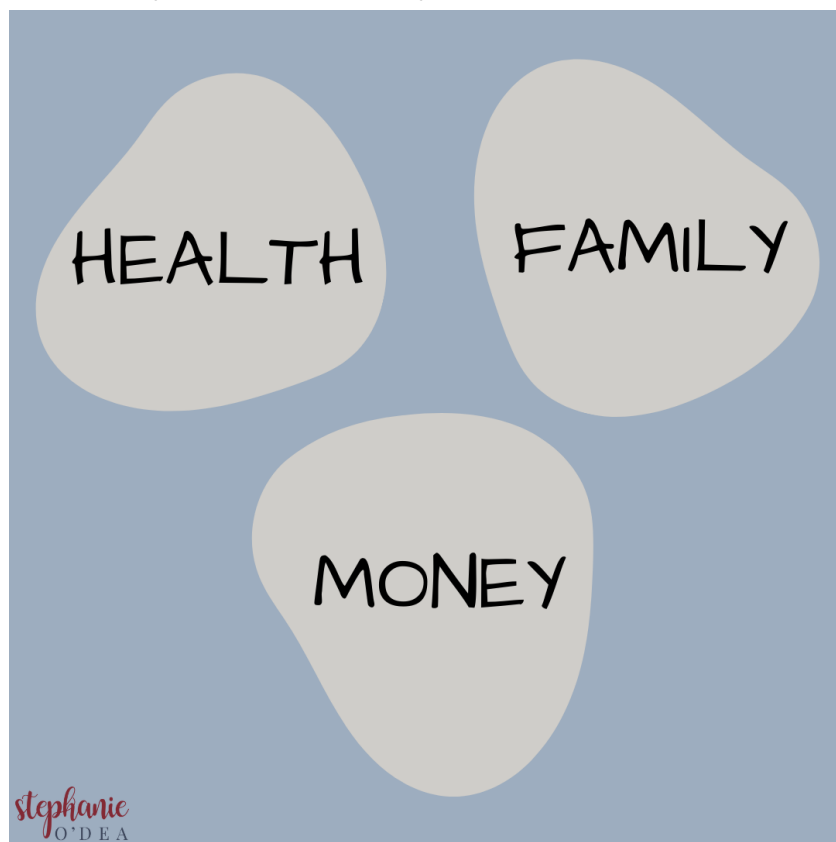
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If the empty jar is your life, and you are told that all of the following items need to get placed into the jar, the only way to cram them all in is to start with the big rocks first.

The big rocks are your top priority.

The pebbles are the next thing to go into the jar, and finally the sand can get sprinkled into the nooks and crannies.

In your life, the big rocks might be yourself (physical & mental health), your immediate family (children & your spouse or significant other), and perhaps your day job (or how you make money).



Pebbles might be representative of coworkers, inlaws, other relatives, friends, neighbors, and hobbies.

The sand is peripheral filler such as TV watching, surfing the web, interactions with casual acquaintances, reading the news, material possessions, traffic, and anything else you end up filling your day/life with.

If you aren't careful to pack your jar thoughtfully and with intention, your jar can easily be filled with sand and little rocks -- which will not leave enough room in your life for your big rocks.

Take the time to pause and think about how you fill your "jar of life."

Most people find that they are moving through life too quickly, and are caught up in the MORE MORE MORE hustle culture, and are **left feeling frantic** because they now don't have enough time or space to do the things they really want to do.

If you accidentally fill your life with too much "stuff" or "sand," the people, things, experiences, and activities that mean the most to you won't have enough room to fit into your "jar."

I don't want that to happen to you. I want you to live a calm, peaceful, and tranquil life filled with purpose and abundance.

You deserve to live out the life of your dreams.

# Step 1: DeClutter (P.R.O.M.) Everything

"SOMETIMES, WHEN YOU ARE TRYING TO ADD TO YOUR LIFE, THE BEST THING YOU CAN DO IS TO START SUBTRACTING." - ANONYMOUS

The first step to take if you are ready to slow down and simplify your life is to declutter.

I'd like for you to take the time to inventory all that you have in your life, and begin to purge what is no longer serving you.

Most people start with the physical things in their home, and that is a fantastic first step.

## Less Is More

As I stated earlier, I used to run preschool centers for disadvantaged children before I started a family of my own.

Have you ever been inside a preschool or daycare center, or looked around a kindergarten classroom?

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Every item has a home. Each shelving unit and bin is labeled, and every toy, art supply, and learning activity has a designated spot.

Because the center I managed happened to be housed within a homeless shelter, we were fortunate to receive a lot of donations.

You would think that the teachers, residents, and children would be overjoyed to receive carload after carload filled to the brim with toys, books, and puzzles.

And sometimes we were -- clothing, food, and immediately-consumed items like toothpaste, bubble bath, and fancy smelling shampoo were incredibly well-received, but after a while, the toys, books, and board games were simply tossed.

It became just too much to store, and we found that after a while, the children refused to even look up from what they were working on to paw through a cardboard box full of “new” things.

They much preferred to pick from the carefully curated shelves with only a few items to choose from. It was also much easier to clean up before lunch and nap time!

In fact, all I needed to do was to set a timer for a *10 Minute Tidy*, and the classroom was whipped into shape before the beeper sounded.

It sounds silly, but adults are an awful lot like preschoolers.

Think about how hotel rooms are laid out and decorated, or how a model home feels when you first walk in. The tabletops and countertops are cleared off, and there is ample open space.

When you have less items to store, it's much easier to keep everything neat and tidy.

In my [Clean Less, Play More: Housekeeping for Normal People](#) book, I share that while I like things neat and orderly, I don't actually *enjoy* the act of cleaning. In fact, if the lifestyle depicted on *The Jetsons* ever became the norm, I'd be first in line for a self-cleaning house.

Since such a house hasn't been invented yet (although, I do really love my Roomba!) I choose to do a little bit each day so the house isn't ever more than 30 minutes or so away from being able to entertain company.

If you find that you have too many personal items to store in a neat and tidy way, the first thing I'd recommend is to start decluttering.

An easy to remember acronym to help with this process is the word P.R.O.M.

P.R.O.M. stands for purge, remove, organize, and maintain.

Continue working on your PROM method of decluttering until you can confidently say that you have a place for all of the items you bring into your living space.

For some, this may take some doing, but I promise you will feel calmer, less anxious, and more at peace when you take the time to organize and maintain your personal items.

Heather, one of the students in my Peace Course, recently spent time going through the items she inherited after her mom's passing last summer. This is the feedback she shared after taking a few months to thoughtfully purge:

“It was (is!) hard to part with a lot of things, but today, having less ‘stuff’ also meant less apprehension. Less avoidance. Less anxiety. Less exclusion. Less loneliness. Less regret. Less shame. Today, less ‘stuff’ meant more time. More hospitality. More relationships. More openness. More laughter. More gratitude. More joy. More LIFE!!”

~ ~ ~

## Less Decisioning

I've decided that decisioning is a word. Let's go with it.

Decision fatigue is a real thing.

One of the amazing side effects of taking the time to DeClutter your home and life is that you end up with MORE time to do the things that you really want to do because you are no longer trying to do things to please others or things that you think you “should” do.

I first realized I had a massive case of decision-fatigue when I was a newish mother to an infant and a toddler who needed to eat real food that was healthy and accessible, multiple times a day.

After I looked in all the nooks and crannies of our suburban tract home for someone to “save me” (prince charming, a knight in shining armor, a fairy godmother, Martha Stewart, Mr. Belvedere....) -- I came to the painful conclusion that / was actually **The Adult in Charge**, and / needed to find a way to feed all of the beings in the house.

(This is originally why I fell in love with my crockpot slow cooker, which led to the [AYearofSlowCooking.com](http://AYearofSlowCooking.com) website and subsequent books)

So I created a meal plan.

And then I created a schedule.

Let's go back to the preschool classroom.

One of the prominent features in all classrooms filled with young children is the Daily Schedule.

It usually starts with an Opening Circle, followed by: Sharing, Math, Language, Recess, Art, Reading, Free Play, Lunch, Recess, Nap Time, Clean Up Time, Snack Time, Recess, Closing Circle, and Pick Up.

Having a schedule and a gameplan means less decisioning.

Think of your schedule, or your routine, as a personal assistant that is always there, keeping you on track.

The trick is to **NOT OVERPACK YOUR SCHEDULE.**

Decide on a few (just a few!) key things (the big rocks!) that need to get accomplished each day. Then, if you are feeling like it, add in a couple pebbles.

It's also okay to schedule in free time, naps, and chillaxing time -- taking care of your physical and mental health are always considered "big rocks."

There is no need to schedule in sand. Sand always finds a way to sneak in, even on what seems to be the most packed days.

## **Practical ways to limit decisioning:**

1. Set a wake-up and bedtime and stick with it.
2. Consider a capsule wardrobe or creating a personal uniform.
3. Schedule in exercise as a non-negotiable.
4. Create a list of favorite meals, and repeat them each week.
5. Write down a few key action items that need to be accomplished each morning.
6. Admit that not all tasks are worth doing.
7. It's okay to delegate.

## **The More Part**

After purging the extra stuff, decisioning, and distractions from your life, you will be left with MORE.

I promise.

We have all heard of FOMO -- which is the Fear of Missing Out. But what about JOMO?

That is the Joy of Missing Out, which is how you should begin to think of things.

And if you take the time to meet your FOMO head-on, and really pause and think things through before acting hastily, you will discover that you actually have been missing out on an awful lot of joy.

And joy is a wonderful feeling.

## Here are a few everyday examples:

- When shopping, you might feel a bit of FOMO if you pass up the opportunity to buy a new outfit, but what about the joy you can feel instead by putting that money into an investment account that will grow all on it's own?
- Or the joy you feel when you can have friends over spontaneously because your living spaces are no longer cluttered?
- If you reduce the number of tasks you do each day to only a few key things, you will be able to approach them more mindfully and with purpose. You may find that you now have "extra" time in your day to take a walk during your lunch break or indulge in a well-deserved nap.

- Take the time to pause and really decide whether or not you want to attend an event or a party instead of automatically saying “yes” right away or out of obligation.
- Taking a break from information overload that comes in the form of watching news or scrolling social media immediately frees up brain space for creativity. Try to spend more time creating each day rather than consuming. Yes, you may be a “bit behind” when it comes to breaking news, but if the news is important enough for you to know about, you will end up getting the information needed.

## Step 2: Program Your GPS

"IF YOU DO NOT KNOW WHERE YOU ARE GOING, EVERY ROAD WILL GET YOU NOWHERE" -- HENRY KISSINGER

When planning out your life, think of it in terms of how you would program a GPS in a car. In order to do that, the GPS really only needs to know 2 things: where you are, and where you are headed.

That's what you need to do in terms of your life.

If you have a goal of getting out of consumer debt, or paying off your home, or lowering your A1C so you don't need to take medication -- those are all destinations that you can program into your metaphoric GPS.

For instance, I started writing online as a way to work from home while taking care of my children. That was my end-goal --- I wanted to find a legitimate way to make good money while continuing to be the primary caretaker for my three children.

I succeeded in this, but along the way some things came up that seemed good on paper, but they actually were detours that made my GPS need to recalculate.

The idea to stay home with my kids percolated for years before it “came to life.” I vividly remember sitting in my college classes, nodding along to the instructor, but thinking to myself: this is all great info, but I’m really going to be a stay-at-home-mom.

That wasn’t my reality after getting married and having children because I happen to live in the SF Bay Area, which is a crazy expensive place to live. I needed to earn an income; there simply wasn’t any wiggle room in our budget for me *not to* work for money.

I dreamt on and off and fantasized about how to stay home but also make money at the same time.

My daydreams turned tangible in 2008, when I decided to make a New Year’s Resolution to use my crockpot slow cooker every day, and share my results online.

(I write out the exact sequence of events and the actions I took in [\*The Mommy Blogger Next Door: A.K.A., How I Became the CrockPot Lady.\*](#))

The website took off, and I was able to garner publicity and ended up writing 4 cookbooks. Because of this, I created a career for myself where I could write in the early morning hours and still stay home and be a full-time caregiver to my children.

This wasn’t something I expected at all. In fact, one of the reasons I love my slow cooker so much is that I don’t like to spend time in the kitchen cooking all that much!

The last time I flew to New York to appear on *The Rachael Ray Show*, to publicize one of my cookbooks, there was a blizzard, and the airplanes

were all grounded. I wasn't able to get a flight out of JFK for two days, delaying my trip home to see my husband and children.

I ended up missing Valentine's Day, which meant I wasn't able to help address the little note cards, attach the lollipops, or volunteer in my youngest's classroom.

To other people, the opportunity to stay in Manhattan for an extra two nights, on somebody else's dime, sounds like a gift from heaven.

But I spent those two days absolutely miserable, and found myself curled up on the bed, crying, because I couldn't be where I wanted to be: with my children.

So I urge you -- take the time to plot and plan exactly what it is you want out of life, and figure out the path to get there. It may take a little bit more time than you'd like, but if you stay the course and don't get distracted by too many detours along the way -- you will get there.

I promise.

But you need to keep moving forward in the right direction. My end destination at the time was that I wanted to stay home with my children.

What is your end destination? A new home? A more fulfilling career? Early retirement? A strong and healthy body?

All of these destinations are absolutely possible (and probable!) when you take the time to purposefully plan.

Remember the metaphor of programming a GPS.

If you are starting in San Francisco, and want to head to Austin, you know that this is a journey that is going to take a bit of time. And that's okay.

Along the way, if you hit some detours, or decide to take a side trip to hang out for a few days in Yosemite, that is okay. Your GPS will recalculate for you.

What you should not do when it takes a bit longer to get to Austin than you'd like, is to turn around and go home.

That won't get you anywhere.

Purposefully set your GPS. And start heading towards your destination. That is all you need to do.



# Get off the Hamster Wheel

A few of my [one-on-one coaching clients](#) that I work with to bring their own dreams to reality have reported that their day-to-day life feels like the movie *GroundHog Day* -- since there are always dishes to wash, laundry to fold, deadlines to meet, and children to drive to soccer practice. Because of these daily realities they just can't seem to get ahead -- they are essentially living the same day over again, without moving forwards.

I know what they mean.

My oldest daughter adopted Penelope (Penny), a cute little fuzzy brown & white hamster a few years ago.

Penny spends hours each and every night running on her wheel in the middle of the night.

Penny exhausts herself, running in place each night -- which means that she is super happy to sleep all day, and would be crabby and has a tendency to nip if you wake her up -- since she was up all night, "working."

And no matter how hard she works, or how long she runs, she stays in the exact same place.

You are not destined to live out the life of a hamster.  
Please don't have this mindset.

It isn't "your lot in life" to feel unfulfilled, or to think "this is as good as it gets" --

It's not too late. Nothing is "over" -- you are not destined to stop growing or thriving or dreaming.

Take the time to reprogram your GPS. And then keep moving forward.

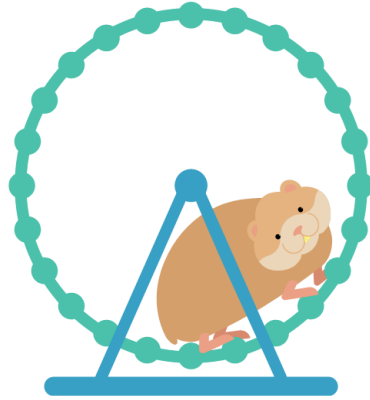
Yes. You might need to continue to do the dishes. And fold the laundry. And drive to soccer practice.

But it doesn't mean that you can't still build a business, write a book, lose the baby weight, or get promoted at work.

Take the time to plan out your days and be sure that you are prioritizing the actions needed to move towards your end-goal.

This may mean that you fold laundry while watching an instructional video, or wash dishes while on a conference call. It may mean that you take a client call in a parked car while at soccer practice.

You are in charge. You get to decide how you look at your day and how you schedule it out.



without a programmed GPS

When this framework is in place -- when you know where you are going and are continuously taking strides (baby steps count!) forward, you will be able to pivot when life throws you curveballs (such as an unforeseen job loss, death in the family, natural disaster, or a global pandemic).

In [\*How to Live Slowly: Peaceful Tranquility in a Frenzied World\*](#), I share the acronym: P.A.C.E.

This stands for: **Peaceful Acceptance of Changing Events.**

Because the only constant we can really count on in life is that things will change. It's inevitable.

But you are in charge of how you deal with this change. The stronger you build out your foundation, the less this unforeseen change will bother you.

## Step 3: Stay in a Positive State of Gratitude

"WHEN YOU ARISE IN THE MORNING, GIVE THANKS FOR THE FOOD AND FOR THE JOY OF LIVING. IF YOU SEE NO REASON FOR GIVING THANKS, THE FAULT LIES ONLY IN YOURSELF." - TECUMSEH

### Staying Present

When you are able to pay attention to your surroundings and give thanks to all that you have, you will begin to find that a peaceful serenity begins to creep into everything you do.

If you find that you are having trouble maintaining a mindset of peace and gratitude, my best suggestion to you is to start narrating your life.

You can do this outloud, but you might get some funny looks if you aren't all alone.

This is what I mean:

"I am turning my alarm off right now. I am going to silence my phone and walk into the bathroom. I am looking at myself in the mirror. I will splash cold water on my face now. Huh, I look really good today. I am going to turn

around and head to the kitchen. I am pulling out the coffee grounds. I am looking for a measuring cup.”

And so on.

Keep a running dialogue of what is ACTUALLY HAPPENING right this very moment, to keep yourself present and aware.

You will not need to do this forever, but it’s a great exercise to begin each morning with so you can focus on the *wonderful things that **are already*** in your life..

I like to practice my narration when I’m outside in the morning, walking Sheldon, my dog. I feel the cold air on my cheeks, and look around to find a bird or airplane in the sky. I then like to imagine where the bird or plane is flying. I breathe deeply and try to pinpoint the scent of honeysuckle or freshly cut grass.

You can do this too.

Instead of thinking of all of the things on your To Do list while in the shower in the morning, take the time to really sniff the *Irish Spring* soap, and feel the differentiation between the water droplets.

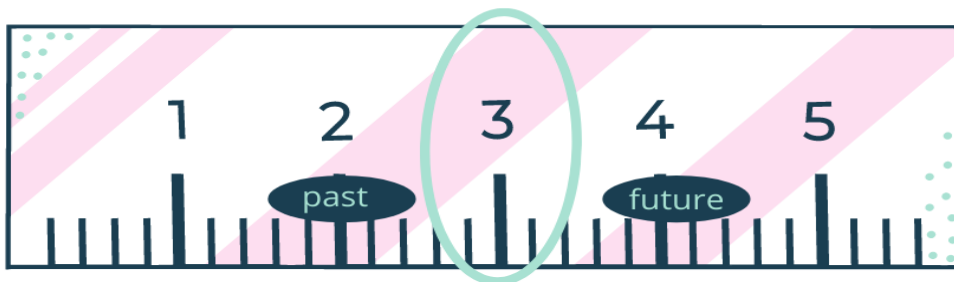
Go Slow.

Take your time.

I like to use the visual of a ruler when I am sharing this concept with the students in my *Simple Shortcuts to Peace* course, or when I’m teaching a workshop.

The only thing you can really “control” in your day-to-day life is what is happening in the Here and Now. If you find that your thoughts are drifting to past events or circumstances in your life, try to pivot your thoughts to the present.

The past already happened. There is no need to constantly replay or rehash what has already occurred.



Also, if you are finding that you spend an awful lot of time and brain energy worrying about the future, shift those thoughts to the Here and Now.

It's been said that worrying is like praying for things that you don't want. Instead, focus your thoughts on what is actively happening all around you.

# Embrace all the Good

While you are at it, spend some time thinking about all that is going well in your life, and what you are grateful for.

Many of my clients spend a few minutes each morning journaling in my [30 Days to a New You journal & workbook](#), and have maintained the practice of jotting down the things they are grateful for along with some affirmations.

In 2018, researchers from the Greater Good Science Center published a paper entitled, “The Science of Gratitude.” In it, they outline the following benefits that stem from practicing daily mindfulness and gratitude journaling:

- increased happiness and positive mood
- increased monetary savings
- more satisfaction with life
- less materialistic
- less likely to experience burnout
- better physical health
- better sleep
- less fatigue
- lower levels of cellular inflammation
- greater resiliency
- encourages the development of patience, humility, and wisdom

In a world where it seems like everyone is rushing around to the next newer, brighter, faster, and shinier thing, it might feel a bit off at first to take the slow route.

Yet the science shows that you will be happier.

And isn't that what we are all striving for, anyway? Isn't that what we want for our children?

A calm, peaceful, happy life filled with health and abundance?

So why are we rushing around, anyhow?

## **Dissatisfaction Sells.**

“BE THANKFUL FOR WHAT YOU HAVE; YOU'LL END UP HAVING MORE. IF YOU CONCENTRATE ON WHAT YOU DON'T HAVE, YOU WILL NEVER, EVER HAVE ENOUGH”

— OPRAH WINFREY

Quite simply, it's easier to sell stuff to those who are unhappy.

And marketers and the media and the ad execs on Madison Avenue all spend an awful lot of time, energy, and resources to keep you dissatisfied.

Unhappy with your current physical appearance? Buy this new exercise equipment, or pop this pill, buy a whole new wardrobe, or pay for liposuction.

Unhappy with your home? Buy a new and bigger one. Or upgrade all your furniture, or re-landscape the backyard, and while you're at it, invest in a hot tub.

The fact is, that the more HGTV you watch, the less satisfied you will be with your home and/or garden.

And the more scrolling you do on Pinterest or Instagram will lead you feeling disenchanted with your clothes, your vacations, your dog, and your neighborhood restaurants.

Step away from it all.

Go outside and start being aware of your surroundings, and becoming immensely grateful for all that you *do have* and *do get* to experience.

"A CALM AND MODEST LIFE BRINGS MORE HAPPINESS THAN THE PURSUIT OF SUCCESS COMBINED WITH CONSTANT RESTLESSNESS." - ALBERT EINSTEIN

## Life Isn't All Sunshine & Roses

It's okay to feel bad sometimes. It's okay to have uncomfortable feelings, to be a bit bored, and to feel anxiety bubble up.

Humans aren't wired to always be on an even keel.

I instruct the women that I coach that I'd like them to "feel all of the feels --- but then act on only the facts."

If you find that you feel uncomfortable or uneasy about something, sit with it for a while. Don't immediately try to distract yourself away from the uncomfortableness by numbing it out with TV, the Internet, food, or alcohol.

One of the best side-effects of taking the time to pause, and to mindfully be aware of your thoughts and feelings is that you may very well become physically healthier.

## Where do you find yourself needing less distraction?

How much news do you watch on TV or read each day? Is watching the news, or reading about it helpful to you in your life?

Once I gave up watching the evening news or watching 24/7 news cable channels, I found that I suddenly had an awful lot more time in my day to tend to the backyard weeds or take the dog on another walk after dinner.

I honestly do not miss watching the news in the slightest, and you might also find this to be true.



SLOW DOWN & SIMPLIFY: LIVE A LIFE OF PURPOSE AND ABUNDANCE

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## Step 4: Take Action Daily (Baby Steps & 10 Minute Chunks)

"EACH AND EVERY DAY, NO MATTER WHAT, TAKE A TEENSY STEP TOWARD YOUR END GOAL. BIG THINGS HAPPEN IN 10 MINUTE CHUNKS."

-- STEPHANIE O'DEA

### Embrace the 10 Minute Tidy

I am a huge fan of timers. I'm also a huge fan of breaking things down into bite-sized chunks, or blocks of time.

The fancy name for this is to use the Pomodoro Method.

The Pomodoro Technique is a time management method developed by Francesco Cirillo in the late 1980s. The technique uses a timer to break down work into intervals, traditionally 25 minutes in length, separated by short breaks.

I found that when I was teaching preschool that the attention span of most 2-4 year olds was about 10 minutes.

I'm much older now, but find that when it comes to tasks that I don't particularly want to do, 10 minutes continues to be my attention span.

The good news is that if you schedule a few "10 Minute Tidies" throughout the day, you really can accomplish an awful lot.

And if you work together as a group or team -- a WHOLE bunch can get accomplished. For instance, in our family we have 5 people. If we need to quickly get the house in order for company, all 5 of us working together creates 50 minutes worth of cleaning.

That is an awful lot of cleaning!

The easy-peasy approach is to set a timer for 10 minutes (or tell Siri or Alexa to set the timer for you) and get to work.

## **Here are some examples of things you can do that will only take 10 Minutes:**

- Watch or read anything funny enough to make you laugh out loud
- Watch or read anything that motivates you to move forward on your goals
- Go outside, and sit in the garden, or feel the rain on your cheeks. Just go and "be" outside
- Chat with someone that you trust and vent out loud any frustrations you may be currently feeling

- Pick a room, a closet, or a cabinet, and start PROMing (purge, remove, organize, maintain)
- Push your body to its limits by extensive exercising, dancing, jumping, or running
- Journal or daydream about any good times or memories that conjure up feelings of warmth and happiness
- Make a to-do list to plan out the next day
- Write up a list of favorite dinners -- include 10 to 12 different meal ideas
- Send an email to a friend you haven't heard from in a while
- Unsubscribe to 5 marketing email lists
- Create a playlist of your favorite, uplifting songs
- Clear your computer tabs and downloads folder
- Sit in front of a mirror and talk to yourself in a kind and gentle way

## Step 5: Tweak & Fine-Tune as Needed

"IT'S THE COURAGE TO CONTINUE THAT COUNTS."

-- WINSTON CHURCHILL

I like to garden. Many people enjoy growing vegetables or fun and colorful flowers, but right now, I spend an awful lot of time working on my front lawn.

It might sound a bit boring to some, but I garner such immense pleasure by taking the time to mow (I have a manual rotary mower, so I can mow at 6am without disturbing the neighbors!) at a high height, and by using large garden scissors to trim the edges.

It would be a lot faster to hire someone to use a gas mower or edger, but I'm not in a rush. I enjoy the act of maintaining my lawn.

I spend a lot of time researching organic lawn fertilizers, and deciding the optimum height for mowing depending on how much moisture is in the ground and the humidity level in the air.

Because of this, I am able to fulfill the drought requirements as mandated by California and I only need to water my lawn once a week.

Playing in my yard, and researching grass makes me happy. It's one of my hobbies, is good for my mental health and I view it as a form of self-care.

Sometimes in the afternoon, I spread out a beach towel and “comb” through the grass with my fingers, and try to find the beginning sprouts of crabgrass, clover, or a dandelion.

Since I do this so very often, it’s now a struggle to find an errant weed.

The neighbor across the street has a yard full of weeds. It would take an awful lot of work, and probably a rototiller to free that front yard from weeds.



I’d like you to think of your life as a field of green grass.

A really beautiful and organically-maintained field of grass. One that the neighbors notice when they walk by, and a lawn that no one would dream of letting their dog pee on.

When a thought, activity, or person pops up that doesn’t fit into the lovely green aesthetic of the life you are trying to maintain, pluck it.

Don't let this errant thought, activity, or person "go to seed" and spread all over your yard.

If you find that your life isn't as green and lush as you'd like -- and you've got too many weeds -- that's okay.

You can work to fix it. And while busting out a rototiller might sound like a good idea, there are calmer and gentler ways to get your life back on track.

You already have a head start, because you've read this far. Start paying attention to the thoughts that are feeding your feelings, and if the thoughts aren't helping you to move forward in your life, start to change them.

If you find that you aren't able to do this all on your own, please look for a therapist or invest in a life coach to help.

The down-and-dirty difference between a therapist and a life coach is that a therapist will help you uncover and heal past trauma whereas a life coach will help hold you accountable if you are ready to move forward in planning out your future.

## Interrupt Patterns

One of the best ways to change up your life is to switch up your daily patterns or habits.

1. Choose a behavior you'd like to change that you normally perform automatically, without thinking.
2. Observe how the pattern runs and what its route is.

3. Create a pattern interrupt that has nothing to do with the behavior.

If you find that you habitually snack on salty chips while watching television and you no longer want to, sit on a different chair, or watch tv in a different room.

If you always pour a glass of wine while you are making dinner, pour a can of seltzer water into your wine glass.

If you spend too much time scrolling your Facebook feed in bed, leave the phone outside of your bedroom.

Only you know if your normal patterns and routines and habits are serving you or if they need a bit of tweaking.

## Goal Setting & Resolutions

I first got a bit of notoriety and fame when I made a New Year's Resolution to use my crockpot slow cooker everyday for a year and write about it online.

A year is a very long time to embark upon a project or to instill a new habit, which is why most people fail at their New Year's Resolutions before they ever see February 1st.

The good news is that you can truly change the trajectory of your life in only 30 days. I sell a [30 Days to a New You](#) journal on Amazon and have found that to be one of the most instrumental tools I've created for both myself and for my coaching clients.

I use this tool as a way to implement change through “habit stacking.” Many of the clients I’ve worked with have used these 30 Day Challenges to completely overhaul their lives in only 30 days.

Some of the women I’ve worked with have pledged to:

- Walk 10,000 steps a day
- Drink 8-10 glasses of water
- Go to bed and get up early
- Stick to the Daily 7 for a Highly Successful Household chore list (Clean Less, Play More book)
- Started intermittent fasting (2, 4, 6, EAT book)
- Written out a book proposal
- Launched a website

You can do anything for 30 days. I know you can. That said, if 30 days still sounds daunting, then break it down even more. Set a timer and tackle a project that you’ve been putting off in 10-minute chunks.

even the smallest  
actions taken  
are steps  
in the right  
direction



# Conclusion

Through my online work, coaching, and cookbooks, I've connected with hundreds of thousands of people, primarily women, from all over the world.

They find me online while searching for a simple recipe.

They find me because they **have to** get dinner on the table quickly and easily.

And that is because they **have to** feed themselves and the people they love.

Sometimes they find me because they are looking for quick cleaning tips or how to get their kids to do chores because they **have to** keep the house somewhat neat and organized.

Othertimes people find me because they just received a new diagnosis of Celiac or a gluten intolerance and they now **have to** eat a gluten free diet.

When I share about making money writing online, people learn about me because they, too, **have to** find a way to legitimately make money from home.

I like helping people get all of their **Have Tos** over with in an efficient way. That makes me feel good, and I like helping people.

One of the best things about getting all of your **Have Tos** out of the way, is that there is finally room in your life for the **Want Tos**.

This is what Slow Living is all about. Living a life filled to the brim with **Want Tos**.

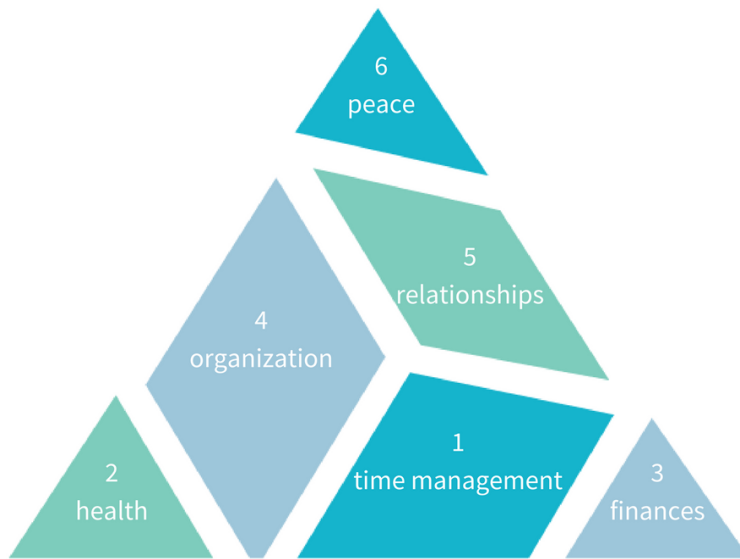
Living out the life of your dreams.

If you've read this far, I know you do not want to merely "get by" or "make do." You are looking for the life you've always dreamt about: one filled with abundance, purpose, and the freedom to spend your days doing what you Want To.

Earlier I shared the image of the six components in the Peace Pyramid, and how to design the life of your dreams -- the life where you have ALL OF THE THINGS working in a cohesive manner -- **where you get to decide** where your attention goes -- not one where you feel like you are treading water or fire-fighting all day long.

There are 5 very basic **Have Tos** that make up the 6 parts of the Peace Pyramid:

they are: time management, health, finances, organization, and relationships.



Once these components are in place, we can put on the very tippy top section of the pyramid that you've been waiting for:  
Peace.

Peace of mind that all is taken care of --

In order to have the calm, peaceful, tranquil, and abundant life you want, need, and deserve, you aren't sacrificing your health in order to build up your finances.

You aren't neglecting your relationships because you are too focused on having a clutter-free home.

You aren't micromanaging every second of your day for optimum productivity so that you don't have time to goof off.

You achieve a life of peace and abundance by taking the time to build out this pyramid to peace in a slow, methodical, and step-by-step way.

Let's revisit the metaphor of a preschool classroom once again -- in order to teach a group of children (of any age), you need to master classroom management.

If you don't have the framework in place to have proper classroom management, you can't instruct, you can't connect with the students, and you can't make a difference.

Once you've mastered the necessary components, you garner the power and freedom to teach and implement different techniques in your classroom.

And that is when the magic happens!

The Peace Pyramid is the exact foundation you need to ensure that all of your Have Tos are taken care of effectively and efficiently so you can live out the **calm, tranquil, and abundant life you've always Wanted.**

If you find that there is a section of your pyramid that is "out of whack" -- focus on it.

Go through the 5 Steps to Slow Living to get it back to where you think it ought to be.

## 5 Steps to Living a Slow Life

- 1: Declutter Everything (use the P.R.O.M. method)
- 2: Know Where You are Headed (set your GPS)
- 3: Surround Yourself with Positivity/Stay in a Grateful State
- 4: Take Action Daily (baby steps and 10 Minute Chunks)
- 5: Tweak and Fine-Tune as Needed

I'm so happy that you came along today on this journey towards a Slowed Down and Simplified life.

Learn more about [Simple Shortcuts to Peace](#), and how you can join us, [here](#).

Thank you.

If you have not already seen it, here is the Slow Living Pledge:  
(print out your own copy, [here](#))

[FULL COLOR](#)

[GREY SCALE](#)

I plan each day in a way that allows me to

**LIVE SLOWLY**

I SPEAK ABOUT **HEALTH, HAPPINESS, & PROSPERITY** EVERYWHERE I GO

I cultivate **peace** of mind. I know that I can change the way that I feel at any moment, **simply** by changing my thoughts.

I LIVE IN A STATE OF **GRATITUDE** FOR EVERYTHING AND EVERYONE THAT HAS COME INTO MY LIFE

I celebrate by making **HAPPINESS & PLAY** a daily priority.

**I treat myself like someone I love & respect.**

I IMAGINE WINS, & REFUSE TO THINK OF LOSSES.

I trust myself and **LISTEN** to my inner voice and guidance.

I give myself permission to be my **AUTHENTIC** self. I am exactly who I am, all of the time.

Every day, and in every way, I am able to **improve** myself. I do this by discarding beliefs that no longer serve me and by being **constantly curious.**

I spend money **mindfully** and buy only what I truly need and what I **truly love.** I put my money to work for me.

I THINK **yes** INSTEAD OF NO.

**I persevere until I reach my goals, despite obstacles or setbacks.**

I believe that worrying is a misuse of **IMAGINATION** **COURAGE**

I try not to take things personally. I know that what others say and do is a projection of their own reality; it has nothing to do with me.

I make the most of my talents, to be of **service**, to create **value**, and to

**give back** to the world.

I **focus** on those things which are within my control, and faithfully **trust** that I will be met halfway

I love **PEOPLE** more than things, and I always choose **KINDNESS**

I create **LUCKY OPPORTUNITIES** instead of waiting for them to find me.

I do more of the things that give me **energy** and less of the things that take it away.

MY HOME IS MY **sacred space.**

I TREAT TIME LIKE THE PRECIOUS COMMODITY THAT IT IS.



Stephanie O'Dea is a New York Times best-selling author of 10 books, host of the Slow Living Podcast, Master Life Coach, contributing editor to Simply Gluten Free Magazine, wife of 22 years, and mother to three daughters, & a basset hound puppy named Sheldon.

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