



Spontaneity

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Another question that comes up all the time is, “I don’t want to give up all spontaneity in my life.” The consensus seems to be that planning robs you of the joy of living in the moment.

So let’s look at why spontaneity is desirable. When you think of being spontaneous, what do you envision? For me, I daydream about my husband surprising me with a weekend away to Napa, just the two of us. Or I see us taking kayaking dates on the weekend. Generally, these daydreams arise from a desire to put my obligations on the back burner and escape to a perceived oasis.

Now, let me count how many times that has happened. I think we kayaked one weekend this year after dragging the kayak from beneath the house, cleaning it, and realizing the seat backrest had broken. Now the broken seats are in my garage waiting to be replaced, which is the new excuse for why we are not kayaking. And, no, we haven’t been to Napa since our second wedding anniversary. We are now 19 years into our marriage, with kids, dogs, and career responsibilities we hadn’t dreamed of back then.

Our desire for spontaneity comes from wanting to avoid the emotions we are feeling right now. We want to feel joyful or carefree instead of obligated and exhausted. Our minds create beautiful escapes that sound so appealing.

Let’s go deeper. That trip to Napa sounds excellent. However, if we were to go on a whim, we would create significant problems in our lives. Our kids would throw a big party and forget to feed the dogs. We would pay a lot more for tickets and hotels at the last minute. We wouldn’t have had time to anticipate what we wanted from the trip, decreasing the odds we would achieve it. The actual experience would be a hollow shell of our daydream.

The alternative is to plan our free time. When we carve out a realistic amount of time to fully experience our adventure or relaxation, it’s much more likely to happen. When we have free time on the schedule, we get to rest. When we rest, we don’t have the same need to escape our current reality. However, my favorite part is the anticipation. Looking forward to something enjoyable brings some of the pleasure into the current moment. We get to have the emotions now rather than only during the event we are craving. If we have enough time to be present and not rush our experience, we can fully immerse ourselves. Participating wholly leads to more connection with our emotions that you can recall later, increasing your enjoyment.

Our brains offer us an illusion with the allure of spontaneity. Creating the reality of what we hope for requires making space, anticipating, and planning. The challenge is that we rarely schedule an adequate amount of rest and free time.

How much free time do you need? Try adding it to your schedule until you get to the point where you stop feeling restricted, exhausted, and overwhelmed. You will recognize it when you hit the balance point that works for you and your unique life.