

Voluntary Simplicity:  
A reflection and experiment  
by Emilyrose Pfaltzgraff

If you lived with 100 items, what would they be?

Are you choosing out of sacrifice or out of deep value and appreciation?

I discovered how living a simplified life requires not only a second look at material possessions, but also reconsidered habits and behaviors.

Instead of applying this during the school year, I have come to formulate a working list for the summer, when I will be interning an herbalist in Wisconsin and living out of a tent.

Why 100 items? I heard about a man who tried a minimalist challenge and wrote a blog about it. <http://guynameddave.com/100-thing-challenge/>

I didn't really look into his version much, but the idea took hold and I wondered what might happen if I tried. I valued simplicity, but had never tried living it. I also wanted to feel simplicity as a positive ethical choice, not one out of denial and sacrifice, something which many environmentalists can suffer from.

This is my list for the summer: blankets, tarps, hand mirror, tweezers, biodegradable soap, bed roll, pillow, Q-tips, scrunchies (3), bug spray, Michael's bracelet, cuddle buddy (teddy bear), bar of soap, sunscreen, slip, mom's earrings, essential oils, razor, face sunscreen, light pink bra, Chels' necklace, candle, hand towel, deodorant, undies (8), tinted glasses, recipe box, body towel, lotion, flower sports bra, visor, salve,

body washcloth, face washcloth, cup, bathing suit, tent, journals, handkerchief, sewing kit, hip flask, letter stuff, hair pick, shampoo, toothbrush, toothpaste, canteen, pencils/pens, brush, baking soda (face wash), fleece, jean skirt, little blue bag, jean backpack, rain boots, long underwear, dad's blue work shirt, dark jean skirt, close-toed tiva shoes, open tiva sandals, brown leg warmers, dad's green work shirt, overalls, socks, gloves, coverall apron, dad's brown work shirt, table setting, leather work boots, leather sandals, jean apron, dark blue shorts, blue sarong, bicycle, white cami, black cami, drop spindle and wool, camping shorts, clothesline, Saab, carving knives, rain jacket, flashlight, striped dress, blue plaid dress, green dress, Rise-Up-Singing book, Essential Tao book, 12X12 book, pocket knife, tin whistle, camera, tape, cell phone, sweatpants, pepper spray, i-pod, chore jacket, sling bag, and a wooden crate.

I have liberties to make up my own rules, and since 100 is an arbitrary number, I don't mind anyway. That is why some objects are categories, but I tend to keep things separate.

The list is for my summer living mostly because I didn't have enough time to wash clothes often enough as a student. I needed to utilize every clean clothing item I had, which far exceeded any version of a 100 count.

I don't know how many things I have and/or use without restriction, or what the average person has in his/her possession.

I found that I care much more about the things I own after intentionally looking into the value they hold for me. I also learned what my luxuries are, such as Q-tips, a second apron, a separate face sunscreen, and two washcloths, and also what my slightly irrational fears are, such as having appropriate foot wear, tape for ticks, measures for sanity (solved with an i-pod that might not even work), and my teddy bear for those extra long nights alone in the woods.