



LIFESTYLE SIMPLIFICATION LAB

FACILITATION GUIDE

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a program of
The Institute of Cultural Affairs

LifeStyle Simplification Lab

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USE OF THIS GUIDE

This guide provides detailed procedures for conducting one-day LifeStyle Simplification Labs. Facilitation procedures (what the facilitator says) are written in **bold letters** for ease of following. It is important that the time design be adhered to so that the program can be done in its entirety. This program design has been extensively tested and proven effective if it is facilitated as laid out in this Facilitation Guide. Take time to prepare for this program. Sit down, read over the material and visualize the event.

If you have any questions, please contact the ICA at Greensboro for clarification or support.

LifeStyle Simplification Lab

DAY AT A GLANCE

Introductions Conversation	Guided Discussion - "Is More Better?"
Participants introduce themselves and say what interests them about the topic of "LifeStyle Simplification." They also say what their expectations are for the day.	The facilitator reads aloud the excerpt, "Is More Better?" followed by a short (10-15 min.) guided discussion.
Group Study "Economics, Ecology and Us"	Thinktank "Boundaries of Enough"
Participants read Robert Gilman's article and discuss an assigned portion with a small group. The groups report their discussions to the whole group. The whole group then reflects on the significance of this paper and elaborates on the "shift" Gilman is calling for.	The facilitator explains the procedures for completing the "Boundaries of Enough" chart in the Participant's Guide. Each participant writes, then pairs up to discuss his/her writings. The whole group meets back to reflect on the exercise and to articulate the shifts they are experiencing.
Break	Break
Thinktank "Articulating the Context for LifeStyle Simplification"	Mini-Cabaret "The New Story"
Participants answer five questions, each on a 1/4 sheet of paper. The papers are sorted and assigned to five groups. The group discusses their data, looks for themes, and reflects on the responses. Each team reports its findings to the whole group. The whole group reflects on what they heard and briefly discusses its significance.	The participants self-select a variety of ways to articulate their new story. They meet together in groups to create songs, skits, slogans, billboards, etc. Their presentations are given in front of the whole group in a Mini Cabaret format. Creativity and spirit abound! "The New Story " has begun to be told.
Lunch	Conclusion
Participants share informally their experiences of lifestyle simplification.	Reflection on the Day Closing

LifeStyle Simplification

FACILITATOR STYLE GUIDELINES

Lab Facilitators guide rather than instruct. They ask open-ended questions designed to elicit creativity and insight. Answers are not given, but question after question is asked to draw out wisdom, to clarify it, to build on it with other insights and to help build individual resolve and group commitment. Since each participant has an important perspective to contribute, naturally-quiet people are drawn out even if naturally-dominant people are asked to listen more than is usual for them. Clarity is promoted by enabling participants to state contributions in short, succinct phrases conveying concise meanings.

Lab Facilitators prepare extensively. They set a clear context for the task at hand, and request data from participants on their anticipations regarding desired results from the interaction of those in the group. The objective of the interaction, the time allocated for consideration and the needed impact on the participants are all kept clearly in mind. At the end of the Lab people realize that they already have the power and resolve to begin the journey they have envisioned.

Lab Facilitators reflect on what is happening in the situation. In the group process, time is scheduled for the group to consider the significance of its work. Humor is both demonstrated and elicited as a way of releasing tension and providing relief from intensive work. Facilitators encourage intuitive leaps utilizing right brain capabilities and sparking corporate creativity which is a highly motivating force producing commitment.

This Facilitator's Guide provides tested and effective questions, contexts and procedures for facilitating the LifeStyle Simplification Lab. Successful facilitators have reflected on their own journey toward LifeStyle Simplification enough to have discerned helpful personal examples to share with the group at appropriate times throughout the day.

ADMINISTRATIVE OVERVIEW

Objectives of the LifeStyle Simplification Lab:

- To explore new images and rationales for sustainable living
- To facilitate individual and family lifestyle changes toward a simpler, less consumptive and more fulfilling pattern of daily living
- To increase understanding of the relationship between peoples' personal lifestyles and the condition of the environment in which they live
- To provide a motivating and collegial atmosphere for individuals and families to make new decisions about their lifestyle

Total Time: One day (two 3 hour sessions)

Target Audience: Anyone who is interested in exploring and creating a simpler lifestyle

Number of Participants per Session: Minimum 15 ; maximum 40

Facilitators: Two - preferably a male and female. (They need to be self-consciously pursuing a simpler lifestyle and be able to tell stories about their own experiences)

Program Development began in Greensboro, NC in February, 1992. The Lab was tested throughout the ICA network in the eastern US during 1992. It was presented at the ICA international conference in Prague and at the Society for Human Ecology conference in Snowbird, Utah. Program testing took place during 1993-95 with self-selected groups in Arizona, Illinois, Maryland, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Ohio and Virginia as well as India, Belgium and Guam.

LifeStyle Simplification Lab
TIME DESIGN

- 9:15 **Registration**
- 9:30 **Introductions Conversation**
 Lay out of the day's program
- 10:00 **Group Study**
 "Economics, Ecology and Us"
- 1100 Break
- 11:15 **Thinktank**
 "Articulating the Context for Lifestyle Simplification"
- 12:30 Lunch
- 1:15 **Guided Discussion**
 "Is More Better?"
- 1:45 **Thinktank**
 "The Boundaries of Enough"
- Break in pairs
- 3:30 **Mini-Cabaret**
- 4:15 **Reflection and Closing**

LifeStyle Simplification Lab

PROTOCOL

1. LifeStyle Simplification Lab brochures are available from the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA) at Greensboro. Run them through your laser printer to put your own local information on them - When, where, cost, co-sponsors, etc. Also print your own registration information/blank.
2. When publicizing LifeStyle Simplification Labs, sponsors should mention that the program was developed by the ICA at Greensboro and should use both the LifeStyle Simplification logo and the logo of the ICA.
3. Facilitation Guides and Participants Workbooks are produced by the ICA at Greensboro. Facilitation Guides (including a sample participant's guide) can be ordered for \$25 + \$3 shipping and handling. Sponsors of a LifeStyle Simplification Lab should order a Participant's Guide for each participant. These are available for \$5.00 each.
4. Two items in the Facilitation Guide must be duplicated by the sponsoring organization for each participant in the program. These include:
 - The Gilman Paper (3 pages) and
 - The 5 Questions for the morning workshop (2 pages).
5. Sponsoring organizations are responsible for all local costs and for arranging for a facilitation team. ICA at Greensboro can provide facilitators or put you in touch with facilitators in your region. While some facilitators may volunteer their services, others may request a modest honoraria plus travel expenses.

MATERIALS & SUPPLIES CHECKLIST

Provide for each participant:

- ___ LifeStyle Simplification Lab Guidebook (order from ICA Greensboro)
- ___ "Economics, Ecology, and Us" by Robert Gilman (copy 3 pages from Facilitation Guide)
- ___ Five 1/4 sheets of paper with questions, stapled together for morning thinktank- "Articulating the Context of LifeStyle Simplification." (copy from Facilitation Guide, then cut into 1/4 sheets and staple)

Supplies:

- ___ Flip chart pad or roll of butcher paper
- ___ Masking Tape
- ___ Colored markers - 3 sets for afternoon cabaret groups
- ___ Wall decor - (available from ICA Greensboro)
- ___ Write on chart paper: Day at a Glance, Assignment for Gilman Seminar

Materials on resource table:

- ___ Books from LifeStyle Simplification Bibliography, especially:
- ___ *Voluntary Simplicity* by Duane Elgin
- ___ *Your Money or Your Life*, by Joe Dominquez and Vicki Robin
- ___ *How Much is Enough?* by Alan Durning
- ___ *Beyond the Limits* by Donella Meadows, et al.
- ___ Other books you have found helpful on voluntary simplicity.

Copies of:

- ___ *In Context* brochure (available from ICA Greensboro or the Context Institute, P.O. Box 11470, Bainbridge Island, WA, 98110.)
- ___ *In Context*, issues No. 26. "What is Enough? - Fulfilling Lifestyles for a Small Planet", and No. 37, "It's About Time!"

ROOM ARRANGEMENT

- ___ Tables: 8'x2.5' tables arranged in a hollow square or rectangle
- ___ Participant workbooks set at each place when Lab begins
- ___ Resource table to back or side of room for materials and books display
- ___ One table near room entrance used for registration, materials distribution
- ___ One table used for beverages and snacks - available throughout the day
- ___ Chairs: One per person
- ___ Breakout space: Space for thinktank groups to move away from the large table with comfortable chairs and small tables or carpet on floor for sitting, **in the same room** as the main table.

(If break-out space is in other rooms it takes longer to pull people back together)

FOOD AND DRINK

- ___ Participants bring their own lunch
- ___ Provide a variety of beverages -- juice, tea, etc. throughout the day
- ___ A large bowl of fruit is a good snack to have on the beverage table

INTRODUCTIONS CONVERSATION

(20 -30 minutes)

1. Request everyone find a seat around the table. Sit down at the head of the table and welcome everyone to the LifeStyle Simplification Lab.
2. Go around the table and have each person introduce themselves and say what prompted them to come to the Lab today.

Let's introduce ourselves.

Please give your name and say what attracted you to this program

OR What prompted you to come today?

OR What interests you about LifeStyle Simplification?

(No titles or other information is needed at this time.)

3. Short Comment - Affirm that people come through many different doorways (from many different motivations) to this program. Recall a few of them which the participants verbalized.
4. Introduce yourself and tell your own story about why LifeStyle Simplification makes sense to you. Also comment on why you decided to go ahead and facilitate the program.
5. Go around the table again and have each person state some of their expectations for the day together.

Let's go around again. What are your expectations for our day together?

If there are more than 15 people ask the question and let several people respond at will.

6. **Stand up** and walk through the day's program. Refer to the printed time design (copy Time Design or Day at a Glance on chart paper) for easy viewing.

We want to incorporate as many of these expectations as possible today. We will begin with a context for lifestyle simplification by dialoguing with Robert Gilman's paper, "Economics, Ecology and Us.". Then we will spend some time sharing with each other about the world we live in, our own experience of living in it today, images of a simpler lifestyle, what is blocking us from moving in that direction and clues about some starting points.

We will open the afternoon with a group conversation on the reading, "Is More Better?", followed by a workshop entitled, "The Boundaries of Enough." We will share some of our work with each other, then we will create a mini-cabaret with some songs, poetry, etc. which incorporate our new thinking about lifestyle simplification. We will be finished by 4:30.

Interlude

We want to continue this morning by corporately studying the lead article from the "What is Enough" issue (No. 26) of the *In Context Journal* by editor Robert Gilman.

Hold up the issue so the participants can see it.
Mention that copies are on the resource table for viewing later.

Pass out copies of Robert Gilman's paper - "Economics, Ecology and Us."

GROUP STUDY

"ECONOMICS, ECOLOGY AND US" by Robert Gilman

1. Introduce the Group Study process.

The next part of the Lab involves everyone in the learning process and draws on each one's personal experiences in dialogue with the author of the paper. We are interested in two main questions: 'What is the author saying?' and 'How do you experience what he is saying?'

2. Divide the participants into (5) groups and give the Group Study Assignment

You will notice that the paper is already divided into 8 sections or parts. Everyone quickly skim the whole paper paying special attention to paragraphs # 1 and #8. The group (going around the table) read section #2; the second group read #3; the third #4; etc.

After you have individually read your assigned section, start to talk with your group about it in this fashion: (put the assignment on a piece of chart paper to refer to as they talk).

1. Choose what you think is the key sentence.
2. Describe your response to the section.
3. Site your own personal examples about what he is writing.
4. State the implications for you and for society.
5. In summary, what is the import of this section?

Be prepared to share a summary of your discussion with the whole group in about 30 minutes.

3. Pull the group back together now and let the whole group dialogue with section #1.

Gilman starts this paper off with a question. _____, can you please read that question aloud for the group?

Gilman says this question 'is becoming the central question of our time.' That is a pretty bold statement. What does he say about our future if the answer to this question proves to be "No"? (wait for a few responses)

But he goes on to say that he doesn't think that the answer need be 'No.' He says that he thinks a resounding 'Yes' is well within our reach. In section #2 he goes on to say this confidence is rooted in his own experience.

4. Each group summarizes what Gilman is saying in their assigned section and reports on their discussion.

Let's hear about that experience from the group who studied section #2. What was your key sentence?

Summarize what Gilman is saying and what your group discussed in response.

5. Continue with each group's summary, linking together the sections as they are reported. Keep up the pace; don't let the discussion drag or become too involved at this time. Get out some real life examples of what is being talked about in the paper.

6. Ask someone to tell the whole story of the paper. Have a second person tell the whole story.

In order to put this paper together again, somebody tell the whole story of the paper as you understand it. Someone else tell it as you understand it.

Why is this paper important to the world?

Why is it important to this country?

Why is it important to you and your family?

Always wait for a few responses after each question.

7. The whole group dialogues with Section #8.

Gilman says there are steps to get out of this mess. What is he calling for?

Away from..... Towards

How would you state this shift in your own words? Away from Towards.....

(Have a few people state it in their own words)

Why does he call this a "Cultural Shift"?

How does he say this shift will come about?

How do you see it will come about?

Again, wait for a few responses after each question.

8. Refrain from drawing any of your own conclusions. End this session with a closing comment, such as:

When we are creating the future, no one has all of the answers.

We will now take a 15 min. break. Help yourself to juice and snacks.

ECONOMICS, ECOLOGY, AND US

Towards a gentle – and enjoyable – way of life

by Robert Gilman

- ① Can we lead our lives in ways that:
- are deeply satisfying, fulfilling, and appealing, and at the same time
 - are environmentally benign, so that everyone else could live in similar ways without damaging the Earth?

This simple question, which has always been at the heart of *IN CONTEXT*, is becoming the central question of our time. If the answer proves to be “No,” our future will be bleak indeed, for we will have no good options. The destructive consumption of the “haves,” the desperate struggle to survive of the “have-nots,” and the inevitable conflict between them will tear both the human and the natural worlds into shreds.

But I don’t think the answer needs to be “No.” Indeed, all that I’ve learned in the past decades convinces me that a resounding “Yes!” is well within our reach.

- ② This confidence is deeply rooted in my own experience. When Diane and I met and married in the late 1960s, we were both oriented to living well on a low cash-flow. Our student-level income encouraged us in that direction, but there was more to it than just that. We both came out of backgrounds with a strong do-it-yourself flavor, and in the idealism of the times, we wanted to explore ways of living that would be environmentally sound and globally fair.

At the beginning of the seventies we lived for 21 months on \$50 per month plus food stamps (our only use of such assistance). Throughout the rest of decade the occasional jobs we had were all relatively low-paying, and our family (then three of us) averaged under \$5,000 per year in total income. The figure was well below the poverty line, but it didn’t feel that way to us. We traveled extensively in North America, built our own ener-

gy-efficient solar home, and started the North Olympic Living Lightly Association (the forerunner of Context Institute).

Needless to say, we learned a lot during that time. On the plus side, it was clear to us that unpaid work within the household could reduce or replace many expenses that most Americans take for granted – in areas from food and health care to housing and transportation. We also found that there was much we simply didn’t need. Whenever we weren’t tied to a job, our freedom gave us opportunities for low-cost yet fascinating adventures of all kinds. Our unusual life also helped us to have a rich family life and give our son attention that would have been difficult to purchase.

This kind of lifestyle is often referred to as “voluntary simplicity.” We used to chuckle at that because, compared to the simplicity of having one job and handling everything else by paying someone else to do it for you, ours was definitely a life of voluntary complexity! It was both enormously stimulating and enormously challenging.

On the minus side, we naturally found that we could not replace all expenses with our own labor. More problematic, we found that the paid-labor world was often downright hostile to anyone who was not devoted to it full-time. It was hard to find a middle ground that combined sophisticated paid work with substantial personal time.

We were never truly poor, but we did get tight enough at times to appreciate the desperation that being without resources (not only financial but social and otherwise) can bring. Yet in our case, whenever we got to the “end of our rope,” new rope always seemed to grow out of the old end. There were always new opportunities coming up over the horizon – often just in time.

Above that level there was, and is, a broad income territory where wealth and poverty are clearly states of mind and not measured by our bank account. In this territory, our sense of fulfill-

Robert Gilman is the editor of IN CONTEXT and the director of Context Institute.

ment depends almost entirely on the degree to which we are able to express our values and have reasonable control over how we spend our time.

In the 1980s, as we have devoted more time to developing *IN CONTEXT*, our family cash-flow has drifted up. Partly this reflects finding a better balance between what we do with cash and what we do in other ways, but it also represents some "compromises with the system." We have chosen to make these compromises so that we can more fully affect the larger system around us. We carry with us, however, in addition to valuable habits, a clear understanding that a totally first class life – no apologies *at all!* – can be lived at a consumption level well below what most Americans would think of as a minimum standard of living. It is a wonderfully liberating realization.

3 Along the way we always felt that our goal was not some private salvation, but rather to lead our lives as an experiment in search of a family of lifestyles – of ways of being – that are both appealing and gentle enough on the Earth to be shared by all. Grounded in our personal experience, we gave a lot of attention to this larger challenge as well. In the rest of this article I'd like to touch on some of what we learned.

Let's begin with the environmental impact side of this challenge. How gentle is gentle enough? We don't really know just how much human abuse the natural systems of the Earth can stand before they are seriously disrupted, but we do know enough to give us pause. The major factors that contribute to the human impact on the natural environment can be put together in the following formula:

$$\text{Population} \times \text{Technology} \times \text{Standard of Living} \\ = \text{Environmental Impact}$$

There are several points to consider in light of this formula:

- During the 20th century, each of these three factors has been growing rapidly, so their *combined* effect has been growing very rapidly.

- Many natural systems exhibit apparent stability up to a critical threshold and then deteriorate rapidly when the stresses on them go beyond that threshold.

- There are already many signs – the dying of trees in Europe, the growth of deserts in Africa, and the deforestation of the tropics – that many natural systems are near their critical thresholds.

The net result is that even if we are not yet at the maximum allowable human impact on the environment, we will likely get there soon if population, technology, and standards of living all keep growing at the rates they have been. What hope is there of lowering our impact? Let's look at

each of the three contributing factors.

4 **Population** • The world population level will be shaped by what happens to both birthrates and deathrates in the coming years. Dramatic declines in birthrate are quite possible, as the experience of Japan, China, Chile, and Columbia illustrate. Each of these countries was able to cut its birth rate in half, down to approximately replacement levels, often in less than 10 years.

Yet even if such steep declines in birth rate spread to all countries, the world population would still grow from its current 5.5 billion to about 8 billion before stabilizing. What about trimming birth rates even further? This would slow population growth, but it can lead to massive social problems – as China is starting to realize with its "spoiled child" one-child families, which in a few decades will result in too few working adults to support the large number of elders – and unstable societies aren't very gentle to the environment.

Could the death rate rise? Of course it could, but almost any scenario that would raise the death rate enough to put a major dent in the total population size, such as massive starvation or a world-wide epidemic, would probably also lead to great ecological and social damage, not to mention terrible human suffering! Also, higher death rates and greater social stress don't necessarily lead to overall population decline. Consider, for example, sub-Saharan Africa where starvation, AIDS, ecological deterioration are all significant and at the same time population growth rates are among the highest in the world.

So while there is genuine hope that the world population can be stabilized, it would be a mistake to look towards rapid population *decline* as a primary strategy for reducing humanity's current level environmental impact.

5 **Technology** • In considering technology, what is important is not just some vague sense of the "level of technology," but the *specific* environmental impacts that particular technologies have. We need to think of technology quite broadly – for example, slash-and-burn agriculture is as much a "technology" as nuclear power is.

What is the potential for significantly reducing the environmental impacts of the broad range of technologies? There is a great deal that could be done. For example, as Hunter Lovins noted in the last issue (*IC* #25, p. 20), "[W]ith the best demonstrated technologies it's now cost-effective to

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save nearly four-fifths of all the oil currently used in the United States." All of my research over the past years suggests that 1) proven, cost-effective technologies are available that could cut our general environmental impact to less than a third of its current level, and 2) we have hardly begun to develop what is possible in terms of environmentally friendly technologies.

⑥ **Standard of Living** • Yet for all that can be done with better technologies, if we attempt to rely on technological fixes alone we are likely to get at best only a temporary reprieve. As long as we base our society and economy on the idea of never-ending growth in consumption, we will sooner

or later find that we have exhausted Nature's tolerance. We have a choice. We can either decide what is enough - set our own limits (as people in developed countries have done with family size) - or have limits disastrously imposed on us.

Can we develop self-chosen limits that are genuinely "Earth friendly" and at the same time satisfying and appealing? As the articles that follow illustrate, many people have found,

as we did, that they can develop such a life. Indeed, many have found that limiting their material consumption has been the key to improving their quality of life.

⑦ **Why Aren't We Doing It?** • Putting all these pieces together suggests that we have the know-how and the capability to be leading satisfying, sustainable, and globally shareable lives. Why, then, aren't we, as a society, living this way?

There are many reasons. Some relate to the pace of change in such things as the magnitude of our environmental impact, which has been so rapid that the normal pace of cultural evolution hasn't been able to keep up.

But the truly essential reason, as far as I can tell, is that our socioeconomic system has been constructed in such a way that it works well when it is growing, but it is awkward, unstable, and pain-producing when it shrinks. We have chosen, as a society, to avoid the pain we associate with decreasing economic activity (recessions and depressions) by attempting always to increase the total volume of economic activity rather than by restructuring the system so that it could gracefully handle contraction as well as expansion.

This choice first became an issue in the U.S. during the 1920s, the first decade when production comfortably surpassed basic needs. Business-

men at first fretted because workers seemed more interested in expanding their leisure time than in increasing their income. Such a move would have slowed economic growth and lowered business profits. But by mid-decade advertising and the "new economic gospel of consumption" came to the rescue, turning workers into consumers and tapping what seemed to be an inexhaustible well-spring of demand. As was clearly recognized in the 1929 report from Herbert Hoover's Committee on Recent Economic Changes, the growth of the American economy now depended on a constant expansion of demand for "optional consumption" beyond basic needs.

This basic idea - that economic growth is our abiding national goal, and that everyone should serve that goal by consuming as much as they can - survived the Depression of the 1930s, World War II, and the decades that followed. Republicans and Democrats have disagreed over the details of how the benefits of this growth should be distributed, but no one questioned the need for consumption-driven growth.

Now, however, after many decades of such growth, we are starting to see that it is not the "endless" solution it was thought to be. The environmental price is high and keeps growing. The demands of constant work and consumption have destroyed the social fabric of our communities and severely frayed that of our families. The ever more sophisticated intertwining of media and advertising needed to drive consumption threatens to completely destroy the integrity of journalism and the arts. And on top of it all, we have to keep going deeper and deeper into debt just to keep up the pace. For these and other reasons it is clear that we need to slow down, yet we seem to be stuck in high gear. Now that we need models for a more sustainable socioeconomic system, as a society we don't even know where to begin to look.

⑧ **What We Can Do** • Fortunately, there are steps we can take to get out of this mess. Some of these are at a macro-level, a topic we will return to in an upcoming issue on sustainable economics. But even the best macro-level designs are unlikely to work unless they are built on a profound shift in our cultural values - away from the goal of ever-greater consumption towards a better balance between consumption, personal time, and the health of the environment. This shift will only come out of the personal choices you and I make, and out of the experimentation we are willing to do with our lives.

The articles that follow come from the frontier of this exploration. I hope you will find them to be as encouraging as I do. ▲

*We can either
set our own limits
or have limits
disastrously
imposed on us.*

Interlude

(Read after the break to refocus people's attention. Use as an introduction to the Thinktank.)

The formula $I = PAT$ has been used by a number of authors recently to illustrate the multiple variables that impact our environment and determine the quality of life we experience.

In their book, *Beyond the Limits* Donella Meadows, Dennis Meadows, and Jorgen Randers write:

MIT economist Lester Thurow has said, 'If the world's population had the productivity of the Swiss, the consumption habits of the Chinese, the egalitarian instincts of the Swedes, and the social discipline of the Japanese, then the planet could support many times its current population without privation for anyone. *On the other hand*, if the world's population had the productivity of Chad, the consumption habits of the United States, the inegalitarian instincts of India, and the social discipline of Argentina, then the planet could not support *anywhere near* its current numbers.

pp. 100-103

THINKTANK

"ARTICULATING THE CONTEXT FOR LIFESTYLE SIMPLIFICATION"

(90 min.)

Preparation: Before the thinktank, copy and cut into quarter sheets the five questions. Staple the five pieces. Decide where the 5 small groups can work -- e.g. around the ends of the tables or on a carpeted floor.

Process: Individual thinking and writing
Small group sharing
Plenary sharing
Group reflection

Context:

We're going to try an experiment in building a common mind. We want to articulate the context for dealing with LifeStyle Simplification. Clearly each of us has our own clarities and unclarities. We each come through a different doorway to this subject. For the next hour we will create a corporate picture of our experiences in relation to LifeStyle Simplification. You will find the process for the Thinktank on pages 6 and 7 of your Participant Guide.

Individual Thinking:

I am passing out some small sheets of paper with the following questions on the top of each sheet:

- 1. What pressures/experiences raise the question of LifeStyle Simplification for you or people you know?**
- 2. What data/facts/statements come to mind when you think about LifeStyle Simplification?**
- 3. What are some positive images/examples of a simpler lifestyle?**

Plenary:

Reconvene the entire group. Ask for reports from each small group. Ask the reporters to cover:

What were some recurring themes in the responses?

How did you group the responses?

Give some concrete examples that people mentioned.

What were your group's reflections on these responses?

Group reflection:

After all of the reports, ask the whole group the following questions. Keep the pace when asking the questions. Wait for 2-3 responses on each one. (Everyone is answering them to themselves, whether they verbalize their thoughts or not.) *Be sure to ask all of the questions.*

What caught your attention about these reports?

What did you hear that resonated with your experience?

Where were you surprised? Interested? Wanted to know more?

How would you interpret these responses?

Where are you in this picture? On this journey?

Have everyone stand and sing *Simple Gifts* which is printed on the back cover of the Participant's Guide.

We will now break for lunch until 1:15.

Add any practical details that will allow lunch to happen smoothly.

4. **What are the issues/blocks that people face when they try to live a simpler lifestyle?**
5. **What clues/advice do you have about a starting the process of LifeStyle Simplification?**

Take 10 minutes and, by yourself, write words and phrases which, for you, respond to each of these questions. Write neatly so that someone else can decipher your writing.

(Give more time to write if needed.)

Now remove the staple from the papers and put them in five piles or "mailboxes" in the center of the table -- all of the 1's together, etc.

(Spread out your set of pages in the center to start the process.)

Small Group Sharing:

Divide the group into five group of 3-5 people.

Give each group one of the piles of papers.

Instruction the small groups to:

Take turns reading the responses aloud. Listen for repetitions in the responses. Then spread out all of your papers in front of the group. Make piles of similar responses. Name some categories for the responses. Take note of specific examples.

Spend a few minutes in your small group reflecting on the responses: Are they similar to your experience? How so, how not?

Select a group reporter for the plenary.

1. What pressures /experiences raise the question of LifeStyle Simplification for you or people you know?

3. What are some positive images/examples of a simpler lifestyle?

2. What data/facts/statements come to mind when you think about LifeStyle Simplification?

4. What are the issues/blocks that people face when they try to live a simpler lifestyle?

5. What clues/advice do you have about a starting the process of LifeStyle Simplification?

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GUIDED DISCUSSION

"IS MORE BETTER?"

Read the following excerpt aloud to the group, then ask the questions on the next page. Keep the pace. Wait for 2-3 responses from each question. Don't be afraid of silence. Be patient and let the group respond.

"Even though Buckminster Fuller likened the earth to a spaceship, we cling to the silver-screen images of the Frontier, where 'there's always more where that came from.' We build our working lives on this myth of more. Our expectation is to make more money as the years go on. We will get more responsibility and more perks as we move up in our field. Eventually, we hope, we will have more possessions, more prestige and more respect in our community. We become habituated to expecting ever more of ourselves and ever more from the world, but rather than satisfaction, our experience is that the more we have, the more we want - and the less content we are with the status quo.

"More is better; this is the motto that drives us. It's the motto that leads us to trade in our car every three years, buy new clothes for every event and every season, get a bigger and better house every time we can afford it and upgrade everything from our stereo systems to our lawn mowers simply because some new automatic widget has been introduced.

"If you live for having it all, what you have is never enough. In an environment of more is better, 'enough' is like the horizon, always receding. You lose the ability to identify that point of sufficiency at which you can choose to stop. This is the psychological cul-de-sac, the invisible Catch-22 of the American myth of more. If more is better, then what I have is *not* enough. Even when I do get the 'more' I was convinced would make life 'better,' however, I am still operating out of the belief that more is better -- so the 'more' I now have *still* isn't enough. But hope springs eternal. If I could only get more, then . . . and on and on we go. We get deeper in debt and often deeper in despair. The 'more' that was supposed to make life 'better' can *never* be enough."

excerpted from *Your Money or Your Life* by Joe Dominquez and Vicki Robin

- 1. What words or phrases caught your attention?**
- 2. What images came to your mind as I read this?**
- 3. Where were you surprised? Confused? Enlightened?**
- 4. What is your response to this reading?**
- 5. What is the learning or insight from this reading?**
- 6. To whom would you like to read this?**
- 7. What decision does it leave you with?**

THINKTANK

"THE BOUNDARIES OF ENOUGH"

(1 hour, 45 min.)

Introduction

John Muir, a simple man who founded the National Park System, once said, 'The difference between me and John D. Rockefeller is that I have enough money'. Until one decides what is enough one is constantly striving for more.

Only by determining, in advance, *what is enough*, can one ever be satisfied. This afternoon we want to explore for ourselves what is enough, become self-conscious about the criteria we use for determining that and reflect on what it means for our lives.

Thinktank Walkthrough

Turn to the centerfold of your guidebook. Let's spend a few minutes walking through how to complete this chart.

This exercise is best done in pencil to simplify the process of changing your mind as the work progresses.

In the left-hand column there are three categories: Stuff, Relationships and Knowledge. Under the category of 'Stuff' list 3 categories of stuff that are part of your present lifestyle. They could be, for example: Books, Electronic equipment, Clothes, etc. Take a minute and list three categories of 'stuff' that are part of your lifestyle.

Give everyone a little time to list their three categories of 'stuff.'

Let's hear some of your categories.

Elicit categories from a few people; enough so that everyone can hear a variety of examples.

Repeat this procedure of individually thinking of categories and then mentioning a few to get out a few examples.

For the category of 'Relationships', Friends, Relatives, Organizational Memberships, Committee Work, Letter Writing, are examples.

For the category of 'Knowledge' e.g. Magazines and Newsletters received, Newscasts viewed, Newspapers read, Degrees sought, Travel done etc.

There are no right answers. Each participant only needs three subcategories listed in each box in order to proceed with the thinktank.

Thinktank Assignment

For each category, work horizontally *across* the chart and jot down how much is not enough, enough, or too much of a certain category. For example, if 'televisions' is your category, how many televisions is enough? Then, in the 'criteria' column jot down how you decided how many are enough. What was your criteria for deciding?

Complete the whole chart, moving across the chart with each category you have listed.

Finally, look down the 'Criteria' column and reflect on what you see written there. In the large bottom box, write the 'overall values' you used for deciding what is enough for you.

When you are ready, pair up with someone and share:

- what you wrote
- how you feel about what you wrote
- what was revealed to you
- how this informs you about your future lifestyle

There are two kinds of people - writers and talkers. Therefore, when you are finished with your personal writing, stand up. Then the next person who stands up can pair with you. Find a place that is comfortable to talk together and we'll meet back in one hour to do a whole group reflection.

Pair conversations go on for one hour. Five minutes before the whole group is ready to convene, visit each pair and invite them to reconvene. When everyone has reconvened, tell the "Farmer Story".

Farmer Story

A man comes along and sees a farmer sitting under a tree. He stops and asks him, "Why aren't you out in your field working hard?"

**The farmer asks, "Why should I be working hard?"
The man replies, "So you can make more money."**

**The farmer: "Why should I make more money?"
The man: "So you can go on a nice vacation!"**

**The farmer: "Why should I go on a nice vacation?"
The man: "So you can sit under a tree and enjoy the sunshine and the cool breezes."**

The farmer: "That's what I'm doing right now!"

Share what was discussed in pairs.

Who would like to share some highlights from your conversation in the past hour? (Let someone start at will. Don't call on people. Then ask for someone else, until 3-4 people contribute)

What did you discover while sharing together?
(may be different people)

What new insights did you have? (a few people contribute)

What new directions did you discern?(a few people contribute)

Synthesizing the conversation --

As you look back over the "Boundaries of Enough" chart and recall your conversations in pairs, how do you see your personal lifestyle shifting? From what to what?

Write on a black/whiteboard or piece of horizontal chart paper:

From

To

Ask the question again if necessary. Don't be afraid of silence. People need time to formulate their thoughts. There are no right answers. Let people contribute at will. Write their contribution on the chart and ask for someone else's contribution. Get 5 - 10 contributions. Do not go beyond 10; no need for a laundry list here. You are looking for contributions such as the following. Give examples to start the group if absolutely necessary.

From More Activity

To More Balance

From Outer Directed

To Inner Directed

From Unquestioning Acceptance

To Examining our Choices

From Getting

To Giving Back

From A Human Doing

To A Human Being

Reflection on the afternoon's exercise.

Let's reflect a bit on this afternoon's exercise.

Where did this exercise prod you?

Where do you want to do further work?

How will you begin?

MINI-CABARET

"CREATING THE NEW STORY"

(45 min.)

Introduction

The media and other social mouthpieces bombard us with messages about consumption and economic striving, trying to convince us that happiness and social standing come from what we buy and possess. Let's end this Lab by creating some new messages to convey the understandings and perspectives we've been discussing. Let's take the next half-hour and create those new messages through several media forms -- slogan, song, poetry, skit, etc.

Choose 3-5 media forms, enough that groups of 5 or so people can work on one form. Let the participants self-select their group.

Who would like to work on writing a song? a slogan? a skit, a joke, etc. In a half an hour we'll meet back for a mini-cabaret.

Group preparation

Groups convene and prepare their cabaret contribution. Direct them to materials, such as chart paper, colored markers, etc. Visit each team while they are creating to encourage them and unblock any obstacles that they may encounter.

Get an idea of the type and quality of what they are creating in order to decide the sequence of the presentations for the cabaret. (Should the song go first to set the stage or at the end as a finale?) Arrange chairs so that a stage area is created.

Each group performs its Mini-Cabaret contribution. Create a little hoopla and have fun! Every contribution is greeted with a vigorous round of applause. **With this kind of creativity and resolve the future will be bending in a new direction.**

Sing one of the songs again and reconvene for the group reflection.

GROUP REFLECTION ON THE DAY
(facilitator seated at front of the table - 15 min.)

Ask all of the questions in the following sequence. This is a "surface to depth" discussion. Wait for a few answers to each question. People answer the questions to themselves whether they verbalize them or not. Don't be afraid of silence. It takes time for people to collect their thoughts. On the other hand, don't let the discussion drag. Gently guide the discussion.

* * *

It's been a full day. Let's pause for a few minutes to reflect on our day together.

Think about the whole day. What are some of the things we did today?

(Let people contribute at will. Get out objective data -- we shared, we discussed, we laughed, we sang.)

What bits of conversation stuck with you?

What are some new insights/images that came to you today?

Where did you find your mind wandering? (associations being made?)

What was the most significant part of this day for you?

What are the next steps for you? (allow time to let most everybody answer this question)

When you get home this evening and a family member or a friend asks you what you did today, what will you tell them?

**If you were going to give a name to this day, what would you call it?
The great day of**

CLOSING

1. Acknowledge/thank the local co-sponsors of the LifeStyle Simplification Lab.
2. Acknowledge the creator and producer of the LifeStyle Simplification Lab: **Development of the LifeStyle Simplification Lab began in Greensboro, N.C. by the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA). ICA is a locally creative and globally connected not-for-profit organization concerned with the human factor in world development. It acts as a catalyst for positive change in communities, organizations and individual lives in the U.S. and in 26 countries around the world.**

The ICA strives to encourage a culture of participation. The ICA's other programs include Group Facilitation Methods training. Participants are trained in *Technologies of Participation*, many of which were incorporated into today's Lab.

LifeStyle Simplification Lab Facilitator Training is also available for anyone who wishes to facilitate this program in their own organization or community.

If you are interested in setting-up a LifeStyle Simplification Lab or any other ICA program in your organization or community, contact ICA Greensboro or your local ICA office. This information is on the back of your participant's guidebook.

3. Next steps for this group

If people are interested in meeting again, set a time, date and place. The agenda and logistical details can be worked out later. Pass out a list with everybody's address and telephone numbers so that people can stay in touch.

4. Adjourn and go to the resource table to talk with the participants about the resources in which they are interested.

LIFESTYLE SIMPLIFICATION SUGGESTED READING

Aslett, Don. *Clutter's Last Stand*. Writers Digest Books, Cincinnati, 1984.

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Castro, Janice. "The New Frugality." *Time*. January 6, 1992.

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Durning, Alan. *How Much is Enough? - The Consumer Society and the Future of the Earth*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1992.

Elgin, Duane. *Voluntary Simplicity - Toward a Way of Life that is Outwardly Simple, Inwardly Rich*. New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1981.

Foster, Richard. *Freedom of Simplicity*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981.

Henderson, Hazel. *Paradigms in Progress - Life Beyond Economics*. Indianapolis, IN: Knowledge Systems, Inc., 1991.

In Context Quarterly. *What is Enough? - Fulfilling Lifestyles for a Small Planet*. No. 26, P.O. Box 11470 Bainbridge Island, WA: Context Institute, 1990.

In Context Quarterly. It's About Time! No. 37, Context Institute, Winter 1993-94.

Levering, Frank and Wanda Urbanska, *Simple Living - One Couple's Search for a Better Life*. Penguin Books, 1993.

Meadows, Donella, Dennis Meadows and Jorgen Randers. *Beyond the Limits*. Post Mills, Vermont: Chelsea Green, 1992.

New Road Map Foundation. *A Lifestyle Self-Assessment Questionnaire*. and *All-Consuming Passion - Waking up from the American Dream*. NRM Foundation, 1990.

Shi, David. *In Search of the Simple Life*. Salt Lake City, Utah: Peregrine Smith Books, 1986.

LifeStyle Simplification Lab Materials Order Form

Order *LifeStyle Simplification Lab* materials and be equipped to facilitate a Lab in your church, community group or school.

Facilitation Guide includes: Set-up and supply list, guided conversation formats, morning and afternoon workshop procedures, timetable, worksheets, articles and a brief bibliography.

\$20.00

Participant's Guide: Required for each participant of the lab. Provides procedures and worksheets for the Lab, selected readings, and a list of suggested resources on *LifeStyle Simplification*.

\$5.00

Publicity Brochure: Pre-printed brochures for marketing the LifeStyle Simplification Lab, each brochure has space for printing your own local information regarding date, time, location and sponsors.

each \$.20

Complete Kit includes: One Facilitation Guide, one Participant's Guidebook, and one sample brochure.

\$25.00

Complete Kit	@ \$25	Qty: _____	Price: \$_____
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