

The upside of downsizing...

If 2009 was about focusing on what we lost, 2010 must be about what we have! As we shift away from wanting more and more, we are appreciating what it really means to live a balanced life that values the experiences of family, friends, community, and hard work.



The new family is defined as being “thankfully simplified” and downsized and is embracing “giving behaviors.” Many families have cut back and simplified their lives, not because they have to, but rather because they want to. Parents want their children to return to a more balanced and less self-centered existence. A more simplified and giving existence puts things into perspective; it helps families understand that there are other people in their community whose needs are much greater than their own. It turns the family from the habits of looking inward and collecting more and more stuff (so you need *yet another* storage unit) to looking outward and participating in their community. The upside to this downsizing is that many kids are now living the lifestyle of their parents and grandparents. For example, the concept of earning an allowance (as opposed to an automatic right to money) has regained popularity. In the last 18 months, there has been a revival of doing chores, learning to play outside without a referee, and not always being scheduled. Many families are adjusting their expectations and placing more importance on the journey and the experience.

From Ben Franklin to the Beatles, we have been told that money can't buy love or happiness. Well, research now backs this up. A study done by Harvard University indicates that money increases happiness when it lifts people out of poverty and into the middle class or when it moves a family from depending on food stamps to an occasional steak dinner. Interestingly, it does not add to happiness when people with more income move from the middle to upper class or from steak to caviar! The study goes on to note that in the current economy individuals think about personal priorities and make conscious decisions about where to spend money and how to live a more authentic life. It's all about buying less and experiencing more!

On many occasions, I have heard that the primary difference between Americans and Europeans is that Europeans buy experiences and Americans buy stuff! Well, maybe that old adage is changing. It's not longer the guy with the most toys that wins!

Interesting thoughts for a Monday morning!

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