

Sustainable Living: Lessening our Dependence on a Global Economy

By Janet Francis, September 2013

How is your quality of life? Are you working toward simplifying and relieving stress in your day-to-day life?

Look at your daily activities. Take time for personal prayer and reflection each day. Look at your needs verses your wants. Ninety percent of our wants are not needed. What are your needs? Food, water, shelter, something to wear to keep you warm. What things does society try to force on you by convincing you they are necessities? Car, cell phone, T.V., insurance, job, phone bills, mortgage, electricity – These along with other things in your life could be wearing you down as you attempt to conform to society's standard.

Working through these things, you will be able to lessen your dependency on them or, in some cases, eliminate them altogether. Remember, the less you need, the more rich your life is – the more you can actually enjoy your life.

DON'T TAKE CREDIT. Credit is like slamming yourself into a brick wall and thinking you will be OK. You won't. You're never gonna win. Buy now; pay later doesn't work. It is not wise to buy something you can't afford; you only end up paying more for it in the end. Making interest payments is like paying for a dead horse. Debt drags a person down. It enslaves you, robs you of your self-respect and keeps you in poverty throughout your life. OK, so stop digging yourself into a hole. I know, I know, the world revolves around credit. But, snip those credit cards up or at least remove the temptation from your wallet. That helps eliminate impulse buying. Pay off your debts smallest to largest. Look around your house; is there anything you just don't need. Have a garage sale or sell it on Craig's List to make up the money you need for something else. Remember, your creditors go to bed at night and wake up richer than the day before. But, you get poorer while you are sleeping, because interest is accumulating against you. Remember, it is your money. I'd rather keep it in my pocket than to give it up to someone else for interest charges. Pay your bills on time, which means early. Refinance your home if you can to get a lower rate of interest, so you can pay off your mortgage faster. It took us nine months to do that, a lot of paper work, headaches, hassle. I don't think they really wanted us to refinance. We thought we would lose our patience but finally signed the closing papers. Sometimes you do have to take out a mortgage, so you can have a little place of your own. Try to pay it off as soon as you can.

Use common sense – wise money management – delayed gratification. Look at the bigger picture. Shop second-hand. We have a wonderful thrift store in town. Sometimes they have bag-day sales, sometimes clearance sales, yeah at a thrift store, 50% to 75% off. Most of the clothes I wear now come from there. My

biggest weakness is puzzles with red barns. Puzzles are expensive in stores; they can be \$10 to \$12. I found one in the thrift store for 12 cents. It reminded me of my Aunt Goldie's place in Loudonville, Ohio, with a house on one side of the road and a red barn on the other. My grandparents' place also had red barns. On the outside of the box it said two pieces were missing from the puzzle. I put it together, and there were five pieces missing. You know, we all have missing pieces, but we are still useful and can bring joy to someone else's life, just like that puzzle brought some joy to my life as I put it together, all 745 pieces.

Shopping thrift stores for what you need gives an item a chance to be used again, keeps more money in your pocket and keeps things out of landfills which pollute Mother Earth. There are many wonderful things to be found in thrift stores, good ideas for gift giving as well.

Here are four things to remember: 1. Use it up. 2. Wear it out. 3. Make do. 4. Do without.

Here are more things to remember: Shop your own closet. Shop your own home. Shop your own cupboards instead of ordering out or eating out. Repurpose, Recycle, Reuse, Fix it up instead of throwing it away or buying new.

In a summer 2011 interview in *Small Farmer's Journal*, self-sufficient farmer Richard Douglass says, "Our lifestyle and our philosophy of living is more to only take the things that we need, the necessities of life, and we want to make room for some luxuries and treats and stuff like that but not to live a lifestyle that you just need money, money and more money; no matter how much you have you always have to have more... I've found that the less you need the more rich your life is, the more you actually enjoy life. It's like an inverse relationship. The more money you have the more you need and the less happiness, your quality of life goes down as your income goes up."

Our neighbor called one weekend needing to talk to our son Peter who works on furnaces and air conditioners. Our neighbor's air conditioner had gone out, and he said, "It's getting hot." The first thought that came to mind was, "Open the windows; there's a good breeze blowing today. If you can open your windows, do so. Let some fresh air come in. You can do without air conditioning either at times or all the time. It is your choice. Our ancestors did not have air conditioning, and they did just fine. You have some control over your electric bill and your water bill. See what you can do.

You need to have a good supply of food to take care of your family in emergencies. It's not just weather related emergencies you should plan for, but loss of job or other circumstances that may crop up. The more self-sufficient we can be, the more secure we are. Self-sufficiency is not just for country dwellers. And remember, it's not just ourselves but others around us, extended family, friends and neighbors we should plan to help when times get hard. Have at least

three month's supply of staples on hand at any given time, things like rice, sugar, spices, flour, honey, oil, pasta, rolled oats, brown sugar, peanut butter, cornmeal, powdered milk, raisins, home canned or cases of store-bought vegetables, canned meat, vitamins, tea, coffee, cocoa, vitamin-C rich fruit. Try to eat less processed food. Put up what you raise or buy food where it's the most reasonable. Buy what your family eats. Buy in bulk but look at the unit price for the best deal. If you can't use it up before it goes bad, it's not a good deal.

Look at your own family situation. I buy in bulk as much as I can. Use discretion; wasted food is expensive. Your own garden is your best source for good fresh food. If you live where you can't have your own garden, farmers' markets are a good source. If you have to buy vegetables, it's best to get local food rather than food shipped around the world. You may also look into Community Supported Agriculture or CSAs in your city or town. It is always best to raise as much of your own food as you can. Rather than raising hybrids or genetically modified varieties, find sources of heirloom seeds and then save seed year to year. In this way, you will save money, the varieties you raise will adapt themselves to your climactic conditions, situation and way of gardening and you will have a secure source of seed for the years to come. Heirloom seeds saved ourselves are life giving, small, little things to feed us and the world, our neighbors for generations to come. I cannot overemphasize the importance of learning and practicing gardening. It connects us to Mother Earth and everything around us, the weather, life itself. Also learn to can, freeze or otherwise preserve some of the food you grow.

If you raise more than you need, swap or barter with others or give some away; it will come back to you as something else you really need. The best things in life are free. Value and develop relationships. The most valuable people in your life are your family and friends. Have a game night; provide some cheap snacks. Relationships with people are the most important things in life. Attend ceremonies and get-togethers; join in the dances. Be a part of community. Laugh together, build relationships, experience life – a life worth living. Turn the T.V. and computer off and have quiet times. Look around you and take time to breathe. Really, you have no worries. You are here in the Earth among your family. Now, live life.

You need to build a library with books on subjects such as herbs, livestock, gardening, self sufficiency, wellness, home remedies and house care. Identify and value the people in your extended family and among your friends who have these interests.

Selected Bibliography for our people seeking decolonization and indigenous cultural restoration

Provided by Janet Francis at the Twelfth Annual Mid American Indian Fellowships Gathering, Linn County Park, Linn County, Kansas, September 20, 21 and 22, 2013.

Back to Basics: A Complete Guide to Traditional Skills edited by Abigail R. Gehring, Skyhorse Publishing 2008.

Country Wisdom & Know-How: Everything You Need to Know to Live Off the Land from the editors of Storey Books, Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers 2004.

The Encyclopedia of Country Living 10th Edition: The Original Manual for Living Off the Land & Doing It Yourself by Carla Emery, Sasquatch Books 2008.

Storey's Basic Country Skills: A Practical Guide to Self-Reliance by John and Martha Storey, Storey Publishing 1999.

All four of these books offer a wide range of subject material and are good to have for general knowledge. I have especially enjoyed Carla Emery's *The Encyclopedia of Country Living*.

Greenhouse Basics: Building Your Own Greenhouse by Mark Freeman, Stackpole Books 1997.

How to Grow More Vegetables: Fruits, Nuts, Berries, Grains, and Other Crops by John Jeavons, Ten Speed Press 1995.

Seed Sowing and Saving: Step-by-Step Techniques for Collecting and Growing More Than 100 Vegetables, Flowers, and Herbs by Carole B. Turner, Storey Publishing 1998.

Seed to Seed: Seed Saving and Growing Techniques for Vegetable Gardeners by Suzanne Ashworth, Seed Savers Exchange 2002.

These books are helpful for small-space gardening and for properly saving heirloom seeds from year to year. Building Your Own Greenhouse gives you ideas, but our own greenhouse is a simpler construction and not as expensive.

Backyard Livestock: Raising Good, Natural Food for Your Family by Steven Thomas, revised by George P. Looby, DVM, The Countryman Press 1998.

Dairy Goats for Pleasure and Profit by Harvey Considine, Considine Creations 1996.

Living with Chickens: Everything You Need to Know to Raise Your Own Backyard Flock by Jay Rossier, The Globe Pequot Press 2002.

Raising Milk Goats Successfully by Gail Luttmann, Williamson Books 1986.

The Small-Scale Poultry Flock: An all-natural approach to raising chickens and other fowl for home and market growers by Harvey Ussery, Chelsea Green Publishing 2011.

Storey's Guide to Raising Rabbits by Bob Bennett, Storey Publishing 2001 and 2009.

I have enjoyed all of these books and refer to them quite often. They are good books to have on hand if your interest lies here.

The Complete Tightwad Gazette: Promoting Thrift as a Viable Lifestyle by Amy Dacyczyn, Villard Books 1998.

Homegrown & Handmade: A Practical Guide to More Self-Reliant Living by Deborah Niemann, New Society Publishers 2011.

Independence Days: A Guide to Sustainable Food Storage & Preservation by Sharon Astyk, New Society Publishers 2009.

Money Secrets of the Amish: Finding True Abundance in Simplicity, Sharing, and Saving by Lorilee Craker, Thomas Nelson 2011.

These books are like the bible to me, a lot of really good information to read over and over again. They provide practical ideas to use in your daily life.

Easy Green Living: the ultimate guide to simple, eco-friendly choices for you and your home by Renee Loux, Rodale 2008.

This is another good reference book which includes information on where to find things – alternative sources for many different products.

Balls Complete Book of Home Preserving: 400 delicious and creative recipes for today edited by Judi Kingry and Lauren Devine, Robert Rose 2006.

The Big Book of Preserving the Harvest: 150 Recipes for Freezing, Canning, Drying, and Pickling Fruits and Vegetables by Carol W. Costenbader, revised by Joanne Lamb Hayes, Storey Publishing 2002.

Stocking Up: Third Edition Of The Classic Preserving Guide by Carol Huppung et. al., Fireside Books 1986.

These are good resources for canning, freezing and dehydrating.

The Doctors Book of Home Remedies by the Editors of Prevention, Rodale 2009

Home Remedies from Amish Country, Revised 5th Edition, Abana Books 2005.

Plain & Happy Living: Amish Recipes & Remedies by Emma Byler (Jonas Em), Goosefoot Acres Press 1991.

These are just good books to have for alternative medicines. Everyone needs to have a medical book of sorts on hand – general first aid knowledge.

Magazine Recommendations

Backyard Poultry, 145 Industrial Drive, Medford, WI 54451 (800) 551-5691
www.backyardpoultrymag.com This is a magazine for small flock poultry raisers.

Small Farmer's Journal, PO Box 1627, Sisters, OR 97759 (800) 876-2893 This is a quarterly journal for small, sustainable farming, especially for farming with horses.