

IS IT WORTH IT?

**Simplify Your Life with
Personality Type**



**A unique and personal approach
to finding what's essential in your life**

Roberta Schwartz Wennik

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OTHER BOOKS BY ROBERTA

The Life-Changing Magic of Type: Your Personality Guide to Weight Loss

To Eat or Not to Eat, That is the Question: Use the Power of Personality Type with the Z-Pattern to Make Healthy Lifestyle Decisions

Your Personality Lifestyle: Living Healthy Through Type (Formerly, A Diet for Every Personality Type)

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Boomer's Guide to Getting the Weight Off ... For Good

Your Personality Prescription: Optimal Health Through Personality Profiling

Beyond Food Labels: Eating Healthy with the % Daily Values

Drawing the Line on Calories, Carbs, and Fat

Nutrition Facts for Healthy Bodies

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INTRODUCTION



Good for you! If you're reading this book, it must mean that you're finally admitting your life has become too complicated and needs simplifying. Guess what? You're not alone. As I was doing research for this book, a Google search turned up 9 million results on the keywords, "simplify your life". There's obviously a lot written about the subject with a lot of people reading about it. That says to me that many of us have a problem.

Stop and think for a minute what a simpler life would look like for you. It's not the same for everyone. With that said, most of the books I've read about simplifying life propose that our lives have become more complex because of our wanting more, wanting bigger, wanting better. But isn't that the American dream? It is still why people want to move to the United States, believing that this is a land of opportunity. They seek prosperity and success; where their children will have an even better life than they had when they were younger.

Maybe our problem is that we haven't done "due diligence" in making smart choices with that dream. We're like kids in a candy store, buying everything that catches our eye, trying new experiences, and doing as much as possible every day. If our friends have something or are trying something, we figure we should too. We've been made to believe that whatever we own needs an upgrade — from electronics to cars to homes to clothes to lifestyle. The list could go on and on. We try to stuff as much activity into a day with the belief that living a full life makes for a happy life. That's not always true. It comes down to making choices — choices that are personal and not dictated by others. That applies to your job, as well. Just remember, **it's your life to define.**

What bothers me with all the books about simplifying our lives is that they make the readers feel guilty about pursuing the American dream. What's wrong with deciding to have the big house, for example? We just need to know what comes with it — more housecleaning, more surfaces to get cluttered, higher energy bills to keep it warm or cold, and so on. If none of these things bothers you, then don't feel ashamed to own the big house. If some of those things *are* a problem for you, now you know what to work on as you read this book. There's a lot of pleasure that can come from a big house — a feeling of spaciousness, more light, each person having a room of his or her own, dedicated areas for certain tasks or hobbies — just to name a few that come to my mind. And just think of the amount of exercise you get, walking from room to room or climbing the stairs!

Now, if you're stressed out because of having too much on your plate (and I'm not talking about food), too many responsibilities, too many conflicts, too many commitments, lack of time, lack of energy, and so on, then it's time to start making choices about *what really matters* in your life and *what must go*. That's where personality typing is going to be your best friend. In this book, you'll find out what your type is and how to start making the *best* choices for you, based on type. I said "best" because there's no "right" choice. We're all free (or should be) to choose what works best for us.

I didn't want to write just one more book about simplifying your life. There are so many out there as it is and most of those merely give you a cookie-cutter approach to the subject. They either tell you to get rid of stuff, cut back on any excess activities, become a minimalist, or follow a hundred tips for simplifying

your life. I find all these approaches too robotic. In truth, all the books on “simplifying your life” are about what worked for the authors with no consideration for whether their methods would work for **who you are**. For example, just because making copious lists worked for them doesn’t mean it’s your style to do that. Maybe those authors were able to eliminate a lot of stuff and activities from their lives, but you don’t want to give up those things. According to the eminent psychologist, Carl Jung, we’re not all the same. We don’t think the same, act the same, or make the same decisions. That’s because of who we each are. By working with hundreds of patients in the 1920s, Jung found some distinct differences in them, as well as some distinct similarities. He was able to sort his patients according to various characteristics, a process he called *psychological type*.

His work became part of mainstream psychological thinking when the mother-daughter team of Katherine Briggs and Isabel Myers developed the tool known as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI®), a tool used for identifying a person’s personality type. Briggs and Myers were fascinated by Jung’s work, seeing its value applied to how we use our minds, make decisions, and determine our values and feelings in the everyday business of living. As a result of their work, they were able to define 16 personality types. If you’ve taken the MBTI®, then you might remember your type (it’s written as 4 letters, e.g. ENFP). For those who’ve never taken the MBTI®, you’ll have an opportunity a little later in the book to find out what your type is.

I’m a dietitian, certified practitioner of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator®, author, editor, publisher, recipe creator, and speaker. I’m also a wife, mother and a grandmother, a volunteer in my granddaughters’ classes, as well as a volunteer in the community college’s adult education department. My hobbies are quite extensive including travel, cooking, biking, hiking, knitting, quilting, beading, playing the piano and the guitar. Just rereading the last several sentences makes me know I’ve got the same problem that you may have. I have to admit that my personality type often gets me into trouble, which you’ll understand later when I go into detail about type.

I’m a perfectionist and an idealist, which carries with it a heavy burden. This book is as much a self-help book for me as I hope it will be for you. I started writing this book strictly for myself so that I could find what was really essential for my well-being. I decided that if I could figure this out for myself, I would publish this book. Well, since you’re now holding it, let me tell you that what I discovered along the way has made a world of difference to my life. I’m hoping it will do the same for you.

When I started on this journey, my husband teased me that I should sign the book with the letters, “PH” after my name — professional hypocrite! How could I write a book about simplifying life when I was hardly a poster child for the subject? After writing this book and living by its principles, I no longer see myself as a “PH”!

I had to accept that I couldn’t do it all or even have it all. It’s not that I’m incapable of doing it all, but I finally realized that by trying to do it all, I’d have to accept that I couldn’t do everything in a way that would make me proud and I’d end up being stressed out. Being a perfectionist is like having my conscience sitting on my shoulder, pointing out the shortcomings of what I did.

Life doesn’t have to be stressful. In fact, to live healthfully and for a long time, it better not be. We experience stress because of the choices we make. No one held a gun to my head and told me I had to become a dietitian, author, and so on. Yet, now that I’m in the thick of it, how do I determine whether or what I should back out of? Do I have to give up something or just figure out how to create more hours in the day? (Now, that’s a great idea, which would make me amazingly popular!)

There's no question that it's time to change something in my life. Do you feel the same way? That's where personality typing is going to help us. **No matter what our type, simplifying our life is possible when we do it in a way that's comfortable for our type.** Keep that in mind as we proceed.

Simplification is going to be based completely on the decisions we make. That's why I called this book, *Is It Worth It?* Much of what we do in life requires us to make a decision. Asking — and answering — that question, Is it worth it?, will be the process we use to simplify our lives. The answers we come up with are going to be based on personality type. When the alarm rang this morning, I had a decision to make. “Do I push the snooze button and sleep in for another 10 minutes or get up so I don't have to rush getting dressed or potentially skip breakfast?” Are those extra 10 minutes of snoozing worth it? How do we really make that decision? Keep reading to find out.

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE DECISIONS

Decisions, decisions, decisions! That's what this book is about — how to make the “best” decisions that will help simplify all aspects of our lives. The number one question you'll be asking yourself — “Is it worth it?” — can be answered **only by you**. Therefore, we have to understand how to measure worth. What unit of value should we use to determine something's worth? Maybe for you it's time, even though for another person it may be money or esteem or something else. We'll be going into how to value things in order to make more informed decisions.

The twist in this book is that you'll be making decisions using personality type. You'll learn how to use the perfect decision-making process known as the *Z-Pattern of Decision Making*. Once you know how the process works, we'll be discussing its use in such subjects as:

- Consumerism and determining when enough is enough
- Dealing with clutter in our home, our work place, and our head
- How technology may not be our friend in winning the war over a complicated life
- The paradox of choice
- How to say “no”
- Determining what is truly essential
- How to simplify our relationships, finance, and activities

THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

Even though we shouldn't live in the past, we definitely can learn from it. That's why the question, “**Was** it worth it?” is just as valuable to ask and answer as “**Is** it worth it?” By asking “Was it worth it?”, we're reviewing whether the decision we made proved to be valuable. Maybe you were offered a job, you took it, and now you're rethinking that decision in light of your present day experiences at that company. If all is going well, where you've made strides in the company, contributed, and made friends, you'd probably say “yes”. Of course, those were my parameters of measurement. You might have used something else to determine value. This is, after all, YOUR life.

Okay, now let's say a head-hunter or someone who saw your résumé on LinkedIn contacts you with another job opportunity? The question would be “**Will** it be worth it?”, where you need to make a decision that impacts your future and the long-term consequences of the decision. If we stick with the job opportunity example, maybe it requires that you move. How will you measure that? If you have children, one parameter might be how you judge the school district you'd be transferring them into. Will they miss

their friends and find it challenging in making new ones? How about you? Will the change of job provide you with a better income? Again, all the measurements of worth and value will come from YOU.

So far we've thought about our past and tried to learn from it with the question, "Was it worth it?" We've also considered possible future consequences through the question "Will it be worth it?" However, most of our decisions are going to be in-the-moment since that's where we live life. That requires us to answer the question "Is it worth it?". Let me give you a perfect example that you might relate to. When I eat a piece of chocolate cake, I taste it and ask myself, "Is it worth it?" The value parameters I'm using are both flavor enjoyment, as well as the number of calories it's costing me for that enjoyment. If I really don't like the flavor, then to me it's definitely not *worth* the calories and I'm more than glad to give it to someone else (who then has to make some judgment). But let's say that I *did* like the taste and want to eat it. Now I have to ask the futuristic question, "Will it be worth it?" That means that if I eat all those calories, am I willing to accept that I may have to adjust other things I eat during the day to stay within a calorie allowance or am I willing to exercise more to burn off those calories I ate? Sometime down the road, if I keep making "yes" decisions to similar questions, will I see the negative results on the scale?

The *Z-Pattern of Decision-Making* will put us in control, making us masters of our own fate. We'll feel empowered to say "no" to things that, in the past, contributed to making our lives more complicated, getting us to take on more than we could handle or worrying what people will think or say. Because our personality type is such an integral part of our behavior, getting to really know ourselves is the key.

The New York Times #1 bestseller book, *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*, by Marie Kondo shows us how much people really do want to change (it's a bestseller, after all). However, the approach she takes may only work for a small percentage of the population. Her approach appeals to the very structured personality types and it applies strictly to tidying up one's environment. Even if we're not that type, we might be tempted to try it since we see everyone else is trying it. Maybe we figure it must work when over a million books have been sold. On first attempt, we may have some success with her methods, but it will probably be only temporary because we'll be using willpower to overcome our own natural instincts. We all know that willpower doesn't last. It's why many people who may succeed at tidying up relapse to a cluttered environment. Because her method works for her; her expectation is that it will work for everyone.

My number one goal with this book is to set you up for success, not failure. That's why making changes based on your type is the answer.

IS CLUTTER MESSING UP OUR LIVES?

Most people associate clutter with their environment — their home, their office, their desk, their car, women's purses, men's tool boxes, and so on. I challenge the concept that clutter applies only to our environment. I think it concerns all aspects of our lives — *things clutter*, *mind clutter*, *financial clutter*, *job clutter*, *relationships clutter*, and *activities clutter*.

Things Clutter

This is probably the number one problem people believe is making their lives complicated. Considering the number of books on the subject, it's a major influence in our lives. I received an infographic in my email box this morning (email is just one example of clutter), asking me to determine what type of "clutterer" I am. The choices provided were the following (with a couple I've added):

PAGES 5 THROUGH 9 NOT INCLUDED IN BOOK PREVIEW

Chapter 1

WHAT IS YOUR TYPE?



I'm not going to keep you waiting. Let's find out what your type name is. I'm sure you're curious. Of course, maybe you've already taken the MBTI®. However, it's amazing how many people who have taken it, forget their results. More often than not, the test was taken in a work environment and so when it was taken, it wasn't viewed as being really important in one's daily life outside of work. But it is! In fact, you're going to find out just how valuable knowing type is to help you simplify your life.

ABOUT TYPE

Although we'd all like to boast that we're unique, we need only look around us to see that there are others who think and act like us. Of course, there are some people who are not at all like us. What makes us the same or different? According to Carl Gustav Jung, a Swiss psychiatrist, it's our personality. We may feel most comfortable with people who are similar to us, but we're often attracted to those who are different because they have characteristics we wish we had. There's much we can learn from those differences, which can contribute to our own growth.

In 1921, Jung published his theory of personality preferences, which he called *psychological type*. He believed that our personality could predict our behavior. For example, if we tend to nurture others, Jung would view our acts of kindness, not as a random act, but as a product of our personality. Knowing our personality, he could predict what we might do. He proposed that the differences between people's behavior stemmed from their different personality preferences. Once he established what these preferences were, he was able to create a personality classification system that allowed him to group people into various personality types. Jung came up with three categories of type, each with two opposing alternatives.

Jung's system took into account what energizes us, how we make decisions and act on those decisions, as well as what influences our decision-making process. It could be as simple a decision as "Should I have a muffin with breakfast?" or as complicated as "Should I take my neighbor to court over the damage done to my fence?" Our personality type can predict and affect the decisions and actions we take. The fact that not all personality types respond the same way in a given situation makes clear the effect of type on our lives.

The daughter-mother team of Isabel Myers and Katherine Briggs added a fourth category to Jung's work, i.e. how people prefer to deal with life. Their work furthered what Jung had developed. By creating the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI®), they took psychological type out of the psychologist's office and into the working world. Once the general public became familiar with the tool and approach of the MBTI®, its use entered many fields — including career development, team building, communication improvement, marriage counseling, and, now, as I have done, to simplifying your life. I was one of the first to take type into the weight-loss field. (See www.advantagediets.com if you'd like to see how type can be used for weight loss.)

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Getting the Job Done

Judgers tend to finish one thing before starting another. It's that "closure" mentality. Working on a number of things at once, so typical of the Perceivers, makes Judgers uncomfortable. They can't check it off their list to feel free to move on to something else.



Judgers like to finish one thing before starting the next



Perceivers often have several things going on at once



When given an assignment, both Judgers and Perceivers will get the job done on time. However, they accomplish it in different ways. Judgers are good about starting on time and working regularly to get the job done. They probably even set up a roadmap for how to get it done. Remember, they're into structure, so setting up small tasks to get at the goal works for them.

You've probably known a **Perceiver** or two when you went to school. They're the ones who never seem to get the project started on time and are rushing at the last minute to finish it. Were you one of those students who pulled all-nighters? If so, you're probably a Perceiver.



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Chapter 2

MORE ABOUT YOU



PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Now that you've learned about each of the preferences, it's time to see how the preferences in your type interact. Find your type in this chapter, checking out its attributes and strengths, as well as its challenges.

ESTP – THE ADVOCATE (EXTRAVERT, SENSOR, THINKER, PERCEIVER)

ESTPs, the Advocates, have **mastered the art of promotion**. They like to put out suggestions and persuade you to go along with them. Their suggestions will be *pragmatic and action-oriented*. They're *resourceful*, believing “where there's a will, there's a way.”

They just seem to **know how to work with people**. ESTPs' sociability is based on a keen perception of people. They're very *observant*, watching body-language, facial cues, hand motions. Their awareness of people is not coming from the Feeling preference, which might be a natural deduction. It's just that they're very *good sales people*, using their observations to sell to the customer. This makes them very *good negotiators* with great powers of persuasion.

They **see life as it is** due to their Sensing and Extraverting preferences. They're the ultimate *realists*. Their interest lies in the world around them, collecting information through their five senses. Don't present them with theory. They're *not interested in theory*. And definitely don't ask them to make long-term plans. It's the *here-and-now* that's most important to them. Because they need to act — and act now, — they *aren't too concerned about the consequences* of their actions. They can think on their feet, making quick adjustments as the situation demands.

From the perspective of other types, ESTPs **seem to be hyperactive or restless**. But it's their *excitability* and *living in the moment* that's often envied by other types. They can sometimes appear *hedonistic*, seeking out the pleasures of life. This can occasionally get them into trouble. They're more than happy to bring you along for the ride. And people want to be on that ride because ESTPs appear so *confident and popular*. They're able to win people over with their charismatic appeal.

They're realistic, not asking more of themselves than they think they can accomplish. **Setting short-term smaller goals** is much more effective for them than long-term goals, the latter seeming to be too far away to figure out how they'd be achieved. When *under stress*, *ESTPs can set unrealistic goals*. (This comes from their inferior or 4th preference, iNtuiting). When they can't achieve the goal, they might turn to food as a remedy.

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Chapter 3

OUT OF BALANCE



When we were young, we didn't realize that we really had the simple life. As toddlers and adolescents, most of us didn't have a lot of possessions, clothes, or toys (unless we were quite spoiled!). We didn't have a lot of responsibilities other than making the bed, picking up our clothes and toys, and brushing our teeth. Why were we in such a hurry to grow up? As an adult, life with its many activities, have-tos, habits (both good and bad), and multitude of possessions is like a tree with hundreds of leaves. Some fall by the wayside, but every year more leaves are added. That's what we keep doing — adding to our already overloaded lives. It's no longer simple.

When I think of simplicity, I compare in my mind a rose bush full of flowers versus one single, well-formed bloom in a crystal vase. I can see that solitary flower more fully by it standing on its own rather than when it's amongst a dozen other roses on the bush. This is the concept that minimalists would like us to have when we try to achieve "the simple life". Yet, it's not quite that straight-forward. And is it the right way to go?

I've already discussed why minimalism doesn't work when you collect things (and there's nothing wrong with collecting things — if it brings you joy). But it also doesn't work when I might actually get more pleasure out of seeing a whole bush full of roses with so much color and foliage compared to one lone flower. We cannot judge another person's concept of what it means to have a simple life. Yet, we still need to clarify what's causing us to feel so anxious, frustrated, and stressed out by everyday life.

THE FENG SHUI OF LIFE

Feng shui (pronounced "fung shway") is a Chinese term that literally means "wind and water". It refers to a Chinese philosophical system of harmonizing the individual with his or her surrounding environment. There are those who believe that there are invisible forces of energy known as *chi* (pronounced "chee") that can affect our mind and feelings. When our environment is cluttered or messy, *chi* can't flow smoothly. It crashes into the pile of clothes you left on the kitchen table to fold, the dirty dishes left in the sink, and gets trapped in dark corners (along with the dust bunnies!). It's no wonder the Chinese believe that by understanding *feng shui*, how to arrange our environment and our mind, we can influence how to control *chi*, a life force.

So, you may ask how the concepts of *feng shui* and *chi* affect our creating a simpler life. Think about it. When you're multi-tasking and, as they say, have "too many irons in the fire", what do you think is happening to your energy fields? They're colliding with each other and being depleted at the same time. Drinking coffee or an energy drink is not the answer. You need to fix the problem by removing what's draining you of your *chi*.

Much as we'd like to believe we can do it all and have it all, that's a pipedream. When we decide to take on too much at work, home life can suffer. When we decide to buy too many things, our finances can

suffer. When we decide to overindulge in food and not match that with a compensating amount of exercise, our bathroom scale will deliver the message loud and clear. I'm sure you could come up with many more of the decisions you've made that don't end up well in the long run. So, figuring out how to simplify is the only way for us to find peace and joy in our lives.

Have you ever wondered why real estate agents bring in stagers to set up homes that are to be sold? Stagers open up the energy fields in the house by removing clutter, leaving just what is essential. Have you ever gone house shopping and said you wanted your house to look like those — so clean, simple, and open? If so, then you know what I'm talking about. Is that any different than your life being cluttered with too many things and too many "have tos"? Your *chi* is definitely not moving smoothly.

Everything is endowed with *chi*, from people to things. I even think we should include our mind in that. And we're all connected by this *chi*. Think of what happens when you throw a pebble into a pond. The water ripples throughout the whole pond, quickly at where the pebble entered the water until the vibrations slowly make their way to the shore. It's a fairly smooth and gentle motion. When we interact with other people or even our environment, *chi* is at work. We're at the epicenter of that vibration. This concept can apply globally, as well, where we're not directly involved, but touched by the *chi* that seems to be outside our personal boundaries. The easiest example is the stock market. When the United States or Europe or Japan have a bad day in the market, the effect ripples throughout the world. Our investments take a hit. Of course, sometimes it does work in a positive way and we'll make money that day. Yay!

I think that our wanting to find a simpler life is telling us that our *chi* is out of balance. Instead of our being that pebble, we're more like a boulder dropped into the pond. And instead of just a gentle ripple, our life feels like it's creating big waves that don't just gently dissipate. Rather, they crash upon the shore, bounce off and come back to knock us over. We may try to steady ourselves, but sometimes we just can't. In our process of trying, we have to use a lot of energy to stay standing or at least, afloat. That sounds very much like what it means to live a less-than-simple life. How many of us need a life vest so we don't drown in our efforts to have it all and do it all? That life vest translates into more caffeine (as artificial energy), late nights (so less sleep, which could affect our health), and multitasking (so no one thing is being done as well or effectively as it might). Isn't it time to become the pebble and dump the life vest?

I saw a great line on a church reader board recently: "If you could have everything, where would you put it?" Another way to say it would be: "If you could have everything and do everything, where would you find the money, time, and energy?"

LOOKING FOR BALANCE

The Chinese philosophy of the *Tao* with its concept of *yin* and *yang* is so applicable here. The Chinese philosopher, LaoTzu, is thought to have written the *Tao Te Ching* over 25 centuries ago as a handbook for leaders. In ancient China, to lead wisely required that you find personal balance from within, as well as balance with your environment. This is as applicable today as it was then, and not just for leaders but everyone.

By seeking the simple life, we're admitting that we're missing that balance. We're not at peace with ourselves or the world. It's interesting when people think about simplifying their lives, one of the first things they set out to do is declutter their environment. Although it's definitely not the only thing that needs help, it's the most visual fix we can do (to make us feel we're making progress) and one that we can have control over. (Of course, if we had all this control, why do we continually find ourselves in this pickle?! Because we haven't been asking the right question — "Is it worth it?").

Take Sally for an example. She's due at the office by 8:30 AM. She's overslept. As she hurriedly gets dressed, she can't find the matching shoe to the pair she threw into the closet last night when she came home from work, exhausted. No matter how many swear words she uses, she still can't find it. Of course, in the process of searching, she's making even more of a mess. Ah good, there's the shoe! As she rushes out the door (having had to skip breakfast), she realizes that there's no way she's going to make it into work on time. What's her boss going to say? This minor incident could undermine her receiving a promotion (because she knows this has happened before and it probably won't be the last time — unless she changes something). A lack of promotion could spill over into financial problems for her. And this is all because she overslept and couldn't find a shoe!

Her situation could even be worse than missing a shoe. What if her desk was so cluttered that she never saw the bills that needed paying? Now her credit score is in jeopardy. There are other ways that clutter can cost us money. My neighbor's husband is a perfect example. When he died, she had to clean out his workshop. She found at least 4 hammers, 2 saws, so many duplicate screwdrivers, etc. He could have opened his own shop. She said that when he couldn't find a tool he knew he had, he'd go out and buy another one. Without having some organization to his tool box, the clutter kept him from seeing what he really had. Sound familiar?

Let's not forget all those other areas of clutter (besides things) that I talked about in the Introduction. At least getting rid of "stuff" is a good start. It's a great learning experience that can prepare us for the bigger things that we'll need to tackle to simplify our lives.

The big question is — *how can balance be achieved and maintained?* That's really what this book is about. We'll each achieve that balance in different ways because we're all different. **This book sets out to honor those differences by using personality type to find what works for us individually.**

YIN AND YANG

Yin and *yang* are opposing forces of *chi*. The practice of the *Tao* is the seeking of balance and harmony of these opposing forces. *Yin* is considered "the shady side of the hill". Yet, we can't have a shady side without a sunny side or *yang* (pronounce *yahng*). The symbol for the *Tao* may be familiar to you.



The black side represents *yin*; the white side is *yang*. To have one element of *chi* (e.g. *yin*), it's necessary to have the other (*yang*). Carl Jung, the psychologist who developed the concept of psychological type, had studied the *Tao* and based psychological type on it. He appreciated that the *yin-yang* dichotomy existed in our everyday lives. He represented that dichotomy in psychological type by having each category include the two opposites (Extraversion versus Introversión, Sensing versus iNtuiting, Thinking versus Feeling, Judging versus Perceiving).

You've probably never thought about how the *Tao* has influenced the way we think. When I say "black", what's the first thing you think? Most people would say "white". When I say "day", we automatically think "night". That goes for opposites like right and wrong, left and right, backward and forward, and so on. It seems that so many of the aspects of our lives are opposites of something else. That causes tension.

The symbol for the *Tao* tells us that nothing is ALL wrong or ALL right, ALL black or ALL white, etc. Allowing for some in-between area relieves us of a lot of tension. Notice that the symbol cleverly includes a black dot in the white area and a white dot in the black area. It's admitting that, in life, everything isn't completely one way or the other. Even though there are decluttering experts (such as Marie Kondo referred to in the Introduction) who would tell us that *everything* must always be in exactly the right place, people such as she aren't allowing for that in-between area. Trying to keep every paper lined up perfectly on our desks, for example, can create a lot of stress. So, it comes down to figuring out how we can find personal balance.

WHERE DOES STRESS FIT INTO ALL OF THIS?

I would say that the number one reason we feel the need to simplify is that our lives have become too stressful. We find it hard to handle what's coming at us. Maybe we've added too much clutter, whether it be related to things, our mind, our finances, our job, our relationships, or our activities. Sometimes we don't even know what's caused us to feel so uncomfortable with life. Yet, we know we're not acting or feeling like our old selves.

So, what is stress? Understanding it may help us get a handle on how to deal with it?

stress, n. 1. importance or significance that's attached to a thing; 2. Physiol. any stimulus, as fear or pain, that disturbs or interferes with the normal physiological equilibrium of an organism; 3. physical, mental, or emotional strain or tension.

I'm sure we all can relate to the second definition, the physiological aspect of stress. There's no question that stress disturbs our equilibrium and sense of well-being. However, look again at the first definition. If we didn't attach any significance to an event, it wouldn't cause us any stress. Significance is the same thing as assessing the worth of something. (Remember, this book wants you to continually ask "Is it worth it?") For example, imagine that the compressor in your refrigerator stopped working. You could fret about how much it's going to cost you to replace the compressor (do you really have an alternative besides buying a new refrigerator, which is going to cost far more?). Or you could complain that you'll have to stick around all day until the service repair person comes to fix it. On the other hand, you could take the opposite thinking. What if you told yourself that you were very fortunate to get 20 years out of one compressor; that the service repair person can come out today instead of tomorrow or next week (leaving you with a refrigerator full of rancid food); that they have the part in stock; and best of all, that you have time to get some things done at home while you wait? You see, **we choose the way we want to react to a situation** (though at the time, you may not be thinking it was a choice!) It's your decision to get aggravated or not. *Is it worth it?*

We can only get to a simple life when we've determined *what matters* to us and *what should go*. Since we probably don't have time to fix and change everything, we have to pick our battles, put our

effort where it counts most, consider what it is that will provide us with the most peace of mind and bring our *chi* into balance. What *is* worth our time, effort, and energy?

No question that we have major problems that throw us out of balance. Maybe the high mortgage on the house is making us question whether we'll have enough money in retirement. Or the burden of our job (one that we no longer enjoy) has become unbearable and when we get home, there's nowhere in the cluttered environment to find a place to relax. The coffee table is so loaded with papers, cups, and electronic devices that there's not even any room for our feet. (We all know that coffee tables are glorified footstools!) The list of difficulties could go on.

However, never underestimate the power of the little everyday hassles — acquiring things that eventually lead to clutter; stacking the dishes in the sink until there aren't any more clean plates and utensils; not hanging the clothes up each day — finding more clothes on the floor than in the closet. Again, the list could go on. Our reaction to these hassles is more of the problem. If clutter doesn't bother you or having to finally wash all the dishes to have some clean ones isn't a problem, then you're probably not stressed by these things. However, something is getting to you.

Does the following sound like you? Steve is on his way to the grocery store. It's just his luck — the light turns red as he approaches the intersection. He stops and waits. Before he knows it, he's drumming his fingers on the steering wheel, starting to feel his impatience growing. Finally, the light turns green and he arrives at the grocery store, and the only parking space he can find seems so far from the store that he *coulda* walked from home! After filling his cart with groceries, he heads to the check-out stand. He picks a line, only to find that it's the slowest one in the store. He keeps watching the line he *shoulda* chosen, agonizing over the fact that he *woulda* been checked out already and on his way. In just that short bit of a time, his poor nervous system has been taxed.

You know how I've come to handle a situation like that? Each time I catch myself aggravating over something I don't have control over, I say to myself "NOT WORTH IT!" That's how I break into that negative cycle. (See, I told you that this book was as much for me as it is for you. And wow, what a difference it's making. I'm still a work in progress, but improving every day!) We can get ourselves so wound up, often by the smallest thing, and inflict chemical damage through the activation of cortisol (the flight-or-fright chemical in our bodies). But wait, there's more!

HOW WE GET IN OUR OWN WAY

There are many other ways we sabotage ourselves, making life balance almost impossible. As you read the following sections, see if you find any that sound familiar. If so, you'll know those are the areas you need to start working on when using the *Z-Pattern of Decision-Making* (to be discussed soon). That which is described in each of the following sections are a result of various preferences at work, singly or interacting with other preferences, all showing the effect of being out of balance.

Are you a perfectionist or, even worse, an idealist, robbing yourself of time to do other things?

There's no perfect person, perfect place, perfect day, perfect thing, or perfect plan. Do I need to go on? Perfect means:

- *Conforming to an ideal* — What's that ideal? Who set the standard? Unless we universally agree what "perfect" is, your opinion of perfect may be different from mine. Do your criteria for

what's perfect stay consistent over time? Probably not. In fact, until we're at our last day of life, we really can't say that something is perfect because tomorrow may change what we believe.

- *Beyond improvement* — I don't know about you, but much as I would like to say what I did is "perfect", I know there's always room for improvement. In fact, without that carrot out there encouraging us to go a bit further than the last time, how does change happen?
- *Entirely without flaws, shortcomings or defects* — Is this even possible? You'd love to think that the car you bought is "perfect", but whether it's a scratch here or something more major that would cause a recall of your car, this definition of perfect tells you that perfection doesn't exist in the real world.

Striving for perfection (whatever that is to you) makes for a hard life when everything we do has to meet the highest levels of measurement and expectations, both are most likely set by ourselves. Talk about stress. What happens when we keep striving to get there but are never satisfied? Do we complain and get frustrated, emotional and distraught? It's not just us we're affecting. Those around us are also recipients of our stress.

Being a perfectionist takes time and energy (and maybe even money) to reach a point where we believe whatever we're working on is complete and perfect. Oh, do I hear you saying that you're still working on it? That's what I mean. As a perfectionist, we're never done because there's always one more hair we can put in place, one more brush stroke we can apply to the painting, one more dash of seasoning to add to the dish to make it just right, and so on. When will we know we've arrived at perfection? A little later in the book, I'll be discussing how we need to measure things to get a sense of how to value them and answer the question, "Is it worth it?". Without some measurement standard, we'll never stop acquiring things; we'll still be longing for, searching for, dreaming of, or hoping for something more than what we've got or are working on right now.

There's a fine line between being beneficial and being problematic when setting high standards and high expectations for ourselves and others. As a parent, we need to encourage our children to make the most of themselves, achieve and prosper. Even as adults, why shouldn't we expect the same for ourselves? However, too many have interpreted that as having the big house, the big salary, the big life. And maybe that's what has gotten us into trouble. It doesn't have to be "big" but "satisfying". If being a super-achiever is complicating your life, ask yourself "Is it worth it?" Is the ROI (return on investment) big enough for the time and energy you're spending?

Part of a perfectionist's reason for striving so hard may be the fear of making a mistake or being wrong. It's like our self-esteem is tied up in all of this when, point-in-fact, most people already think what we've done or are doing is perfect. It reminds me of my friend who introduced me to jewelry beading. You'd laugh if you listened in on our conversations after we both show off our latest projects. While I'm telling her that the necklace she's just completed is gorgeous, she's pointing out all the flaws. Even though she called it quits on making it "just right", she's still not satisfied. There are times she will take a project apart and do it again in hopes that, this time it will come out "right". I can't criticize her for what I also do myself. But I'm learning. By asking the question, "Is it worth it?", I try to determine just how much more effort I want to invest in a project before I call it done and good. (Hmm, I wonder when I'll say that about this book!)

The situation is even worse for the idealist. That's because idealists tend to set such lofty goals that achieving them becomes almost impossible. In some cases, those goals aren't even realistic. And even if they're achieved, they'll probably be re-set higher with the thinking that they were probably set too low originally, and that's why they were so easily fulfilled. In many ways, it's because Idealists never allow

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Chapter 4

HOW WE NATURALLY MAKE DECISIONS



TAKING CONTROL

For us to feel that we can successfully simplify our lives, we need to believe that **we're** in control rather than outside forces controlling us. It means we have to trust that we can and should be choosing the options that are in our best interest. By going through the *Z-Pattern of Decision-Making*, a crucial skill used to answer the question "Is it worth it?", we should never again question our thoughts or actions. If we say "no" to something, we should feel comfortable with that response, having no guilt or shame. Let's not forget that our goal is to declutter all aspects of our lives, which requires the process of eliminating. As Gregg McKeown shares in his book, *Essentialism*, we need to remove the "trivial many from the vital few". When we surrender that right to say "no", we've given power to someone or something else, forcing us to say "yes", which leads to a cluttered life.

Having just said that, however, there are still laws that need to be abided by (for example, speed limits), principles of respect for authority and for the generations that have come before us (we wouldn't be here without them), being a good Samaritan (would you ignore helping someone who's just been hit by a truck?), respecting the environment (throwing garbage out of your car window may unclutter your car but clutter the environment), and so forth. Recently I heard this great line in a car advertisement, "Respect sees another as worthy of our time". That's true whether that "another" is a person, our environment, or things.

Following old habits and usual responses has gotten us to an uncomfortable place where we know something has to change. That reminds me of the joke about cooking a ham, which shows that relying on old habits may not serve us well, especially if we haven't addressed "why" we're doing it and whether it's worth the doing.

A young girl was watching her mother cook a ham. She noticed that her mother cut off the ends of the ham and asked her why. Her mother replied, "I really don't know, but my mother always did it. Why don't you ask Grandma?" So the next day when the girl was visiting her grandmother, she asked her. Her grandmother replied, "I cut off the ends because the ham wouldn't fit into my baking pan."

Not all habits are bad. Be glad we've got some. Who would want to consciously think of doing things, such as brushing our teeth or putting some of our income into a retirement account on a regular basis? Good habits mean we no longer have to make any decisions about them. The fact that we feel our lives are overloaded means we've taken on a lot of stuff and responsibilities without ever questioning them. It's now time to free ourselves of the extra burdens that are complicating our lives by determining their worth to us.

When we appreciate that, given the same situation and conditions, different people make different decisions, we can begin to understand the involvement that our personalities and past experiences have in the decision-making process. Our priorities are different and what's a good decision for one person may not be for another. That's why decision-making is a very personal thing. We need to determine where we're headed and then make the decisions accordingly. Our usual approach in making decisions is tapping into our dominant preference (we'll be discussing that in a moment) rather than using all the preferences within our type. I believe that's the basis of our problems. All preferences have something to offer in the decision-making process. We're short-changing ourselves when we don't use them all.

One of the major benefits to learning about personality type is becoming aware of who we are, what makes us tick, and what we need to do to make our lives run smoothly. When we start to consciously use personality typing in our daily life, we'll be much more watchful of our behavior and the choices we're making. We'll notice what we're thinking and feeling. The more we understand our actions, the easier it is to change those actions that aren't working for us

WHAT MAKES FOR THE “BEST” DECISION?

Before I go into how to make decisions, we need to agree on what it means to make the “best” decision. It's not a matter of someone else judging us and saying that the decision we made was or wasn't a good one. Their call was based on **their** knowledge and experience, which is probably different from ours. Why should we believe that their judgment is better than ours? If we don't have the necessary knowledge, then we need to educate ourselves. When all is said and done, we're the ones who must be responsible and accountable for the decisions we make. As Jack Canfield says in his book, *The Success Principles*, “You can't hire someone to do your pushups for you.” Our motivation and commitment to our goal will influence how responsible and accountable we want to be.

That's why I want you to learn “**how**” to make the best decision. I don't want to tell you “**what**” the best decision is. Once you've learned the *Z-Pattern of Decision-Making*, you'll have the tools to rule your own life and not be dependent upon others for answers. Making the “best” decisions are ones that move you forward toward the simpler life.

WHAT MAKES FOR THE SIMPLE LIFE?

As I've said before, each of us must determine for ourselves what the simpler life looks like. It's obviously different from what you're experiencing right now, otherwise you wouldn't be reading this book nor would I have written it (remember, I needed help, as well). Let's go back to that clutter list I included in the Introduction that consists of six areas of our lives.

- Things
- Mind
- Financial
- Job
- Relationships
- Activities

For each of those areas, what do you need to change? What do those areas need to look like to make you feel more comfortable with life? Here's a quick exercise for you to do. Write down (or do this on your electronic device), the six areas, leaving space after each. For each area of clutter, list several points

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Chapter 5

THE OPTIMAL Z-PATTERN OF DECISION-MAKING

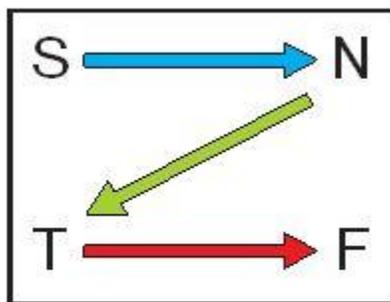


How easy it is to make offhanded decisions, not giving them much thought or even realizing how we arrived at the decisions. They were made quickly and outside of conscious awareness. For some decisions that may be fine. I'd hate to think of having to go through an elaborate decision-making process for such simple things as what flavor ice cream to eat or what television program to watch. Our brains would become overloaded. Besides, I don't think ice cream flavors or television programs are what's causing our lives to be complicated. There are enough other things chipping away at our peace of mind.

Refer back to the various areas of clutter in the Introduction and you'll know what I mean. Those areas need serious work. And the best way to get it done is through the *Z-Pattern of Decision-Making*. This approach makes sure that all preferences are heard from equally (even those preferences not in your type name since they have plenty to offer). Once you start making decisions consciously, you'll never have to ask yourself again, "How did I get myself into this mess?"

THE Z-PATTERN OF DECISION-MAKING

In contrast to what our type naturally and normally does, the optimum approach to making a decision is different. It asks us to first check in with **both** of the *Perceiving* functions (S and N) and **both** of the *Judging* functions (T and F) and, most importantly, done using the "*Z-Pattern*".



Optimal "Z-Pattern" Of Decision-Making

Compare this pattern to what your type naturally does (as seen in the chart, "Your Type's Natural 1-2-3-4 Order of Decision-Making", in the last chapter). Even though some types do start the decision-making process with the Sensing preference, that's where the comparison stops. With the *Z-Pattern*, we use *both* of the *Perceiving* functions **first** since they provide all the necessary information with which *both* of the *Judging* functions can make a decision.

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SEEING HOW THE Z-PATTERN WORKS

Let's see how the *Z-Pattern* works for each type of clutter. I'll use myself for the first example and then share examples of how others use this approach. After each example, stop and think about something regarding your own clutter and how you would handle it. I want you to be practicing as you go along. Don't save it for later. Use the accompanying Workbook to enter how you'd handle the situation for yourself.

Saying "No" isn't easy, but it's necessary in order to uncover what your true priorities are. By saying "no" enough times to what isn't essential, when you say "yes", you'll be preserving that which *really matters*, and, in turn, simplifying your life.

As you read the descriptions that follow for dealing with the various types of clutter, try to see what measure of value is being used to determine if the answer to the question, "Is it worth it?" is a "no" or "yes". Think about what measures you would use. Time, money and energy are the three most common. However, there are far more than that.

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Mind Clutter

Mind clutter can be more destructive than most of the other types of clutter. There wouldn't be a problem if we were constantly thinking positive thoughts about ourselves and others. However, being out-of-balance comes from too much negative thinking, whether directed toward ourselves or others.

Depression is way too common today, partly from our living a life that is too stressful. Instead of pumping ourselves up, patting ourselves on the back for what a great job we're doing, we may be tearing ourselves down, believing that we could be doing a better job.

Take Lucy, for example. She's very angry with her son-in-law. What's with these Millennials anyway, she's thinking? Did their parents never teach them to respect their elders? She can't take any more "snarky" remarks. She's tried to be as nice as she could be to him, not wanting to upset the apple cart with her daughter and her daughter's relationship with her husband. She's tried to tell her daughter that her husband owes her an apology and a promise to keep the snarky remarks to himself. While the son-in-law goes about living his life as he pleases, Lucy is still angry and it's not helping her blood pressure any. **She has to decide whether carrying this anger around is worth it and, if not, how to stop the *mind clutter*. Is it worth it?**

First, Lucy puts the problem through her **Sensing** preference:

- "I've tried so hard to make Joe a member of our family."
- "When he wouldn't call me Mom and my husband, Dad, we came up with a substitute name. We're old school and don't like being called by our first name. That doesn't mean we're happy with the substitute name either. But we tried to keep peace for our daughter's sake."
- "My oldest daughter's husband shows complete respect and calls us Mom and Dad."
- "I've tried to avoid confrontation and, therefore, swallowed hard and said nothing to his "snarky" remarks, even when I've been hurt."

Next, Lucy lets her **iNtuiting** preference add its two cents:

- "Should I just avoid him completely? That's difficult when there are grandchildren involved."
- "Should I tell him to his face what I think rather than using my daughter as a go-between?"
- "I do a lot of things for my daughter and her family. What if I just stopped doing anything for them (like babysitting their dog)? Would the message get through? Would it make any difference?"
- "To stop the emotions in their tracks before they hurt me, I could come up with a word that I say to myself every time I start getting angry."

Now, Lucy's **Thinking** preference needs to work on it. This is where she's going to determine the "worth" of her decision.

- "Joe isn't all bad. He has helped us when it comes to setting up computers and anything techy. But does that give him the right to be disrespectful?"
- "If I decide to cut off all dealings with him, I have to realize there's a great chance of ruining my relationship with my daughter and grandchildren. I don't know that if I cut off all dealings with him whether, he might forbid our daughter and grandchildren from seeing us."
- "These are my only grandchildren. Is he worth risking the relationship with them?"
- "The idea of a word or phrase seems like a good approach since I don't believe I can or will get him to change."

- “When I let Joe get me angry, I’m letting him control me. That’s just not acceptable.”

Lastly, maybe the hardest part for Lucy will be the **Feeling** preference. Anger is a huge emotion and a huge drain.

- “I’m wasting my energy and emotional supply unwisely. My being angry doesn’t accomplish anything.”
- “I don’t want my anger at Joe to spill over to my daughter or grandchildren.”
- “I don’t like feeling this way.”
- Joe has seen a psychologist for road rage; so maybe I should just feel sorry for the guy, appreciating his shortcomings.”

IS IT WORTH IT? — “NO. In fact, I just figured out the phrase to say to myself when I start feeling angry or start revisiting in my mind the incidents that have upset me. From now on, I’ll be saying, “NOT WORTH IT!”

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Chapter 6

LIVING THE SIMPLER LIFE



Let's circle back to the beginning — why you chose to read this book. It's because your life wasn't feeling like it said it should in "the manual". What? You never received "the manual"? That's right — none of us came with operating instructions and we've been making decisions about life in a willy-nilly fashion as we've gone along. We've allowed our personality type, life's experiences, and the school of hard-knocks to get us this far in life. We obviously don't have it perfect yet or we'd all not be asking the same question: "How did I end up with this overcomplicated and overscheduled life, and how do I now get back to the simpler life?"

Not knowing how long we each have on this planet (sorry, that does sound morbid!), I'm sure we're all wanting to figure this out fast. Or, on our deathbeds, we're going to be having a lot of regrets. No matter whether we live to be 100 years old or live another year, every day needs to be our "best" day. We no longer want to waste time, energy, money, or any other resource on what doesn't matter to us. No question that life must be worthwhile, have value. The only way we can be sure that life is the "best" for us is that for every situation, we're able to answer the question "**Is it worth it?**" with a resounding "yes" or "no", whichever leads to a simpler life. Anything less needs to go down the drain because it doesn't matter in the overall scheme of things. Only that *which matters* should be a part of our lives.

Let's agree that we can't do it all or have it all. Unless you've figured out a secret formula for making it happen, we're just asking for trouble when we think that way. Point-in-fact, when you have everything and can do everything, nothing is precious. Appreciate that the moment you say one experience was better than the other, you just pointed out which experience was worth the time and effort. Wouldn't you like to have all your things, experiences and relationships be the "best"?

We're better off being fussy about what we choose to have, what actions we decide to pursue, and the people with whom we have meaningful relationships. We have to see simplifying as actually improving all facets of our life. By owning fewer things, we can focus on what it is we do have and appreciate those things that much more. By doing less, we can enjoy more fully the moments we spend in the doing of those experiences (instead of shortchanging one experience to get to the next). With fewer friends, we can spend more concentrated meaningful time with each of the ones we have.

Life should never be about quantity, but quality.

WHAT SIMPLIFYING CAN DO

When we successfully simplify our lives, we show ourselves that not only CAN we be in control of our lives, but that we ARE in control. That question, "**Is it worth it?**" is our ticket into a life worth having. With it, we find out what really matters and discard all the rest.

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