

Preparation for Session G93 — How Much is Enough?

“Enough” is a nebulous concept, but coming to personal terms with it is a necessary step toward happiness and satisfaction. However, that’s easier said than done! There is no guidebook that spells out exactly how many material possessions are enough for each person, so every individual must reach his or her own conclusion. In fact, doing this is one of life’s essential tasks.

This session encourages you to think deeply about the issue of “how much is enough?” to come up with your own answers to these basic questions: How much (money, possessions, services, living space, shopping, clothing, etc.) is “enough” for you? How much do you need to be content? And what *don’t* you need to be content?

Please use the following exercise and questions as guidelines for thought.

1. Make a list of major things that you own and services you use. Then circle the things on the list that you need — that you absolutely couldn’t do without. Put a box around items that aren’t necessary but that make your life easier. Put a star by those that are luxuries. How do you feel about this exercise?
2. If you don’t feel you have “enough” right now, how much more money or material possessions *would* be enough? How would you know it was enough?
3. How much money would you need to feel wealthy? How would wealth change your life? Would it change your standards of “enough”?
4. Can you have too much — more than enough — of a good thing? How do you know what’s *too* much?
5. Is there, as David G. Myers, Ph.D., suggests in *The Pursuit of Happiness*, a “point of diminishing returns beyond which more money [and consumption of material goods] does little to enrich our lives”?
6. Do you think it’s OK for people to buy whatever they can afford? Are there ethical or moral aspects to this issue?
7. Do you consider whether you already have enough when you buy something? Are there questions you ask yourself before you make a purchase? Do these questions apply equally to large and small purchases?
8. What feelings do you experience when you’re in a situation in which you have more money/material possessions than other people? What feelings do you experience when you think about having *less* than others? Do these experiences alter your thoughts about what’s enough?
9. Look at the question of “enough” another way: How much is enough when it comes to giving charitable contributions, gifts, your time, etc.?

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If you want to read about this topic ...

- Center for a New American Dream (an organization), <http://www.newdream.org>
- “How Much is Enough?” (essay about giving), by Claudia Mills, <http://www.nonprofits.org/lib/mills.html>
- *The Circle of Simplicity; Return to the Good Life*, by Cecile Andrews (HarperPerennial, 1997).
- *How Much is Enough?*, by Alan Thein Durning (Norton, 1992).
- *How to Want What You Have*, by Timothy Miller, Ph.D. (Henry Holt & Co., 1995).
- *The Overspent American*, by Juliet B. Schor (Basic Books, 1998).
- *Wealth Addiction* by Philip Slater (E.P. Dutton, 1980).