

#### **Step 4: Consume Less**

Do me a favor...the next time you sit at your desk to get some work done or read a book, make a complete mess of it. Sprawl papers, paperclips and pencils all over. Set a few glasses and maybe some snacks on top. Maybe put your phone or iPad on there too.

When the desk is covered to the point it's hard to see the surface, stop. Sit down and open a book or try to do some work. Is it easy?

Pay attention to how you feel...comfortable, uneasy, distracted, happy?

Now clean up your desk so that there are few if any items on top. Maybe just a lamp and a glass of water. Again, try some reading or work and see how you feel? Which is easier?

I'm guessing you answered that it's easier to read or work on the clean, uncluttered desk. It's simple...when there's less stuff around, it's easier to focus. But in today's world, more and more people have too much stuff. Hoarders and pack rats are becoming more common. And you may even know one yourself.

#### **The benefits of consuming less**

Hoarder or not, most of us can benefit from having less stuff. Cut out some non-essentials in your life, like that extra car or magazine subscription, and you may be amazed at what this does for your mental clarity.

Personally, I sold my car a little over a year ago and it's been fantastic. I no longer need to think about car insurance, maintenance and gas prices. Simply put, I'm less stressed without a car and have one less thing to think about.

The point isn't that you need to get rid of your car, but to get rid of the things less important to you. Then you'll have more time to focus on the things that matter. With less stuff in your life, there are less distractions and more room for clarity. And an added benefit...you'll have extra money.

#### **So how do you consume less?**

The easy answer is just to stop doing it. The harder one is, well...it takes time and effort. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- **The six-month rule**  
You may want to start by looking through your belongings and getting rid of the things you don't use. If you haven't touched an item in six months, you likely won't use it again and probably don't need it.
- **Recognize the problem**

It's been proven that most people actually experience a high or euphoria when they buy something new. So consuming can be an addiction. And with any addiction, the first step is recognizing it. If you often come home from the store with something you didn't plan on buying, you're probably consuming too much.

- **Prioritize and plan**

Once you recognize the problem, the rest is effort and prioritizing. That means you need to take some time to think about how you're going to consume less. Come up with a plan. Before you go to the store, create a list of what you need to buy and stick to it. Consuming less is a habit. And as with any habit you're trying to create (or break), you need to think about it everyday.

- **Differentiate between “want” and “need”**

Also, you need to recognize the difference between what you want and need. You may want to go and blow 400 dollars on that new laptop, but you need to save that money for your health insurance. “What's important?” That's the question you should be asking yourself on a daily basis.

Even if money isn't a problem for you, set a budget for how much you spend on items you “want” a month. No one is saying live like a monk, but a budget will at least help you be conscious of your consuming.