step-by-step, how to feel a lot happier, healthier, and more fulfilled

Right now you are probably feeling that you’re the only person in the world, who is as sad, lonely, stressed-out, and unappreciated. But it’s not true. Everyone is. The difference is you want to do something about it. And this is where we come in. Albeit, with some rather radical ideas, but ones which I promise will change your life. Beginning with that wall you’ve built up around you. The one stopping you from listening to your own inner voice of reason, what your heart tells you, in favour of what others say. This is not good. You are going to have shut them out. Switch off from all television, newspapers, and the radio, right now.

Next up is money. This job hoax, that we need it to pay the rent/ mortgage, for food, plus all the other essentials, and some extra to make us feel good about ourselves. It doesn’t have to be like this, there are alternatives. As in the one we’re advocating, self-sufficiency. Where you work at not needing money. First by cashing in all your assets, using them to buy some land in a much cheaper area, outright. Then making and growing all the other stuff you used
to pay cash for. At a stroke reducing your outgoings by up to 90%.

Healthiness. The scariest thing about having a job, is how it seriously reduces your life expectancy. Living/working in any kind of urban environment cuts it in half. It’s like being trapped in a health centre, the waiting room, full of the sick and dying, there’s no windows, and instead of chairs everyone is sitting in their cars with the engines running. You have to move to the countryside. You also need plenty of real exercise (not the gym type) and sunlight. To eat only freshly-picked and seasonal produce. And drink water that comes from your own unpolluted spring.

Happiness. One of the biggest surprises we had when we moved to the countryside, apart from it being nothing like we’d ever known before, was what it does for your self-esteem. All that nature, the wildlife, watching the seasons change, how they affect everything, including the sun/moon/stars. But best of all was becoming part of the local community. This is an amazing experience. Like joining a vast extended family, where everyone wants to know and help you, and you learn how good it feels to do the same back.

Choosing where. When we started on our search, way back in 2000, the house-market AND interest-rate had collapsed, the internet didn’t exist, and there
was nowhere in the UK we could afford. We were forced to look further afield, to abroad. And began with Spain, in the almost unheard of region of the NW (Galicia), assuming it would be really cheap and not too hot. Then when our confidence had grown, took to the road again, in our campervan, down through Portugal, checking out New Zealand and South America en-route (via the internet), with a short detour after that to find ourselves actually living in the remote wilderness of Canada, before finally settling on SW Spain, nine years later. It was a wonderful adventure, though you’d probably want it rather shorter, so here’s the definitive search tool for finding your own place:

1) it has to be somewhere with a good climate - why not? And you’ll want to be able to grow the widest range of things to eat.
2) as close to the coast as possible, so the prevailing wind, coming straight off the sea, contains the least amount of pollution.
3) high up, at least 600m above sea-level. This is partly to avoid future global flooding as the icecaps melt. It’s also a lot milder (less frost/snow, cooler winds in the summer).
4) no nasty industry or airport within 100km.
5) no mobile phone masts or pylons.
6) and there has to be a really nice small town (<600 people) nearby, within walking distance (1-3 km), where you could imagine yourself. With a Post Office + internet access + general store + and a bar to enjoy espressos.
1) if it’s for two people, should be between 2.5 and 10 hectares, depending on whether there are neighbours close-by.

2) it has to be south-facing. You need this for the plants, and to ensure there’s enough sunlight during the long winter months (which even here is from November ’til May), to keep sane and for solar power. Check also that the views to the NE/E & W are clear of any obstructions, as this will affect the number of hours of daylight you’ll have.

3) you will need an all-year-round source of water. A spring, or at least a borehole. Make sure there is no possibility of it being polluted, especially by the neighbour’s septic tank/ spraying/ or livestock, and over as wide an area as possible. You’ll also need to be able to draw at least 2000 litres from it each day.

4) the land has to be suitable for growing all the trees/ shrubs/ perennials/ and annuals required to harvest food/ fuel/ and medicine. The best indicator for this is what’s growing already. Fruit trees are very good. Eucalyptus or pine is really bad.

5) the house. We originally planned to build our own. This was because land is cheaper without one already on it, and we had lived in far too many disasters. New-build though can be an even worse experience. A lot more expensive, time-consuming (2-3 years), and you’ll probably have to drastically revise everything to get it through the petty bureaucracy that polices these applications. Our advice therefore is to buy
a ruin. This way you keep sane, solvent, and move into the home of your dreams straight away, as it now falls under the heading of a renovation. Make sure though that the ruin is registered as a dwelling, not a farm building.

Also bear in mind what it will cost to make habitable:
1) at least double any quotes you get.
2) that the smaller it is the cheaper to buy (the value is mostly in the building), repair, and maintain. How small? You’ll need a lot less space than you think. While we were searching for ours, we lived in a van (6m²), we also rented and most of those places were really tiny (on average 25m²). Which is why we settled for 42m² (6m x 7m) in the end, and still seems vast. Taking out all the internal walls and ceilings helped. As did adding extra windows, there’s one in each wall now, and two in the roof.
3) water. This turned out to be the most expensive part of the renovation. To drill a borehole, pay the licence, install a pump and solar panel, install a water tank (10,000 ltrs is optimum), then all the plumbing work/ materials.
4) electricity. This can be a lot cheaper if: a) you’re prepared to make a major change in how you depend on appliances, and b) buy land where there is no possibility of a mains connection. Utilising the power of the sun/ wind/ or a nearby river instead. The only downside is you have to buy/ install/ and maintain the system yourself. Pay someone else and it will end up costing at least three times as much and probably never
work. Start with the smallest/simplest and learn from using that.

5) bathroom. Buying a ruin means you don’t have to have one. This is good. Saves lots of money and space, all the precious waste gets returned to the soil, and you get to discover the fun of washing in a large bowl, which is just like camping but indoors.

And that’s it. All you need to do now is relax. Learning the new language, the different customs, and most importantly how to manage your newly-won free time. We’ve never been so busy. Apart from two mornings when we go into town, we’re always either in the garden or working somewhere around the house.

The garden is a massive project, one which will take many years to provide everything, but already is looking good, providing us with a wide-range of things we no longer need to buy. We’ve based it on a system called forest gardening, because this is the easiest and most sustainable, diverse, and natural type of gardening.

Making things is our other passion. We call this Monkey & Sofia, and it’s about turning scrap and recycled materials into lovely toys. A creative challenge and very rewarding. Plus there’s no pressure, no overheads, no need even to market ourselves. We just do whatever moves us then put the finished pieces on our (free) website. This also earns us all the remaining cash we need. You’ll be able to do this as well. Don’t worry, your talent will make itself known.
Finally. Choosing this path is definitely not going to be the easy option. But compared to what you have right now, the rewards are more than going to repay any upheaval. We guarantee that. We also know you’ll become a very different person from the experience.

How?
What you are doing is unique, you are daring to step outside the global fantasy. For that you get the rest of your life back, put down roots and learn how to grow into yourself. This is serious magic.

Prepare.
Your mind, body, and soul, are about to expand. Exponentially.
FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
There is more detailed material about each of the steps, on our website:
http://asimplerlife.yolasite.com
You can also see what we make at:
http://monkeyandsofia.yolasite.com

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