



An Easy Solution to Reduce Anxiety: The "Full" Philosophy

Leigh Ann Rodgers

I had an "ah ha" moment last year that has changed my life. Or at least the perception I have of my life.

Like so many people, I was busy, busy, busy. I was juggling lots of balls in the air at once... two young children, a business, a house to manage, volunteer work to do, not to mention tennis, my Bunco group and Book Club, and on and on. I would start the day running and often fall in bed after midnight with only half of my to-do list checked off. "Next week things will settle down," I'd tell myself, only to discover that next week was just as busy. I was always looking forward to that time when things would slow down – but that time never arrived.

Sound familiar? I bet it does because I rarely meet people who aren't stressed and overwhelmed trying to get everything done.

We live in a harried, exhausted society. And I had fallen prey to the belief that busy is good – it means I am worthwhile, and NOT lazy. I've even found myself bragging (disguised as whining) about how busy I was to others. Occasionally, I'd get into a friendly competition with someone to see who was the "busiest." Now, that is insane!

We don't get medals for running ourselves into the ground – we just get exhausted!

Then, it hit me one day. My life is busy – but more importantly it is FULL. I am doing so many things that I want to do because they make me happy and they fit my vision. Instead of saying, "I have a really busy week" – I started replacing the word "busy" with "full" – and suddenly my perspective changed. I have a "full week." I have a "full life". Full of activities that support my family, give me purpose, energize me, and are enjoyable.

That may seem like a very small and simple thing to do. But changing that one word also changed my perspective – and that is POWERFUL! I began to make a conscious choice

to recognize the beauty in my life. I saw how fortunate I was to have so many opportunities, relationships, and experiences. I recognized I don't want to sit around watching TV and eating bon bons (at least, not most of the time). I want a full life – full of happiness, love and satisfaction.

I realized that everything in my life is a choice. I choose the people and the activities that fill my days. Thus, it is up to me to make wise choices and be sure I am choosing things that are fulfilling and not just things to make me busy.

Then, I started looking closer and when something came up that didn't feel good – that didn't feel "full" to me – I decided I needed to let that thing go. Slowly, I started saying "no" to the things that weren't fulfilling. Now, when I begin to feel stressed by my schedule, I acknowledge how lucky I am to be doing so many things that I love.

I am able to be home with my kids after school, run a business, volunteer when and where I want to, spend time with my friends, and even have regular date nights with my husband. My life is full.

It is a change in mindset. It is choosing to be empowered by the choices you make and see them as blessings and opportunities. It is recognizing that you alone have the power to choose how you perceive your life. It is your choice to have a full life.

"Full" choices include a person(s) or activity that:

- Fulfills one of your purposes.
- Fits within your value system.
- You enjoy.
- Adds value to your life or to others.
- Helps you grow, learn and become smarter and/or stronger.
- Helps you relax, rejuvenate and nourish yourself.
- Helps you to reach your goals and vision.

Some examples of the "full things" are:

- Spending quality time with significant people.
- Reading, taking classes, participating in clubs and organizations.
- Thinking, planning, writing, brainstorming with self or with others.

- Participating in activities that make you happy or inspired.
- Giving, sharing, and helping others.

So take a look at your life right now – and make a list of the "full things" that are there. Take note of how much time you spend doing those things. Reflect on how you feel when you do those things. Make a conscious choice to choose people and activities which fulfill you – and let go (or delegate) the other "stuff" whenever possible.

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