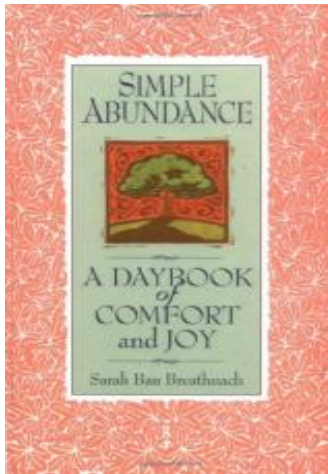


# Simple Abundance

by Sarah Ban Breathnach

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## About the Book

With the grace of Anne Morrow Lindbergh's *Gift from the Sea* and the wisdom of M. Scott Peck's *The Road Less Traveled*, *Simple Abundance* is a book of 366 evocative essays -- one for every day of your year -- written for women who wish to live by their own lights.

In the past a woman's spirituality has been separated from her lifestyle. *Simple Abundance* shows you how your daily life can be an expression of your authentic self...as you choose the tastiest vegetables from your garden, search for treasures at flea markets, establish a sacred space in your home for meditation, and follow the rhythm of the seasons and the year. Here, for the first time, the mystical alchemy of style and Spirit is celebrated. Every day, your own true path leads you to a happier, more fulfilling and contented way of life - the state of grace known as...*Simple Abundance*.

## Discussion Guide

1. SIMPLE ABUNDANCE--At first glance the title itself seems contradictory or ironic. Discuss how something can be abundant and simple at the same time. To get started, think of examples, such as a Shaker chair, which is at once austere and simple, but luscious and even extravagant in its perfect shape.
2. NEEDS VS. WANTS--Do you know the difference between what you need and what you want? Is it a basic human need to always want more than what we have? Is it therefore impossible to quiet the "I want's"? When your basic needs are met, do you feel serenity? The first step is distinguishing between what you truly need and what you merely want. To get the discussion started, classify the following items as either needs or wants: time alone, a vine-ripened tomato in August, someone you trust unconditionally, ten hours of uninterrupted sleep, more space, that lottery ticket. For guidance consult January 9, March 24, and October 27 in *Simple Abundance*.
3. SECURITY VS. SERENITY--Do you know the difference? Discuss your definition of each word. How do they differ

among the group? Do you understand how gratitude flows from this understanding? See January 13. To understand how this applies to money, read October 28.

**4. STYLE VS. FASHION**--Do you know the difference between style and fashion? Do you know someone who has a sense of style? Do you envy that person? Would you like to create a personal style but don't know where to start? Is style a matter of money or something less tangible? You are not your appearance, but does the rest of the world know that? What are some snap judgments you have made about people based on their appearance? What judgments have others made about you? How often are those judgments proven faulty? How does this contribute to racism, sexism, or any other isms? Refer to March 30 and April 2 for assistance.

**5. YOU COME FIRST**--If you move your personal needs to the top of your list (see exercise #3 below), what would you do first? How do you square this new self-awareness with the legitimate needs of those around you? How do you distinguish this from selfishness? See August 3.

**6. CALLING FORTH AND OWNING YOUR GIFTS**--Are you using your creative gifts? Do you even know what they are? List them, and see if other group members can add to your list. If you are not using these gifts, what are the possible consequences? See August 9 and 10.

**7. YEARNING TO VANISH**--Read the story in September 3rd about the woman whose apparently comfortable life overwhelmed her to such an extent that she disappeared. Have you ever felt like vanishing? Is this an answer? Is there an alternative? Is it a good stopgap measure when life is too much?

**8. MONEY MAGNETISM**--When we are worried about money, it colors our outlook and we send out signals of fear, lack, and deprivation. This attitude repels good fortune rather than attracting it. Sarah recommends both tithing and an additional savings which is yours alone. These two savings strategies create a feeling of abundance, and when we feel serene about money, it allows Spirit to send more good our way. Do you believe that this is workable, i.e. can you share and save 20 percent of your income? If not, how much can you experiment with? It's okay to start with small increments if you are open to the process. Do you believe that a feeling of abundance can actually create wealth? Do you have a better solution? Read October 23 through 30.

**9. BEING THERE**--How much time do you spend listening to your inner voice rehash past disappointments? When does this stop being a healthy exorcism of past demons and become a destructive reluctance to move ahead? How do you quiet that negative inner voice? Try selecting a code word that you must say whenever the negative voice takes over. Select a word that makes you laugh at yourself. Share it with no one. Does anyone else in the group have a better way of silencing that voice? Focus on the present, not the past or the future. Review June 30.

**10. THE SPIRAL PATH**--Does the *Simple Abundance* journey ever end? Do you ever arrive at a permanent state of grace, or is it always a struggle to attain and hold harmony in our lives? **Possible Exercises**

**11. GRATITUDE JOURNAL** (see January 14 in *Simple Abundance*)--For one week preceding the reading group meeting, each evening jot down five things that you were grateful for that day. Range from the concrete to the abstract: from freshly squeezed orange juice to a more relaxed attitude about money. Was it hard to do at first? Did it get any easier as you began to look for good in your day? Discuss the awareness that comes from an appreciation of all the good that goes unnoticed in our daily lives.

**12. THE "TO DO" LIST** (see August 3 in *Simple Abundance*)--the Sunday before the reading group meeting make a list of all the things you need to do in the next six days by following the suggestions on August 3. Don't forget about your personal needs. How hard was it to move the personal to the top of the list? Discuss strategies for making it easier.

**13. CHOOSING TO BLOSSOM**--From either your garden or a florist select one flower that expresses how you see yourself (June 18 in *Simple Abundance*). Bring it to the reading group to create a communal bouquet. Or in darkest winter bring a favorite quote or cartoon instead. Use them as springboards for discussion.

**14. THIS ISN'T A DRESS REHEARSAL**--Come to this session dressed to the nines. Wear your very best (no leggings, this is too important) and accept the applause. Or take a big fashion risk and come dressed as the person you'd like to be, and let the group help you. But whichever way you go, be a Star. This may be the only life you get. See January 4 for reinforcement. Sarah Ban Breathnach would like to hear from you. For more information on her activities or about The Simple Abundance Charitable Fund, please write her at: Simple Abundance P.O. Box 5870 Takoma Park, Maryland 20913-5870

## **Author Bio**

SARAH BAN BREATHNACH'S (pronounced "Bon Brannock") work celebrates quiet joys, simple pleasures and everyday epiphanies. The wisdom, warmth, compassion and disarming candor of her No. 1 New York Times bestsellers, *SIMPLE ABUNDANCE: A DAYBOOK OF COMFORT AND JOY* and *SOMETHING MORE* (both published by Warner Books) have made her a trusted voice to millions of women.

First published in November 1995 with little fanfare, *SIMPLE ABUNDANCE*-a daily inspirational guide written for people who wish to live by their own lights - soon found its audience through word-of-mouth raves including Oprah Winfrey's, who named it "her favorite book" of 1996 and called it "life-changing."

*SIMPLE ABUNDANCE* has been back to press 44 times, and has sold nearly 4 million copies in the United States alone. It has been on the New York Times bestseller list for over two years, topping the list at No. 1 for a year. It was named one of the top ten best selling books in the United States for the last five years (1994-1999) according to *USA Today*.

In October 1998 Sarah's book *SOMETHING MORE: EXCAVATING YOUR AUTHENTIC SELF* debuted at No. 1 on the bestseller lists of the *New York Times*, *USA Today*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *Publisher's Weekly* and within six months had sold a million copies. Her *SIMPLE ABUNDANCE JOURNAL OF GRATITUDE* (published by Warner Books) has also sold over a million copies. Warner Books added to the *SIMPLE ABUNDANCE* experience with *THE*

ILLUSTRATED DISCOVERY JOURNAL: CREATING A VISUAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF YOUR AUTHENTIC SELF and THE SIMPLE ABUNDANCE COMPANION.

SIMPLE ABUNDANCE has been highly praised from different corners of American culture. Thomas Moore, the best selling author of *Care of the Soul* called it "a book of real wisdom--a satisfying blend of the sassy and the profound." The book's phenomenal success has been parodied in the nationally syndicated comic strip "Cathy" and featured twice as a question on the hit television quiz show "Jeopardy."

According to Deepak Chopra, writing in *George* magazine (September 1998) which named Sarah Ban Breathnach as one of America's twenty most fascinating women of power and influence, "she's a one-woman women's movement--just the subversively cosmic voice society needs" to help the country "re-evaluate our values." Because its editors felt that Sarah had her finger on the pulse of the American people, in September 1997 she was commissioned by *People* magazine to cover the funeral of Princess Diana. As a contributing editor of *Good Housekeeping* she writes a regular column on "everyday spirituality," the first such feature in a mainstream American woman's publication.

Sarah Ban Breathnach is also the President and CEO of Simple Abundance, Inc., a consultancy firm specializing in publishing and multimedia projects which give creative expression to the timeless Simple Abundance principles and the concept of personal authenticity. Recently her company entered into a ground-breaking joint venture with Scribner to create The Simple Abundance Press. This new publishing imprint will include both original books by Sarah Ban Breathnach as well as books of "Substance, Style and Spirit" by other writers. The Press's mission is to help readers explore innovative and inspirational ways of enriching their lives.

In early 2000, her magazine Sarah Ban Breathnach's Simple Abundance debuted on her website [simpleabundance.com](http://simpleabundance.com) prior to a print version later next year.

She is the founder of the Simple Abundance Charitable Fund, a non-profit bridge group between charitable causes and the public dedicated to increasing awareness that "doing good" and "living the good life" are soul mates. In acknowledging Sarah's contributions to rethinking the role of philanthropy, The American Benefactor noted that while "it's not necessary to reconcile your public persona with your personal life these days, it's refreshing when someone does, like Sarah Ban Breathnach?" Since 1995, the SACF has supported the vision of over 100 non-profit organizations by awarding over \$1 million in financial support. The Simple Abundance Charitable Fund is underwritten with proceeds from Sarah's speaking engagements, royalties and product sales.

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