



**Simple, with Tsh Oxenreider**

**Episode 181**

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## Segment One

Tsh: [00:02](#) This is Simple; I'm Tsh Oxenreider.

[00:06](#) Hey friends! In this episode, I'm chatting again with my friend Crystal Ellefsen, who back in episode 177, shared with us a snapshot of her day as a work from home mom with a newborn. Well, she's back again this time to talk about her good list, which she wrote earlier this week on the blog. We get into Marie Kondo, a new book I'm excited to read from a friend of mine, and something she's been doing weekly with her husband. Kyle and I started doing this right after I talked with Crystal. It is really such a good idea and no, get your mind out of the bedroom, that's not what I'm talking about. Then, I springboard a little from this week's post to mine where I got a bit vulnerable talking about my love-hate relationship with social media, a thing called Dunbar's number, how Seth Godin's thoughts on Iceland have been really encouraging to me, and a little concept that's been around since the fifth century that is currently rocking my world. Basically, in this chat I'm talking about the beauty of good ole partial solutions and then at the end Stephanie Langford and I tackle another one of your travel questions. Let's get right into it. First up, here's Crystal and me talking about her good list.

Tsh: [01:14](#) Okay. Crystal. This week you shared with us your good list, so why don't you expand on that a little bit?

Crystal: Sure. The first one, the thing is just my Kindle, which I realize isn't anything super fantastic except that my husband and I are actually doing three months of no buy, that what we're calling it. It's not very official. Just the goal just being to not accumulate while also slowly working on some decluttering and I realized I have so many e-books that I've bought, \$1.99 on sale but I haven't read. When there's books on your shelf that you haven't read, it's in your face a little bit more. I've just been enjoying these books that I wanted to read and the other reason it's on my list and really making my life better is because I spend so much time breastfeeding and holding a baby and it's hard to hold a real book.

It's so much easier to read a Kindle with one hand and I've just been thinking a lot about how I've been reading so much more with this baby than I did with other ones because I didn't have a Kindle then.

Tsh: Interesting. That's so funny how that works out that way. I love my Kindle and I still prefer paper books, but I love my Kindle, so I get it. Is your synced to your local library? Do you have that?

Crystal: Yes, I do. Actually I heard of that years ago from you. I never knew that and I still think of you when I download my books in the library.

Tsh: Oh that's funny. All our kids have one, all five of us have a Kindle for that reason alone, just so we can get books off the library and when we travel it's so easy and that's what we did on our big trip. I'm a big, big fan. Do you have a Paperwhite?

Crystal: Yes, I do.

Tsh: I don't feel like it's super screenish, do you know what I mean?

Crystal: Oh no, I agree. There's things that I really don't like reading on my phone, on my computer. I guess it technically is a screen, it doesn't hurt my eyes in the same way that looking at screens.

Tsh: Right. And then I know we are going to move on, but the final thing I really like about my Kindle is that I can read at night and I feel like it doesn't emit as much light as my nightstand does when Kyle is asleep. I can read in the dark and I don't bother him.

Crystal: Absolutely. That's one of the other things that I love about it is I can be holding my baby and I can't put her down yet, but I can be reading without a light on and it makes me feel like I can just rest and enjoy that being stuck and not be able to get up without feeling awful or I just want to go do something and I can read. It's not a light on that's gonna keep her awake.

Tsh: That makes a lot of sense. That's very cool. I think I would've felt the same way if I had a Kindle with the baby. That's your thing and then your habit was what?

Crystal: My habit is something new. We've only done it about three times now, but we started it this in January and my husband and I are trying out having a weekly meeting that is a really more of a business meeting because I realized that we would go on dates and it felt like we were working on our calendars, you know? Especially, just the reality of having a newborn and he's really busy at work right now. I realized I was getting frustrated and I realized okay, what is the actual need that I have?

And it was just to set aside this time so I knew we'd be able to talk about tons of things. We're even reading through a little bit of a parenting book, if we have extra time. I just realized like I had this need to connect about household management and family management things, but it just wasn't happening at night. Partly again, just because of the newborn where it's like, I'm trying to put her to sleep, he's putting the other kids to sleep and then I'm trying to go to bed earlier. We don't really have our evening time consistently. I cannot express how amazing it has been for me just to know, okay, we have that time coming up. Instead of feeling like when are we gonna be able to talk about this knowing we'll be able to talk about on Thursday.

Ts: [05:25](#) And you know what to piggyback on that I actually read recently that it's a good idea to not talk shop or business right before bed, like it affects your sleep and I totally believe it. That is kind of a win for you there too, you're not waiting till the very end when you're already exhausted and stuff like that. When do you guys do this weekly meeting?

Crystal: We're actually doing it on Thursday mornings. He works a lot of Saturdays so he can block off time during the week. And because I work for myself, I can block off time and so we're actually just doing it when kids are at school or we have babysitter there and then we can really just focus. And, that's the other reality. There were a few times we were trying to talk about something and it was late at night and we were tired and this is not a good time for us to talk about something where we don't agree and we need to be able to be good listeners and communicate well. That was part of the reason we decided it in the morning, we're just so much more patient with each other, obviously, in the morning. When there are things that we need to discuss, a budget choice or are we going to spend money on that or money on this, it just makes it where there's truly no conflict and we can just be adults who have a great conversation instead of at night, right after you put kids to bed and you're exhausted. For me, this is definitely not where I'm very patient.

Tsh: [06:45](#) It is such a good idea. Kyle and I used to be way better at this I think when we lived overseas. This is kind of a good kick in the pants for me too because I find myself accumulating this never ending to-do, not to-do list, to-talk list with Kyle and we're trying to fit it in the the little nooks and crannies of our day and that's just never going to be a good way to talk. So, I love this. I'm going to talk with Kyle about putting this in our routine. Good for you guys.

Crystal: For a while. I was emailing him these things, oh we need to talk about this because I didn't want to text him. But then I kept feeling like, well, when are we going to be able to do it? And now I know that it's coming up and I don't feel anxiety about I just have to figure this out by myself. It has ben really helpful.

Tsh: So smart. What's next on your list?

Crystal: The next one, work of art. A disclaimer: I'm actually picking my friend's book. I just read the advanced reader copy, so it's actually not out until June. It's called *All of Me* and it's a middle grade novel in verse. The author's name is Chris Barron. We're actually neighbors, we live on the same street. He and his wife had been my friends for 10 years. One reason I'm picking this book is because I genuinely liked it. It really stirred up a lot of compassion.

I realized when I put it down that was the intense feeling that I was thinking was just compassion. Not that all art has to do that, but that's definitely something I love about reading other people's stories that are so different from your own. I've never struggled with that and then reading it, just the obvious of stepping into someone else's shoes and feeling compassionate. I love that.

Tsh: That's very cool. Is it a book of poetry?

Crystal: It's a novel in verse, which basically means it's narrative and it reads very much like a novel, but there are line breaks in separate poems, but if that sounds confusing to people, I don't know what a novel in verse is, you'll enjoy it like a novel that's just lots of short little sections. Don't let that throw you off.

It's middle grade, but it wouldn't have even crossed my mind if I just read it. I would have just thought, oh, it's a young narrator. I really love that. The other reason that I am picking it is also just because I've really enjoyed seeing that full process of idea to, it's not out in the world, but he has a publisher. It's going to be out in June. It's there. Just being able to watch that in someone else is really inspiring to remember because again, like we're close friends, we see them a lot, our kids play together. First of all, just working parents, making it happen is just inspiring and then also just remembering how much work it takes to put your story out into the world and how worth it it is and how much I appreciate when other people do that and so I'm working on my own little novel but I'm the very beginning stages and so it was just so inspiring to just see this big picture of how it is coming together and I know it will be received really well so I'm just really excited about him.

Tsh: [10:03](#) One of my favorite things is just watching people in their element, you know what I mean? Like doing the thing they do really well and it sounds like that for your friend.

Crystal: Yes, exactly. It's just so satisfying. You're right.

Tsh: What is your last one? Your philosophy?

Crystal: Okay. So the last one is outer order creates inner calm. There's a book that Gretchen Rubin wrote called *Outer Order, Inner Calm* and I was also able to read an advanced copy of that and it's about decluttering and adding media to your home. I just was really struck in a way that I have never been to realize that outer order really does help me personally create an inner calm. When I was a kid, I actually had a poster in my room that said, I'm not messy, I'm creative.

I'm not a naturally tidy person. In college, I was always the messiest roommate and I always was, oh, I'm just creative and it just doesn't bother me.

Tsh: I have to say because I remember you when you were in high school and I was in college and I remember going to your house and thinking, oh, because you also had like stuff all over your walls, right? You would paint and it was a hodgepodge of chaos in your room.

Crystal: For truly places that are about creating art, I would say I'm still totally fine with letting them be because I think there is a lot of value in the connections that come. But in terms of living spaces, I genuinely just thought I'll do it for other people, but it doesn't effect, I thought it didn't affect me. I just truly always thought clutter does not affect me and I just thought, I'm just one of those people that's clutter blind or something like that and I am a little bit more cluttered blind, but I've recently realized that it does affect me, which feels for me really transformative, even if it's obvious. My house is cleaner than anyone who ever lived with in college would believe because I do it out of love for my husband because it matters to him. But I just recently realized that it was also affecting me partly because I having a newborn, it's not as clean as normal. I just realized that it was something that I am not naturally good at, but it does still affect me and it's something that I want to become good at. This actually leads me into the Marie Kondo Netflix show.

Tsh: [12:31](#) Right.

Crystal: Have you seen it?

Tsh: I have. I haven't seen every single episode, but I've seen enough.

Crystal: I have lots of thoughts but I want to hear yours too. There was one thing, I remember which episode it was, but one of the father said something about how this is something we can learn and it just struck me that I have just thought of being able to declutter as something that I'm not good at and couldn't learn. I didn't think of it as something you could learn to be good at, which seems obvious because you can learn to meal plan and you can learn to do lots of household management things, but I just accepted I'm just not good at this. It

made me want to be good at it. By the way, my husband pulled out your old book and has it on his nightstand right now.

Tsh: Funny, I love that.

Crystal: I would love to hear your thoughts and Marie Kondo and I'll share mine as well.

Tsh: [13:26](#) I will say one thing that I think is a benefit to the show is that it's really softened my heart towards Marie more than the book did because when I would read the book, it's the difference between reading and listening to a podcast as well. You hear the humanity and you see her as a person and she's so not judgmental at all and I know you feel the same way. I really appreciate that about her and it's made me just soften up towards her and her perspectives. I definitely don't agree with her philosophy on books and meaning that you should only have a few. To me, books are one of the few categories of things I don't declutter readily other than I have a very specific category that I will get rid of, otherwise I keep them. I also am not a huge fan of the spark joy question, simply because it doesn't resonate with me too much. I feel like that might be true for other people, but I get the gist of what she's saying. I appreciate what she does.

Crystal: [14:24](#) Yes, I totally agreed that I was struck by how nonjudgmental this show was. I was thinking of that old show Hoarders. I don't know if you've ever watched that.

Tsh: I vaguely remember it.

Crystal: I only watched a couple of episodes of it, but it was so uncomfortable because it felt so shaming, you know? That was one thing that I truly enjoyed watching this more than I expected. I usually can't stand any kind of reality show. There was some tenderness in the relationships and of course, just watching people truly change their perspective. It's like six weeks or something. But then watching them change their perspective on things that they were having a hard time getting rid of. The thing that I also loved was the people. There was one guy, again, I don't remember any episode numbers, but he really had a realization about how spending time with his family, all they really needed was each other.

They didn't need this stuff, which again is basic, but it was just beautiful to see that realization happen. I did really enjoy the show, although I am not a big fan of her philosophy specifically, kind of like you said, where it's very, do it exactly like this. I know that a lot of people want that. They're like, tell me exactly what to do and then tell me what to do next. That's not my style, but I understand why she made it that way because a lot of people want that.

Tsh: That's what I felt when I read her book. It's not so much that I thought this is a terrible book. To me, this is for somebody else, so I'm happy to read it and I'm glad I did, but it's not really for me and it's for somebody who needs that more methodical do this and not that and that's fine.

Crystal: [16:08](#) Yes, and again I can understand but my style is I want to read five different philosophies or versions or approaches and then I will customize my own.

Tsh: I liked that you brought up Gretchen Rubin because of her Four Tendencies. I'm a Rebel, which means I've learned this over the years...

Crystal: I thought you were a Questioner?

Tsh: I used to think I was a Questioner, but the more I studied it, the more I realized I was a Rebel and actually I had her on the show and when I mentioned that she was like, I could've told you that you were a Rebel, that's so obvious. And I was like, really? What it is though is that I like rules in a guard rails sort of way, but when they're my own, when I've decided them because they work for me.

Once I've established my rules that work, that also don't like harm other people, of course, then I follow them because they're my rules. For me, I'm with you. I don't know necessarily if I read five different books, but I do definitely gather from a few people and then create my own system so maybe that's you too a little bit?

Crystal: Yes, I'm a questioner that tips to rebel. A lot of ways that rebels do things resonate with me a lot because I definitely like find my own way. That's one reason I really liked Gretchen's new book, *Outer Order, Inner Calm* is because it's very much like try this, try this, here's another idea, try this. It feels like a collection of sometimes these things work for people, try any of them, hopefully it works for you. I like that sort of thing where it's like here's some experiments and figure out what works for you instead of follow these exact steps. Anyone who needs tell me what to do next, there's nothing wrong with that, either. It just doesn't work for me. I can say thank you Marie Kondo because I know that she is helping lots of people do something that they want to do even if her method does not work for me. I have issues with this spark joy question as well.

Tsh: I think it's funny that you brought up my first book because it is coming up on its 10th anniversary of when I wrote it and I've been thinking about it pretty frequently and how I would write it so differently now because I know it is helping a number of people because people still post about it and it cracks me up and makes me happy. First of all, I'm a better writer. Secondly, I would approach things differently now so I almost sometimes wish I could do a 10th

anniversary rewrite and then I think, but do I really want to? I don't think I really want to you unless some publisher just comes up and says we want to publish that. I think about it a lot and I just wonder, who all that benefits from because it's almost like I do things completely differently now to.

Crystal: One thing that I think was similar in your book, I have to say sorry, and Marie Kondo's perspective as you both start with different perspectives on it, but still the idea of, first think about, for you it's the family mission statement. Thinking about like what is the life that you want and how does getting rid of junk help you get there?

Tsh: [19:10](#) For sure, and I'm still all about that. I think figuring out your why is key to pretty much all the things that I'm a big believer in because it doesn't have to look the same for everybody and it shouldn't look the same for everybody, but it should look the right way for you. The way to know that is to know your way. A big fan of that idea still.

## Segment Two

Tsh: The thing I wrote about this past week was a little bit of a, I don't know if you call it a philosophy, I'm so not sciency. But a theory? A law? I don't know. There's a thing called Dunbar's number and I wrote about this so you can look at the post, but I first heard about this idea from longtime co-host of the show, Haley Stewart who talked about it. What it is, is it's a scientist who basically discovered that humans can really at max handle about 150 other human connections in their lives and beyond that they either become shallow or almost like counterproductive making your life less than what you would want it to be.

Basically, a 150 connections of some sorts and that includes things like close friends and family all the way to like co-workers and people you interact with regularly in your life. It's not like the people you walk by in a grocery store, not that. It's more just the people you rub shoulders with on a regular basis.

Crystal: Even like know their name?

Tsh: Yeah, more or less or even if you don't know their name but they're familiar enough to your life to where they're kind of part of it in some capacity. In my post I talk about what I've learned from that, how to apply that in this digital world we live in where clearly we have more connections than 150 just through places like Instagram and all the ways we can connect with people and what that means for me in terms of analog relationships and how important they are in my life.

Crystal, I've talked with you before about how my word of the year is community and so this really resonates with me and helps me give myself a lot of grace in terms of what my limits are. I've mentioned this to you before and I'm sure I'll talk about it again. I can handle social media only so much and that can be a challenge in my line of work when we're "supposed" to be everywhere online. I totally don't buy that and so I choose not to be, but it still can make me feel a little bit like I should always be doing more and embracing this idea helps me release the should's and just say, nope. I'm actually not made to have that much human interaction or some kind of connection that is actually false and not a real connection and it deprives me of my real connections that I'd rather invest in, my real life friends.

Crystal: [21:51](#) What does this look like in a practical way in your life? How are you applying this in different areas?

Tsh: For me it looks a lot like having a lot more boundaries on my social media time. I'm not on it very much at all anymore because what I found it would do was it gave me this fake, it's not so much a dopamine hit, but it gave me this feeling of connection, but it wasn't really connection. I would not prioritize real life friendships. For example, not being on Twitter and Instagram much and I'm almost never on facebook, I feel the need to meet friends for coffee more. That feeling reminds me to ping my friend, hey, let's go out and grab a cup of coffee for an hour instead of let me open up my Instagram and just scroll mindlessly so it'll feel like I'm connecting with people, but I'm really not.

It's been really good. I'm not saying this because I've arrived. It is a thing I am learning a lot and I think it's been a good hard practice the past, I don't know, six weeks or so. This idea is basically a partial solution, which if anybody is a long time listener or reader of the blog, you know that I've talked about this a lot. The idea of partial solutions, I first learned from a therapist when we lived in Turkey and I met with him and Thailand and he talked about how, I, in my head would be so all or nothing that if it wasn't ideal I wouldn't do it at all. It's funny, I just brought up coffee, it was in that example where I would want to meet with a friend who spoke English in my huge Turkish city because I needed some friend who spoke English so I felt like I had a real connection. But in my mind I would say, well, the city is so huge that the closest person I know that's an English speaker, is an hour away by bus and that is such a pain to take a bus a whole hour away just to have coffee with her for an hour or two hours. It's just not worth it. I'm just not going to do it. And what he reminded me of is, nope, that's actually worth it. It might not be ideal. Ideal is walking down the street to your neighborhood coffee shop, but that's not an option. The next best thing is your partial solution and that was such a game changer for me because I used to be such a perfectionist and such a A+ or nothing kind of person. I've found myself

over the past decade applying partial solutions more and more in my day to day life.

I was thinking of this and the different ways I'm experiencing partial solutions besides the thing I wrote about this week. One example that really comes to mind, is this in the realm, I guess you could say, of health. I started a few weeks ago, I enrolled in a thing called The Balanced Life, which is an online program. She was actually on the podcast a few months ago. She's a pilates instructor and she has this online membership. I remember when I talked with her thinking, this sounds really cool. She had an open enrollment in January and so I signed up for it and it's basically Pilates Monday through Friday. At most the workouts are 30 minutes, a lot of them are just 15 minutes long and she's actually in your town. She's in San Diego, all the workouts are on the beach and they're seagulls and it feels a little braggy, but I also like that because then I feel like I can be on the beach in my living room at 6:00 in the morning. This is a partial solution for me because, would I rather go to the gym and be in a class with 3D humans? Yes, I would. But the rec center in our neighborhood has the worst class schedule right now. Nothing works for me in terms of what classes I want to take at what time and the old me would say, well, oh well I guess I just won't work out or something dumb like that. The current me is saying, okay, what else can I do? This is actually cheaper than a gym membership. I'm just embracing it and doing it and yeah, it's in my living room. Yeah, I prefer not to do it through a screen, but the benefit is I get to see the San Diego beach every morning, Monday through Friday, and so it works. That's an example in my life right now.

Crystal: I like it. What's next?

Tsh: A few others. One is travel.

Everyone knows that I love to travel and our family loves to travel, but we're not doing it much these days and we miss it a ton, but the reason is because we're in a fixer upper and we want to prioritize it so that it gets done and finished and one of the big reasons we want it finished is so that we can travel again and we could do it better. Our tentative idea is to Airbnb it while we go out as well. There's no way we can Airbnb it right now. It's not a nice thing to do to anybody and it's not just an aesthetic thing. It's a literal, we should have a bathroom floor before we rent this.

Crystal: I saw a picture of the sink you just put in.

Tsh: Yes. The sink is fantastic and actually, the bathroom looks a lot better.

I did do some little Instastories on the bathroom floor pulled up where you could see the dirt and people were freaking out. It's not like that anymore. Kyle

is fantastic at what he does. All that to say is it would be very easy for me to say, well, I guess we're just going to hunker down and have another summer in Texas because the house isn't done and in the meantime we would go crazy because I know you remember the summers here, Crystal. They're miserable. They're so unfun and one of the reasons we were okay with living in central Texas, moving back here from the Pacific northwest, is on the condition that we get the heck out of dodge in July and August, in some fashion. We've decided we're just going to do it even if the house isn't all the way done.

Of course, we can't spend as much money as we'd like because we want the house to be done. We're just trying to figure out, okay, what do we do then? I'm leading Literary London again the summer so maybe we tack on a couple of weeks in the UK and all of us go or maybe we just road trip up to the Northwest but it's not as ideal as months out on the road backpacking like we like. But that's okay. I know a lot of people can identify with that. I mean most people have regular jobs who cannot take more than a few weeks off. I'm sure most of the listeners can understand this.

Just a few more examples. One of them is my work. Crystal, you work from home as well. You've got really little kids so this is more of a challenge for you.

It's constantly a challenge for me to work at home when the kids are home because, they're older but they still want me around like I am still their go-to person whenever they need something or want something. They're getting better at it though. One of our eventual plans is to have a writing studio in the backyard, like a separate outbuilding either a vintage travel trailer that Kyle fixes up or maybe even just a shed that he converts or something to that effect. That's the ideal, but we're not there yet and that's okay. For now, it's the public library. It's a 10 minute walk for me and it's got really good Wifi and they have frequent study rooms available that I can sign up for if I just need to have a private space and it's free. I looked into a co-working space and then I saw the price tag and I was like, the library is good! I just work a lot from there. Do you work anywhere besides your house?

Crystal: When I do my actual business work for clients, I pretty much always do that in my office. Occasionally I bring my laptop over to the dining room table but I try not to do that. However, if I'm doing something, like when I tried to work on my novel or I'm doing something creative or even writing my Art of Simple posts, I don't do that in my office because that's where I do my work.

Tsh: I love that we're actually talking about this with Violet chewing right next to you. It's like the epitome. I want you to keep it right by you.

Crystal: I definitely resonate with the idea, because I didn't always have, I mean we bought this house about two years ago and this is the first time I've ever had a space that was just for my office. Even though I've actually worked from home for eight years even before I worked for myself, but I never had a space. Even apart from actual work, so many times can think of where, even in just hobbies, right? Where I'm like, oh, I really want to paint or I want to do this. Oh, but I don't have this perfect space for it. I do often just think, oh right, well if I can't do it in this perfect way, then maybe I shouldn't bother. But it's just like we were saying maybe it takes, it is harder, right? But that doesn't mean it's not worth it.

Tsh [30:44](#) That's just it, you know. For anybody who feels this way, I am currently literally in my bedroom and I have been working from my bedroom for years. This is where my office space is. When we lived in Bend, I had a dedicated office and we don't anymore and it can be really challenging, but I've learned instead of gnashing of teeth and wailing and maybe putting money towards a writing studio when we need to spend it on something else, on the fixer upper first, the partial solution is the library for those exact reasons. And it's okay. I think I can look back, I think I'll be able to look back and just say it worked out fine. I wrote a book from the library, I did all my business running from the library and it was fine.

The last thing really fast, this is kind of a silly one, silly is not the right word, just kind of small. One day I would love to have a fully fleshed out backyard garden with almost enough veggies to supplement our groceries and, and be a full on harvest of just deliciousness, but it's not right now because we are in a fixer upper and then plus we actually liked to travel like I've said, so it doesn't actually even make sense to plant all these things and then leave and they all fall apart. My partial solution is this really simple raised bed garden that we created last spring and it made us really happy. We just had a few tomato plants, we had some peppers and squash and we had enough to just make it fun.

This lent, we did it as a lenten practice and we want to do it again to add a few more raised beds. We're going to have a total of three and so a few more veggies but not a full scale and that's totally okay. One day I would love chickens. I'm looking at my neighbor's chickens right now and I think that'd be so fun, but it's just not our season of life. I'm learning to embrace the season of life we're in and longterm, it'll be fine.

Crystal: I totally want chickens too, so when you do, I want you to write a post all about it.

Tsh: I will, I'm really excited about the thought of it. I keep daydreaming about what it would look like and in the life lessons and oh my gosh, every time I go to the

grocery store and buy eggs, I'm just thinking, holy cow, I need to have my own chickens for the sake of cost alone.

### Segment Three

Tsh: Okay, Steph, Ms. Travel Guru. We are here answering another listener question. This one is from Red3188, which I am 100 percent positive is not her real name. Her question for us is how do you eat healthy while still indulging when traveling? I think this is a fantastic question for the both of us. Steph, what are your initial thoughts about this?

Stephanie: I mean, I totally understand that question because part of the joy of traveling is eating all the amazing foods. I mean that is definitely one of the things that we love best about traveling is that you get to try out new things and local specialties and that's really for us, part of what makes a place come alive is experiencing the local culture through the food and the drink. I understand why somebody would ask that. And I also get that it's a temptation for us. I guess it's because it feels like it's easy when you're traveling to just eat, like you're perpetually on vacation. I guess it really depends on the length of your trip. But for us, that would be an absolute no-go because we don't travel for a week at a time. We travel for a long period of time. If we were to eat like we were on vacation, we would have some problems. I would need a new wardrobe for starters.

Tsh: [34:23](#) That was actually going to be one of the first things I brought up is that this all depends on length because if we're talking a weekend getaway all the way to a year long backpacking trip, very different scenarios. If you're going away for a weekend, heck, even a couple of weeks. To me that's a vacation, that's not extended travel. I loosen up a little bit where I'd just say, I'm only in this one little place for a weekend or a couple of weeks, not that I go gangbusters and then feel sick, but there are times when it's just okay and you get over it. Like for example, I think of Italy as one when I went for a week the first time with my literary agent, Jenni. You've been on this trip as well. She does this Tuscany Writer's Retreat. I was only there 10 days.

My thought is I am not going to worry about a thing. I am in Italy. I'm going to eat gelato every day if I want to, I'm going to eat some gluten. I am usually gluten free. I feel a million times better when I am gluten free. I'm just not going to sweat it too much. Well, it turns out that not only was the gluten not as bad for me, like it didn't upset me nearly like it does in the States, but the combination of being there and walking everywhere, it almost feels like the indulgent eating you do in a place like Italy at all evens out to where you feel healthy still because of the lifestyle overall. That's been my experience on those shorter trips.

Stephanie: [35:54](#) I actually agree with that a lot. I do think that when you travel on a trip like that and it's shorter and it's vacation and you're really out seeing things and doing things, you do walk so much and you're outside so much. I feel like that helps to counteract even when you make those more vacationy food choices. London came to mind instantly for me because when we were doing Literary London last summer, I truly just ate all the things and I enjoyed it so, so much. I would agree with the shorter trips like that. Now when we start talking about longer trips, that's where I have to think about it a lot more carefully. For me the way that it works is not thinking about being on vacation but thinking this is my regular life. How would I eat if I was at home? What kind of stuff makes me feel good? Because you can do that for a short period of time on vacation. But then when you start extending that into several weeks or several months if you want to actually go and live somewhere else or have the extended time of travel, my body just does not feel great if I continue to eat in that mode. Instead what I do, is sort of what I do back home really. I just try to eat really well, really thoughtfully, really wholesome diet. I don't eat gluten either. It's just personal, preference, I don't feel great when I eat it, so I will focus on my regular diet like 80, 90 percent of the time so that then when we're out and we're having a fun sight seeing day or we stumble on something really amazing or Ryan and I want to go and have a special dinner, then that 10 percent, then I really can just indulge and I can enjoy the local things. Actually saying that just made me think like it's not that you can't enjoy the local things, it's just that you need to choose to eat them more thoughtfully, like in a more balanced way. I can't eat croissants for breakfast every morning if I'm in to live in France for two months, that would not serve me well. There's actually, most cultures have some really great healthy foods baked into the types of things they eat all the time. Not everything is going to feel that way, but a lot of it actually can fit pretty well in to what you would need at home anyways.

Tsh: [38:01](#) I think of a Turkish breakfast. It's one of the healthiest breakfasts, the classic Turkish breakfast where you have olives, tomatoes, feta cheese or some form of cheese like that and hard boiled eggs. That sounds so good to me and that is healthy and yet that's super Turkish and so you get the experience completely of being where you are and yet you're not regretting it later. I guess that's the other thing is a mindset. I don't know at what point this shifted for me, probably whenever I started getting older, is what fun is to me. Sure, it sounds great on paper, if you're going to go somewhere that's famous for its bread, for example, to eat all the bread and baked goods nonstop. After, an afternoon of that, that is not fun for me anymore.

Legitimately, I would not choose that for it to be an enjoyable experience. You're self-filtering a lot of these choices to where you end up making the healthiest choices because it sounds really not enjoyable to be in a brain fog with a

bloated stomach trying to make sure I know where the bathrooms are, you know?

Stephanie: Yeah, I agree. I think at some point your body just says, all right, that was that. Now let's move on and let's eat some stuff that actually makes us feel good. I think that the easiest way for us to do that is by making a lot of our food and that's why we stay in Airbnbs and why we get house rentals. That's why we go to the grocery store in the local market a lot and we carry snacks with us because when you're doing those things you, you can just naturally eat really well and, and you even still feel like you're experiencing the foods.

When we go to markets in these different places, we're trying out the things that the locals are eating are the things that grow in that place. You're still having this really cultural food experience and yet, I mean those are great. Those are all things that would be part of your balance diet anyway and it's cheaper to eat that way and we just like it that we enjoy eating that way.

Tsh: Whenever we travel and we stay in a guest house, 99% of the time as well, even if it's somewhere for a week, we will really only eat out once a day so we will eat breakfast and dinner at home usually and eat out for lunch. Especially with kids when they're younger and it's just not enjoyable to stay out super late. I'm not talking major cooking because for a week, a lot of times you don't really want to invest in lots of spices or whatever and you just never know what kind of condition your guest house is going to be in.

We will go to the grocery store and even get the, I guess you could call it pre-packaged food, but just the food that is simple to make that's just a few ingredients necessary. It's just as much a great experience. I think of Paris, we went to Paris back when we lived in Turkey in 2009 and we had little bitties then and we spent a week there and we had so much fun just going to the market there and getting lots of little yogurts and finger foods and veggies that are just frozen that you can just heat up and I know it's just as much an experience like you said, and you end up eating different foods too. When we lived in Thailand, we ate so much mango and pineapple and so many times that was not eating out. That was at home because that was literally so cheap. It would be ridiculous not to eat that all the time. It really is just as much an experienced to eat healthy.

Stephanie: Those are some of the experiences that our kids like best, when we go to the markets and we do those some really simple dinners or even more of like a finger food style spread. Those are actually memorable meals for us. We feel like we're getting to enjoy the type of things that they would eat anyways. And you're also getting the experience of that more authentic experience of being at the markets and shopping. You feel more like a temporary local when you do that as well.

Tsh: [42:02](#) I'll say domestically this is the same thing when we go on road trips instead of going through the drive through at a lot of places, we might do that once or twice. For example we do a lot of road trips to the West because Kyle site is in Oregon and we used to be there or we used to live there. We'll road trip up and we will keep a cooler in the car and fill it with stuff from the grocery stores as we go and mostly finger food it on the way up, so lots of little cheeses and deli meats and some kind of cracker or lots of veggies, lots of fruits, nuts, that kind of thing. It does not feel like we're sacrificing because I would rather eat like that over driving through fast food. That makes me feel gross, especially when I'm just going to sit in her car for hours at a time. Trader Joe's is a place we always like to find whenever we're driving through a big city on a road trip because they have such great little foods. While it's not location specific, it's ooh, let's eat how they eat in Salt Lake City. It's not like that. It's still just as much a pleasant experience because we're not feeling gross all the time.

Stephanie: [43:14](#) Yeah, that's exactly what we do when we road trip it too, whether it's domestic or whether it's international. The amazing thing about when you do that, you save so much money that when you really do want to go out to that restaurant or you want to go and try that special dessert or those baked goods or whatever, you actually have the money in your budget to do it because you've been saving money on food the rest of the time.

Tsh [43:35](#) That's right. Such a good point. That hopefully answers your question. I love talking about food and travel, so that was fantastic. If you have any questions for Steph and me about travel, I would love to hear them. Email [hello@theartofsimple.net](mailto:hello@theartofsimple.net). Toss in your question in an email and we will do our best to add it to the queue of questions we have from you guys.

You can find Stephanie at [Wonderlandfamily.com](http://Wonderlandfamily.com) or on Instagram [@wonderingfamily](https://www.instagram.com/wonderingfamily). You can find Crystal at [CrystalEllefsen.com](http://CrystalEllefsen.com), on Instagram [@crystal.ellefsen](https://www.instagram.com/crystal.ellefsen). And to keep up with me, I'm on Twitter [@Tsh](https://twitter.com/Tsh) and Instagram [@TshOxenreider](https://www.instagram.com/TshOxenreider) and of course at [TheArtofSimple.net](http://TheArtofSimple.net) where you can find my writing as well as Crystal's and other delightful folks. Don't forget to get my weekly email [@fivequickthings.email](mailto:@fivequickthings.email). Follow us on Instagram [@artofsimple](https://www.instagram.com/artofsimple) and to be extra awesome, show your support of the show by becoming a Patron for just a few dollars per month. As always, because I just gave you a ton of places to go, I've got all these things linked in this episode's show notes, number 181, so just head there. The show is produced by Chad Michael Snavely and Jesse Montonya and thanks also to Caroline TeSelle, Andrea Debbink and my intern Ginny. Go see a photo of Ginny at [thesimpleshow.com](http://thesimpleshow.com). Thanks so much for listening. I'm Tsh Oxenreider and I'll catch you back here soon.