

*The Joneses surrender!*

# ESCAPE FROM AFFLUENZA

aka: *Living Better on Less*

## Viewer's Guide

Tuesday, July 7, 1998

9pm (8pm central)

(check local listings)



# ESCAPE FROM AFFLUENZA

## Viewer's Guide

*Escape from Affluenza* is a one-hour PBS special providing practical solutions to the problem of "affluenza" – an epidemic of stress, waste, overconsumption and environmental decay. *Escape from Affluenza* shows how some Americans are calling a halt to keeping up with the Joneses and abandoning the consumer chase. The program is a sequel to the popular special, *Affluenza*, which premiered on PBS in September 1997. PBS will re-air *Affluenza* nationally on July 2, 1998 at 10 p.m. (check local listings).

*Escape from Affluenza* offers viewers a variety of ways to cut consumption, debt and waste and save the environment, while also saving bundles of money. In addition, the program explores how living more simply can mean enjoying a better quality of life – with more time for family and friends, and less time working, shopping and going deeper into debt.

This viewer's guide is an invitation to examine the ideas presented in *Escape from Affluenza* more fully. Use this guide alone, or with family, friends, neighbors or members of a church or community group.

[www.pbs.org/affluenza](http://www.pbs.org/affluenza)

## Let's Party...

Have a viewing party the night of the broadcast! Invite friends, have a potluck and make a night of it. After the show, have a discussion using the questions below. Encourage respectfulness during the discussion and remember that talking about money can be uncomfortable for some people. Consider asking your fellow party goers to get together again to continue the discussion or to start a study group.

### Have a Discussion

Give every member of the group an opportunity to answer the following questions.

- 1) What parts of the program struck a chord with you? Why?
- 2) What is the last item you bought that you didn't actually need? What motivated the purchase?
- 3) What would be one step you would feel comfortable taking to begin changing your consumption and spending habits?

### For a More In-Depth Discussion

#### A Matter of Meaning

- 1) What do you think of Ron Simons' decision to give up a lucrative job at Microsoft so he could spend more of his time following his dream? Like Ron Simons, is there some work you'd rather be doing?
- 2) If you were, as Ron Simons says, "to get out of this rat race, and get a real life," what would that "real" life look like for you?
- 3) Evy McDonald, a hospital administrator who discovers she has a terminal disease, asks a poignant question, "Who do I want to be when I die?" How would you answer this question? Are you that person now?
- 4) As he explores Wabesa Marsh, Cal De Witt enjoys the wonders of nature free of charge. What are some free activities you enjoy?
- 5) Sometimes the Schneider-Chen family pays more for an item because they want to support a small, local business. Sometimes the family pays more because they know the people who harvested or manufactured the product worked under fair conditions. Is this important to you? When are you willing to pay more?

## What a Waste

- 1) Since 1970, the number of commercial self-storage facilities in the U.S. has increased 2,500 percent. How can you begin to reduce the amount of stuff in your life?
- 2) Alan Durning says every item we use has an "ecological wake" that ripples out across the ecosystems of the planet. Like Alan and his cup of coffee, do you know where the everyday products you use come from and how these products affect the environment?
- 3) When Ming Chen gets his toaster repaired, he saves money, supports a local business and saves resources. When do you make the decision to repair something instead of buying new? Could you get more things repaired?
- 4) Jeanne and Dick Roy are so careful about waste, they only dispose of a single can of garbage in a year. How can you reduce the amount of waste you make?
- 5) Carbon dioxide from fossil fuel is a major contributor to the greenhouse effect. Could you find some way to reduce the amount you travel by car?

## Family and Friends

- 1) *Escape from Affluenza* shows examples of families who make family time a priority. Do you feel you have enough time to spend with family and friends? If not, what changes could you make?
- 2) Arguments about money play a major role in 90 percent of divorce cases. What causes disagreement in your family about how to spend money? How do you deal with it?
- 3) Consumer Credit Counseling teaches San Diego-area kids how to manage money and dodge debt. How would your children benefit from this information? What are some ways you can educate your children about money?
- 4) Do you and your friends share similar values about money? When you go out together, do you ever feel pushed into spending more money than you are comfortable with? If so, how can you change this?

## For More Information

Viewer's guides, teacher's guides, publicity materials and additional information on the program and other resources will be available on the *Escape from Affluenza* Web site at [www.pbs.org/affluenza](http://www.pbs.org/affluenza) or contact:

**Chris DeBoer • KCTS Television, 401 Mercer Street  
Seattle, WA 98109, 206/443-4817, [deboe@kcts.org](mailto:deboe@kcts.org).**

## Spread the Word!

**Help us ensure the primetime broadcast of *Escape from Affluenza* has the greatest possible impact.**

- Contact your local PBS station and find out if and when it will broadcast *Escape from Affluenza*.
- Publicize the program in your community. Put up flyers, tell your friends, use the Internet (e-mail, Web sites, listserv and user groups).
- Announce the broadcast in newsletters and encourage others to have viewing parties.
- Call your PBS station's program guide editor and ask him/her to feature *Escape from Affluenza* in the guide or on the station's Web site.
- Host a special preview event in your community. For more information, contact **Chris DeBoer, 206/443-4817** or [deboe@kcts.org](mailto:deboe@kcts.org).

## Contact Us!

Tell us what you thought about the program. Write us at:

KCTS Television

attn: Escape from Affluenza Producers

401 Mercer Street, Seattle, WA 98109

fax 206/443-6691, e-mail: [boevi@kcts.org](mailto:boevi@kcts.org).

## Catch It on VHS!

Videocassettes may be purchased for educational, grassroots and home use from Bullfrog Films at **1-800-543-FROG(3764)**, by e-mail at [bullfrog@igc.org](mailto:bullfrog@igc.org), and on the Web at [www.bullfrogfilms.com](http://www.bullfrogfilms.com). Special rates available for non-profit and grassroots groups.

# To Learn More...

## BOOKS

### Simple Living

Frank Levering and Wanda Urbanska, New York, Penguin, 1993.

### Your Money or Your Life

Joe Dominguez and Vicki Robin, New York, Viking, 1992.

### The Circle of Simplicity

Cecile Andrews, New York, Harper/Collins, 1997.

### The Simple Living Guide

Janet Luhrs, New York, Broadway Books, 1997.

### The Overspent American

Juliet Schor, New York, Basic Books, 1992.

### Getting a Life

David Heitmiller and Jacqueline Blix, New York, Viking Penguin, 1997.

## ORGANIZATIONS

### Northwest Earth Institute

(503) 227-2807

### The New Road Map Foundation

PO Box 15981, Seattle, WA 98115

### Global Action Plan for the Earth (GAP),

P.O. Box 428, Woodstock, NY 12498

### Center for a New American Dream

(301) 891-3683

### Consumer Credit Counseling Service

(check local phone books)

### Co-Op America

1612 K St. NW, Suite 600, Washington DC 20006

### Seeds of Simplicity

(818) 247-4332 (simplicity circles)

## MAGAZINES, NEWSLETTERS AND WEB SITES

### Simple Living

319 N. 45th St., Box 149, Seattle, WA 98103

### Living Cheap News

7232 Belleview, Kansas City, MO 64114

### A Penny Saved

P.O. Box, 3471, Omaha, NB 68103

### Money-Saving Matters

46 Park Ave, Medford, MA 02155

### Simply News

335 E. 19th Ave., Columbus, OH 43201

### Yes! A Journal of Positive Futures

PO Box 10818, Bainbridge Island, WA 98110

### The Simple Living Network (web site)

[www.sl-net.com](http://www.sl-net.com)

## OTHER VIDEOS

### Affluenza

Bullfrog Films,  
1-800-543-FROG

### Jampacked

The Video Project,  
1-800-4-PLANET

For additional resources  
check out our web site at

[www.pbs.org/affluenza](http://www.pbs.org/affluenza)

## Did You Know?

- 55 percent of Americans say they'd be willing to reduce material possessions and earnings either "some" or "a lot" in order to gain time with family and experience less stress. (A recent poll taken by the Center for the New American Dream.)
- The average American spends two out of every five work days working to pay for her car expenses.
- Five million pounds of waste could be prevented each year if every person in New York City used just one less grocery bag per week.
- Americans throw away enough paper and plastic ware to feed the whole world a picnic every other month.
- During the last 20 years, as our per capita consumption has risen 45 percent, our quality of life has gone down 52 percent (as measured by the Index of Social Health).

*Escape from Affluenza* is a co-production of John de Graaf and KCTS/Seattle  
in association with the Independent Television Service and the Pacific Mountain Network.

Funding was provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the Summit Foundation, the Merck Family Fund and the Pew Charitable Trusts.