

## Further Study: Minimalism

### What is Minimalism?

So what is this minimalism thing? It's quite simple: to be a minimalist you must live with less than 100 things, you can't own a car or a home or a television, you can't have a career, you must live in exotic hard-to-pronounce places all over the world, you must start a blog, you can't have children, and you must be a young white male from a privileged background.

OK, we're joking—obviously. But people who dismiss minimalism as some sort of fad usually mention any of the above “restrictions” as to why they could “never be a minimalist.” Minimalism isn't about any of those things, but it can help you accomplish them. If you desire to live with fewer material possessions, or not own a car or a television, or travel all over the world, then minimalism can lend a hand. But that's not the point.

Minimalism is a tool that can assist you in finding freedom. Freedom from fear. Freedom from worry. Freedom from overwhelm. Freedom from guilt. Freedom from depression. Freedom from the trappings of the consumer culture we've built our lives around. Real freedom.

That doesn't mean there's anything inherently wrong with owning material possessions. Today's problem seems to be the meaning we assign to our stuff: we tend to give too much meaning to our things, often forsaking our health, our relationships, our passions, our personal growth, and our desire to contribute beyond ourselves. Want to own a car or a house? Great, have at it! Want to raise a family and have a career? If these things are important to you, then that's wonderful. Minimalism simply allows you to make these decisions more consciously, more deliberately.

There are plenty of successful minimalists who lead appreciably different lives. Our friend Leo Babauta has a wife and six children. Joshua Becker has a career he enjoys, a family he loves, and a house and a car in suburbia. Conversely, Colin Wright owns 51 things and travels all over the world, and Tammy Strobel and her husband live in a “tiny house” and are completely car-free. Even though each of these people are different, they all share two things in common: they are minimalists, and minimalism has allowed them to pursue purpose-driven lives.

But how can these people be so different and yet still be minimalists? That brings us back to our original question: What is minimalism? If we had to sum it up in a single sentence, we would say, Minimalism is a tool to rid yourself of life's excess in favor of focusing on what's important—so you can find happiness, fulfillment, and freedom.

Minimalism has helped us...

- Eliminate our discontent
- Reclaim our time
- Live in the moment
- Pursue our passions
- Discover our missions
- Experience real freedom
- Create more, consume less
- Focus on our health
- Grow as individuals
- Contribute beyond ourselves
- Rid ourselves of excess stuff
- Discover purpose in our lives

By incorporating minimalism into our lives, we've finally been able to find lasting happiness—and that's what we're all looking for, isn't it? We all want to be happy. Minimalists search for happiness not through things, but through life itself; thus, it's up to you to determine what is necessary and what is superfluous in your life.

## **IT IS FREEDOM FROM THE PASSION TO POSSESS.**

Modern culture has bought into the lie that the good life is found in accumulating things—in possessing as much as possible. They believe that more is better and have inadvertently subscribed to the idea that happiness can be purchased at a department store.

But they are wrong. Embracing minimalism brings freedom from the all-consuming passion to possess. It steps off the treadmill of consumerism and dares to seek happiness elsewhere. It values relationships, experiences, and soul-care. It lets us see all that we already have and reminds us to be grateful.

In doing so, we find a more abundant life.

## **IT IS FREEDOM FROM MODERN MANIA.**

Our world runs at a feverish pace. We are too hurried, too rushed, and too stressed. We work long, passionate hours to pay the bills, but fall deeper into debt every day. We rush from one activity to another—even multitasking along the way—but never seem to get anything done. We remain in constant connection with others through our cell phones, but true life-changing relationships continue to elude us.

Becoming a minimalist slows down life and frees us from this modern hysteria to live faster. It offers freedom to disengage. It seeks to keep only the essentials. It aims to remove the frivolous and keep the significant. It values the intentional endeavors that add value to life.

## **IT IS FREEDOM FROM DUPLICITY.**

Although nobody intentionally chooses it, most people live in duplicity. They live one life around their family, one life around their co-workers, and another life around their neighbors. The lifestyle they have chosen requires them to portray a certain external image dependent upon their circumstances. They are tossed and turned by the most recent advertising campaign or the demands of their employer.

On the other hand, a simple life is united and consistent. It has learned a lifestyle that is completely transferable no matter the situation. It is the same life on Friday evening as it is on Sunday morning... as it is on Monday morning. It is reliable, dependable and unfluctuating. It works in all circumstances. It is honest and transparent.

## **IT IS COUNTER-CULTURAL.**

We live in a world that idolizes celebrities. They are photographed for magazines, interviewed on the radio, and recorded for television. Their lives are held up as the golden standard and are envied by many. People who live simple lives are not championed by the media in the same way. They don't fit into the consumerist culture that is promoted by corporations and politicians. Yet, they live a life that is attractive and inviting.

While most people are chasing after success, glamour, and fame, minimalism calls out to us with a smaller, quieter, calmer voice. It invites us to slow down, consume less, but enjoy more. And when we meet someone living a simplified life, we often

recognize that we have been chasing after the wrong things all along.

### **IT IS NOT EXTERNAL, BUT INTERNAL.**

In my first book, Simplify, I outline 7 guiding principles to help anyone declutter their home and life. The principles outlined in the book have helped hundreds of thousands find freedom by removing much of the physical clutter in their homes. The book concentrates almost exclusively on the externals of life. And while it helps people find freedom from external clutter, it does not take the next step of helping people find freedom and unity in their heart and soul.

I have learned embracing this lifestyle is always a matter of the heart. After the external clutter has been removed, we create the space to address the deepest heart issues that impact our relationships and life.

### **IT IS COMPLETELY ACHIEVABLE.**

Becoming a minimalist is completely achievable. My family stands as living proof. We were just your typical family of four living in the suburbs accumulating as much stuff as our income and credit cards would allow. Then, we found minimalism. We have embraced minimalist living and will never go back to the way life was before. We stand as living proof that simple living is completely achievable (and unique) to anyone who seeks it.

Q:

1. Will minimalism automatically make me content?
2. What is a minimalist lifestyle?
3. Is minimalist living boring?

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