

Lesson 1 Our Meaningful Life

Main Reading

Minimalism: A Journey to Happiness

Minimalism is a lifestyle that involves focusing on the things we most value and letting go of those that distract us. It isn't a new philosophy, but in the twenty-first century, it has gained renewed popularity.

It can have a more positive impact on the environment by promoting a more economical and less wasteful way of life. Here are two minimalists who have discovered the true value of their lives through minimalism.

Hi, I'm Anna Hwang. I want to share with you my journey into minimalism and how it has brought me happiness beyond material possessions.

Back in high school, I felt like I was stuck in an endless cycle of consumerism. I was always comparing myself to others and never satisfied with what I had. But my whole perspective changed when I discovered minimalism. It made me wonder whether possessions could truly bring me joy or simply keep me feeling trapped.

I began to take small steps in making changes in my life by asking myself questions about the things that I owned: "Why did I want to keep a certain item? Did I even know that I had this item? Have I used this item in the last 12 months? Would I take this item if I moved?" Then, I removed 90% of my possessions by putting everything I owned in boxes and only unpacking the items I needed to use over the course of a week. I donated the items I had never used, which helped me feel freer from the mindless consumerist culture and allowed me to focus on myself.

Now, I didn't stop buying products or clothes, but I started making deliberate and mindful choices. I would ask myself whether I had space for the items and if I would use them often. When I shopped for clothes, for instance, I would look for pieces that were more timeless and would remain stylish even after a particular trend passed. Also, for my birthday, I started asking for experience gifts rather than physical items. I would ask for concert tickets or have lunch with a friend. That way, I wouldn't be stuck with a bunch of physical gifts that I didn't want. And let me tell you, it has brought me so much joy and happiness.

I recognize that not everyone can make the major change I did toward minimalism, but I believe that everyone can benefit from the movement. Everybody has his or her own interpretation of minimalism and there's a huge spectrum of how it is expressed. At its core, minimalism involves decluttering your life to create more space for what truly brings you happiness and living with better intentions.

A Traveler's Journey to Minimalism

I'm Tom Ferris and I'd like to share my story about how I got into minimalism as a traveler. As someone who values experiences over possessions, I've learned that replacement should be the last resort. During my trips around Europe, I've met many travelers and noticed that they tried to fix their items rather than replace them. They would fix whatever was broken, torn, or damaged, and while their items wouldn't be perfect, they were still usable.

In contrast, as I reflected on myself, I realized that I had prioritized convenience, ease, and newness. I used to be one of those people who would carelessly buy things online. I would buy them because I was into new designs or the current trend, and later I would simply throw most of them away. But after being inspired by these people who value their items, I decided to do the same. So, I started to repair and trade in as many items as possible to extend their life instead of throwing them away. For example, one day, while I was exploring a small town in France, my backpack strap started to tear. Rather than buying a new backpack, I remembered the value of repairing and decided to fix the strap using a sewing kit that I brought along. Even though the repair wasn't perfect, it worked and allowed me to continue my travels without any issues.

As a minimalist traveler, I don't collect souvenirs or buy things I don't need. Additionally, by traveling light, I avoid paying extra for heavy bags and missing out on spontaneous opportunities. For example, during a trip to Italy, I came across a walking tour by chance and was able to join it since I had packed light. This allowed me to make new friends and gain valuable insights into the city's culture and history. Minimalism is more than just a trend or fad to me; it's a mindset and lifestyle that has allowed me to experience more of the world and have adventures I never thought possible. I believe that by simplifying our travel plans and focusing on what's important, we can make as many meaningful memories as we want and positively impact the world.

Extended Reading

What Is Your Organizing Style?

Welcome to the world of organizing! There's no one-size-fits-all approach to organizing, so let's explore the Clutterbug system, which identifies four distinct organizing styles. By discovering your organizing style, you can learn practical tips to bring order to your life.

A Butterfly is a visual organizer who likes to have all items visible and displayed. That's because a Butterfly often forgets about stored items. So, while the drawers are clean and empty, the floor can be filled with items. This style needs easy and fast organizing solutions.

Tips for Butterflies: Label bins and baskets with words or pictures so that you can easily identify the items inside, such as clothes, hats, and socks.

A Bee is also a visual organizer, but only likes to see his or her “frequently used” items. This style likes to keep things “just in case” they are needed someday. Since a Bee struggles with letting go of things, these “just in case” items often tend to pile up.

Tips for Bees: Pack up items you do not use but do not want to let go of, and store them in a box with a set date to decide whether to keep or donate them.

A Ladybug is a hidden organizer who likes his or her everyday items to be out-of-sight. Sometimes this style hides important papers and items to minimize visual distractions, but this can cause things to get lost and misplaced.

Tips for Ladybugs: Create specific areas for your things and put them in designated spaces close to where you use them.

A Cricket is also a hidden organizer, but prefers a visually simple environment. Unlike a Ladybug, a Cricket is a bit of a perfectionist when it comes to setting up and using organizing systems. This style can get caught up in finding the “perfect” organizing system. In this style of organizing, one may focus on every little detail and reorganize the same space repeatedly. As a result, one may never finish organizing.

Tips for Crickets: Set a timer for just 15 minutes when organizing so that you can move fast and stay focused.

Critical Thinking

The Sloppy vs. The Neat

Sloppy people tend not to actually be sloppy. Their sloppiness is merely the unfortunate consequence of an extreme moral principle they follow. In sloppy people's minds, they hold a vision that is too perfect to be achieved in this world or the next. They save everything, planning to file, order, and organize the world someday. For instance, they have a plan to arrange all their books in order of the alphabet and to organize everything on the surface of their desks. But while these ambitious plans take clearer and clearer shape in their heads, the books spill from the shelves onto the floor, and the surface of their desk becomes buried under mounds of paper. They can't bear to part with anything.

Meanwhile, a neat person would just throw away everything on the desk. For neat people, everything is just another dust-catcher. If anything collects dust, it must be removed and that's that. The only thing messy in a neat person's house is the waste bin. When something comes to a neat person's hand, he or she will look at it and decide if it has an immediate use. If it does not, the person will throw it in the waste bin.