

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE
TO FINALLY GETTING
ORGANIZED

A FREE 40-PAGE GUIDE TO A
Stress Free Life



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INTRODUCTION

These days, too many of us feel as though we don't have everything we want or need. It is all too common to feel as though we are going without and to feel that painful sense of longing, wishing that we had more of what "they have", or wanting possessions, or scrolling Instagram and living vicariously through others.

All these distractions on social media and in our lives seem designed to encourage this envy and desire and leave us feeling increasingly dissatisfied with the things that we own. This is no accident, as we will see.

When life is tough, and we feel bogged down, we often find ourselves thinking that if only we had more, we would be happier.

The irony though is that this idea couldn't be further from the truth. The reality is that you need less to be happier.

By adopting a more minimal lifestyle, you can create more space for yourself, own more attractive items and get more enjoyment out of the things you already have.

Unbelievably, you already have the means to create the kind of home set-up that will make your friends and family green with envy. You can own a home just like the ones you have been fawning over, but you do it by getting rid of things – not by adding more in!

And what's more, is that when you start to realize this mentality is the way forward – when you start to remove clutter and appreciate the items you own – you'll find that you become much happier as well.

This book is going to show you how to make it happen and how to make your home into one that supports the lifestyle that you want and makes your life much easier and more enjoyable. And you'll see how to transform your mindset into one that allows you to be much happier with the things you own.

IN THIS BOOK, YOU WILL LEARN:

1. 51 tips for cleaning and tidying up every nook of your home
2. How to create a 'Zen space' that you can use to unwind and relax
3. How to take the things you own and start making the most of them
4. How to sort clutter and create an organized, minimal space
5. How to change your mindset to remove envy and learn to truly appreciate the things you own
6. How to automate and systemize your life so you spend less time on menial tasks
7. How to massively reduce stress
8. How to turn a small home into your personal place of luxury
9. How to save money and protect the environment with smart, minimal tips
10. Top tips for creating a beautiful minimal décor
11. The true meaning of minimalism and how to adopt the ethos into your life

ONE-MINUTE CHORES

Only have a minute for cleaning? No problem. This first set of tips will give you some ideas for chores that take less than a minute.

1. DUST ONE THING

It only takes a minute to choose one thing and dust it. You can either use a feather duster, a dust spray and a rag, or a dust wipe. Here are some things you can dust quickly:

- TV screens
- Shelves
- Blinds
- Ceiling fans
- Air Vents

2. CHANGE VACUUM BAG

It doesn't take much time at all to change your vacuum bag, and it can make your vacuum run more efficiently. A good tip is to take your vacuum outside to change it so the dust from the bag doesn't go back into the room.

3. CLEAN A MIRROR

A clean mirror makes a room look cleaner. If you don't have glass cleaner and paper towels, try vinegar and old newspaper. This is a lot less expensive and it works just as well.

4. CHANGE TOWELS

Fresh towels make a room smell great, whether they're in the kitchen or the bathroom. It takes less than a minute, and it freshens up the whole room.

5. CHANGE TRASH BAGS

Even if you don't have time to take the trash all the way out, just taking full bags out of the cans and replacing them with clean bags can help tidy up when you only have a minute.

6. SORT TODAY'S MAIL

Mail can really pile up if left alone. If you take 30 seconds every day to organize that day's mail, you'll have a lot less clutter. Don't be afraid to throw away junk mail.

7. TREAT A STAIN

Got an extra minute? Treat that nasty stain that you noticed last week.

Here are some tips:

- Flush stains with water.
- Blot the stain with a dry cloth.
- Apply a mild cleaner and let set.
- Blot again.

8. TAKE CARE OF PLANTS

A minute is more than enough time to care for your favorite houseplants. If they need water, fill a pitcher so you can water them all faster. Take a pair of scissors with you to snip off dead vines or leaves.

9. WIPE DOWN FORGOTTEN AREAS

Grab a wet washcloth and quickly wipe down areas that might be forgotten when cleaning. Areas like:

- Doorknobs
- Remote controls
- Light switches

- Handles
- Telephones

10. SWEEP ENTRYWAYS

Most entryways are small and take less than a minute to sweep. Grab your broom and dustpan and you'll be finished before you begin. You can even cheat and sweep dust onto the carpet, then use the carpet-sweeper to clean it up.

11. SHAKE OUT A FLOOR MAT

Floor mats are sometimes forgotten during cleaning. If you have an extra minute, grab a mat or two and shake them out outside. This will reduce the amount of dust in your home as well as keep those mats fresh and clean.

12. COLLECT GARBAGE IN A ROOM

If you don't have time to clean a whole room but want to make it look a little bit better, clear out the garbage. Grab a trash bag or a waste paper basket and start stuffing. You'll find that this improves the look of a room dramatically.

GOOD HABITS TO START

As you start developing simple housecleaning habits, you'll notice that your work will get easier and easier. This next set of tips will give you some great ideas of good habits to start.

13. DELEGATE

Housework can be a huge job. Learn to delegate. Make chore charts for everyone in your house. Even small children can help pick up toys and other things. As you learn that you don't have to do it all, housework will become much easier.

14. FILL THE SINK

A good habit to start is filling your sink with hot soapy water every time you start to cook. This way you can “clean as you go.” As you get done with each pot or dish, wash it quickly. This makes clean-up a snap.

15. SPRAY THE OVEN

Time for take-out? If there’s a day when you’re not using your oven, give it a quick spray of oven cleaner and forget about it. The next day, before you turn on your oven, give it a quick wipe down. You’ll find that the baked on stuff comes off much easier.

16. HAVE A CHARITY BOX

It’s a good idea to keep a box or bag in your front closet that you put things you don’t need anymore. This really helps get rid of clutter in your home. When the box is full, simply drop it off at your local good will store.

17. RINSE YOUR PLATE

This may be a small tip, but it can help in big ways. If you simply make it a habit to rinse your plate after dinner (and have all family members do the same), it will make washing them a lot easier. No one likes trying to wash dried food off of dishes.

18. TACKLE THE SMALL JOBS

Housework can be overwhelming. Learn to break it down and tackle the smaller jobs first. As you do, each job will become easier. Also, if you clean the small messes before they get big, it’ll be a lot easier to clean up.

19. KEEP CLEANER IN THE SHOWER

A great shortcut for cleaning your tub and shower is to keep a bottle of shower cleaner handy. After you take a bath or shower, spray it down. You can take it a step further and keep a squeegee in it as well.

20. FAST PICK UP BEFORE BED

If you make it a habit to do a quick pick up before going to bed, it'll really help. You'll find that it's easier to wake up and feel good about the day if even one room is clean.

21. LINE YOUR FRIDGE

If you make it a habit to line your fridge shelves with paper towels, it'll make it a lot easier to clean. This will work especially well in the crispers, as the paper towels will soak up any extra wetness.

22. TAKE A TRASH BAG WITH YOU

As you leave the house, make it a habit to take the trash out. This is a simple tip, but why make extra trips if you don't need to? This is also a great job to delegate to a teenager. They're always coming and going anyway.

CLEANING THE KITCHEN

Your kitchen gets used every day. Without maintaining small messes, you can have a big cleaning job every day. This next set of tips will help you keep your kitchen clean and manageable.

23. MICROWAVE

Here's a good shortcut to cleaning your microwave: Fill up a cup of water and put it in there on high for a few minutes. The steam from the cup will loosen any stuck-on food, and then you can just wipe it away.

24. BAKING SODA

Baking soda has many practical uses, especially in the kitchen. Here are a few ideas:

- Put an open box in your fridge and freezer to eliminate odors and bad tastes.
- Sprinkle some in the bottom of your trashcans.
- Sprinkle some down your drain and garbage disposal to eliminate odors.

25. FRIDGE

Cleaning your fridge can be a big job, but here are a few tips to make it a bit easier:

- Toss out any bad food.
- Start with wiping down the top shelves and work down.
- Baking soda and water make a great cleaner and won't leave your fridge smelling like harsh cleanser.
- After you wipe out the crispers, line them with paper towels for easier cleaning next time.

26. WASHING DISHES

Washing dishes can really be overwhelming. Here are some tips to make this grueling task a bit easier:

- Invest in a scrubber that you can put soap in the handle. This way you can “wash as you go,” eliminating huge piles of dirty dishes.
- Soak all dishes that have dried on food. This lets you use less elbow grease.
- Wash in groups—silverware, glasses, bowls, plates, pots and pans.

27. WIPE DOWN

After the dishes are done and put away, don't forget the wipe-down. This makes your kitchen have that extra clean look. When you're wiping down, don't forget:

- Counter tops
- Stove
- Sink
- Faucets
- Cupboard doors
- Table
- Chairs

28. SWEEP AND MOP

The very last thing you need to clean in your kitchen is the floor. There are lots of brooms and mops on the market these days. Make sure to use a broom and mop that best fit the needs of your floor.

CLEANING THE BATHROOM

Cleaning the bathroom is something that nobody likes to do. Unfortunately, it needs to be done, not only to make it look better, but to eliminate germs that can cause illness. Below you'll find a few tips to make cleaning your bathroom more effective and easy.

29. TOILET

Cleaning the toilet is a grueling job, but fortunately, it can be done fast.

Here are a few steps to follow to get it done quickly:

- 1st—Pour some cleaner in the bowl to soak.
- 2nd—Wipe down the seat and outside of the bowl with an antibacterial wipe or spray cleaner.
- 3rd—Scrub the bowl with a toilet brush.
- 4th—Wipe down everything again with a dry cloth to make it shine.

30. MIRRORS

Mirrors can be very tricky to clean because if you don't have the right tools, they can look worse than before you started. Make sure you use glass cleaner (usually blue) or vinegar, and use paper towels or newspaper to wipe them (not cloth as it will leave residue).

31. BATHTUB

Bathtubs can be awkward to clean, because there are many hard-to-reach places. Here are a few things that may help:

- Use a cleanser that will foam or bubble. This allows you to “soak” your tub or shower, even if it’s a vertical wall.
- Shop around for a tub scrubber that fits your needs. Whether it’s a long-handled one or an extra firm one, pick a scrubber that will be easiest for you to use.
- As mentioned earlier, spraying the tub or shower down after each use can make deep cleaning easier.

32. WIPE DOWN THE SINK

Wiping down the sink and counter is easier if you first fill the sink with hot soapy water. Keep dipping your washcloth or sponge into it until everything is clean. Don’t forget to dry everything so it’ll really sparkle.

CLEANING THE LIVING ROOM

The living room is usually the first thing that visitors see when they come to your home. It’s also the room that can get the messiest. This next set of tips will help you keep your living room clean and inviting.

33. PICK UP

First do a quick pick up. Here are some important points:

- Put everything in its place (remotes controls, magazines, etc.).
- Throw trash in the trash can.
- Put things that don’t belong into laundry baskets, so they’re easier to put away later.

34. DUST

As mentioned earlier, dusting doesn’t take very long, but it can really help make your living room look great. Here’s a list of things not to forget:

- Blinds
- Air Vents
- TV screens
- Shelves

- Ceiling fans

35. VACUUM

Vacuuming really finishes a clean room. Use your vacuum's attachments to make sure you get the hard to reach places. Don't forget:

- Couch cushions
- Room edges
- Under the couch
- Curtains
- Window sills

CLEANING UP THE BEDROOM

You spend almost half of your life in your bedroom, so keeping it clean is important. Here are some tips to keep your bedroom looking great:

36. MAKE THE BED

Making the bed will make any room cleaner. It doesn't take very long, and it really pulls the room together. It helps to have a thick, lightweight comforter that can easily be thrown on without a lot of smoothing or tucking. Pillows really make a bed look good as well.

37. PUT AWAY CLOTHES

Put away all clothes. Whether they need to be folded and put in a dresser, hung up, or put in the dirty clothes hamper, managing clothes is very important.

38. CLEAN OFF DRESSER

Your dresser top can get cluttered very quickly. Make it a habit to clear it off every time you clean your room, and it will get easier each time. It's also a good idea to wipe down your dresser with a damp cloth.

GENERAL CLEANING UP SHORTCUTS

You're almost there! This last set of tips will give you additional shortcuts for cleaning the house. Some of them are hardly conventional, but sometimes you just have to get creative—especially when you're in a hurry.

39. FAST WINDOW CLEANING

Got a big window that needs to be cleaned super quick? Try only pulling the blinds up halfway, and only cleaning the bottom half of the window. As stated earlier, vinegar and newspaper work well in a pinch.

40. CARPET SWEEPING

It helps to have a carpet sweeper or a cordless hand vacuum handy. This way you don't need to drag the big vacuum out every time your floor needs a quick clean-up.

41. PET HAIR

Pet hair can be hard to control, especially on furniture. Here are a couple of ideas for fast clean up:

- Ball up an old pair of pantyhose and rub them all over your furniture—they're really great at picking up pet hair.
- Buy a cheap lint roller (the kind with sticky tape) and roll it over the furniture.

42. DO THE TOWEL SHUFFLE

Who would have thought a house-cleaning tip would mean doing a dance? If your floor needs a good mopping but you don't have time, simply wet two towels, put one under each foot, and "shuffle" them across the room. You'll find this quite effective as well as fun.

43. CLEANER ALTERNATIVES

Out of cleaners? Here are some things that you can use to clean instead of store bought cleaners:

- Vinegar
- Baking soda
- Lemon juice

44. LAUNDRY BASKETS

Laundry baskets aren't just for laundry anymore. You can get them at almost any dollar store, and they can really speed up housework. Here are some ideas:

- When cleaning a room, put all the things that don't belong in that room in a basket. Then put the baskets in the rooms that they go in.
- Use a basket to carry dishes from the dining area to the sink.
- Use baskets to separate magazines.
- Give each household member a basket. When cleaning, line up the basket in the room you're cleaning and put belongings in corresponding baskets. Have each family member put away the things in their basket.

45. DECORATIVE BASKETS

Decorative baskets are a great way to hide clutter. Take a trip to your local dollar store and invest in some fancy baskets of all sizes. Use them to organize. Here are some things you can use them for:

- Mail
- Magazines
- Couch pillows
- Remotes

46. GO PAPER

Don't be afraid to use paper plates and plastic utensils. This reduces the clean-up time to almost nothing. You can even dress up paper plates with wicker holders, and utensils with colorful ribbon.

47. SPRAY DUST MOP

No time for a full mopping? Try giving your floor a good spraying with your favorite cleaner, then go over it with a mop. Depending on the cleaner, you may need to then spray your floor again with just water, and mop again to remove any residue.

48. MUSIC

Every grueling task is easier when music is involved. Find yourself some good music to clean to, and you'll find that time goes by much faster. In no time, the CD is over, and your house is clean.

49. GOOD SMELLS

A clean house may be the first thing people see as they come to visit, but what are they smelling? An inviting smell in your home is just as important as keeping it clean. Here are some things you can use:

- Spray air fresheners
- Candles
- Plug-in air fresheners
- Scented pine cones
- Scented oil lamps
- Potpourri

50. MAKE A PLAN

Housework is a lot less overwhelming if you have a plan. If you divide chores up into specific time blocks, or even days, they will be a lot easier to tackle. Don't forget to make fun chore charts for the kids.

51. KNOW WHEN TO QUIT

With housework, there will always be something else to clean and organize. It's important to know when to quit. When wiping down a cupboard door, resist the temptation to pull everything out of that cupboard and reorganize; save that for another day.

CHAPTER 1: YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE BOGGED DOWN WITH "STUFF"

So just what is a minimalist lifestyle? Why is this so much more than an approach to décor? What does it really mean?

"Get everything you want, by discovering you already have it..."

Essentially, a minimalist lifestyle simply means reducing the clutter, scaling back your possessions and aiming to say and do more with less. It means appreciating a few things instead of having a huge amount of clutter that you don't really need or want.

We often see minimalism as an approach to UI design for devices from companies like Apple and on an increasing number of websites. Here, the all-important maxim to follow is 'communicate, don't decorate'. That means that unless something is serving an actual purpose, it doesn't belong in the design.

A website doesn't need a patterned background, it doesn't need unnecessary menus and it doesn't flourish filling up every bit of white space. Every single element should serve a purpose, whether that is to guide the viewers' eyes in a certain direction, to communicate some key information, or to facilitate an important interaction.

If a button doesn't do anything, it doesn't need to be there!

APPLYING MINIMAL DESIGN TO YOUR HOME

This same ethos can then be applied to décor. Of course, you don't need to communicate anything as such when it comes to your home's decoration but you can accomplish something similar when looking at items of furniture etc.

Minimalist items of furniture are items that are utilitarian in as much as they don't have lines or decoration that doesn't need to be there. That means that they will be made up of straight lines and they won't feature things like swirly handles, or unnecessarily elaborate feet. Everything serves a purpose.

With that serving as the basis for your décor, you can then continue with that basic concept by adding just a few items that you need while staying away from the temptation to add extra decoration that will serve no real purpose (of course we'll be covering how to do all this in later articles).

In UI and design, this minimalist concept has come to the fore because it allows for better interactions. By having fewer distracting elements, this approach is able to more effectively direct users to the right points on the screen and encourage the right interactions. It also allows a website design to scale to different screen sizes more effectively when users change devices and it creates more 'space' which makes the experience more calming and enjoyable.

But while your home is not a UI, all these same concepts apply just the same. When you start removing unnecessary decorations and clutter, you start to make interacting with your home much simpler. When there are fewer items on your desk, you'll find that you can find what you want that much more quickly and easily.

Likewise, when there is less clutter generally in your interior design, you'll have less clutter in your visual field. This will make your space that much more calming and relaxing and also make it much easier to keep clean and tidy.

And that in turn means you're now spending less time cleaning and less time digging around for things. Your home will be clean and attractive more often and you'll have more time and energy to do the things that you enjoy doing and use your space!

Just like a UI, your home serves a function. That function is to support the lifestyle that you want to live. So, if an item in your home is not serving that role, then the simple solution is to remove it!

And then you can breathe more easily...

MINIMALISM AS A REACTION TO MATERIALISM

More people are starting to realize the benefits of having less clutter and fewer items and this is resulting in a situation where they are happier with just a few beautiful

objects rather than feeling the need to go out and buy everything they see advertised on TV.

And what does that lead to as a result? Greater satisfaction and happiness with fewer items! This makes a massive difference because it means that you're now going to be happier and spend less time thinking about the things that you don't have.

And you'll have more money to spend on those select few items and on the things that really make you happy.

This is the perfect antidote to our modern, materialistic culture and it is also the very same ethos that has been preached by numerous philosophies and spiritual practices for centuries. Happiness doesn't come from what you own, it comes from what you do with what you own.

You can be the richest person in the world but be incredibly stressed and unhappy.

Why?

Because you have created a lifestyle that still pushes the limits of your budget. You've been accustomed to a certain quality of life that costs a lot of money and involves a lot of hard work.

Maintaining this lifestyle takes a lot of effort and yet you are still always thinking about the things that you don't have and the things you want. You don't stop to take a moment and just enjoy the things you have and objects of incredible value and beauty end up being lost in all the noise and losing their value to you.

Minimalism is about getting the very most out of what you have, and this applies to your personal life. Taking a gratitude attitude means waking up and feeling so lucky that you're with your partner. It means being overjoyed with your children and with your health and with your freedom. It means not looking next door and wishing that you had the neighbor's widescreen TV.

It means not wasting money on junk and it means being present.

And of course, minimalism means that your happiness isn't tied up in physical possessions. It means that you can get enjoyment out your own mind and your own body, rather than letting that small scratch on your car ruin your day.

Life is there to be enjoyed and there is so much out there to be enjoyed right now. If all you can think about is how much you want the latest toy or gadget though, then you're not going to have time to stop and enjoy those things. You have to work harder, stay in the office later and take out loans.

But what you don't realize is that you already have everything you need. It's time to relax and enjoy it!

Many thinkers agree that this is the secret to happiness. To be able to truly appreciate things and let go of unnecessary stress, distracting desires and that gnawing sense of dissatisfaction.

Of course, in a capitalist world, where every company under the sun is constantly showing off its wares, this can be incredibly difficult.

Fortunately, you have this book at hand which is going to help you get everything you want by discovering that you already have it.

CHAPTER 2: THE FIRST STEPS TO A MINIMALIST LIFESTYLE

If you're like most people, then you're probably living a lifestyle that is a long way from minimal right now. Chances are that every single surface is covered in unneeded clutter and that you have a long list of things you want and that you intend to spend your money on and feel like you can't quite afford the quality of life that you want or feel you deserve.

You've learned why this is a problem and how it can make you unhappy. Now it's time to start doing something about it!

Follow these steps to begin your journey toward a truly minimal lifestyle...

REDUCE YOUR CLUTTER

We've used the word 'clutter' a lot already and that's because it really is one of the biggest problems. Minimalism doesn't mean not having nice things, it means not having the things you don't really need or want.

As an experiment, I want you to head into any room in your house and go over to one of the surfaces – whether that's a bedside cabinet, a desk or a windowsill. Now, take a look at those items on display and remove 60% of them.

This is going to feel wrong at first. It will feel as though you're getting rid of things you really like or that you're leaving that surface too sparse. But go with it.

What you'll find, is that far from looking worse, removing those items makes your surface look a LOT better. That minimalism provides space for your possessions to breathe and it makes them stand out more. What's more, is that it reveals the actual surface underneath and removes the visual 'noise' out of the corner of your eye that can end up creating a lot of stress.

What's remaining is now the top quality 40% of your items. That means that what you've left behind will be things that you really love. It means that the average quality of what's on that surface will go up significantly, as will the average value. And those few remaining items will say much more about you and will attract much more attention – instead of just blending into a crowded mess.

The best part though, is that when you then come to clean that surface, you will be able to do so by simply removing 3 or 4 items and then wiping. This has now become a 3 minute job, as opposed to a 10 minute job. And imagine what will happen when you apply that same logic to all the other surfaces in your home!

Now go and do the same thing for all those other surfaces in your room!

REMOVE BOXES

The reason that removing clutter is so powerful, is that it provides you with mental space. Our brains are designed to pay attention to contrast and things that stand out and they do this by releasing small amounts of stress hormone. The more clutter and noise there is in a space, the more there is for our brains to process. This can be overwhelming and after a long hard day at work, it makes it very hard to relax and unwind.

The fact that they also create more work only further enforces the fact that an abundance of items doesn't add to your space.

The same goes for several other items that you probably don't realize are causing you stress. Case in point: boxes that you are keeping under

your bed or on top of your wardrobe.

This probably seems like a great place for storage, that will be out of the way and help you to keep more items. But the reality is that it will again create visual clutter and work.

For starters, boxes under the bed and on the wardrobe get badly dusty unless they have a lid. But more importantly, they once again will play on your mind by taking up room and by removing those crucial areas of 'space' that make a room feel much bigger and much lighter.

Just try taking the boxes out from under the bed and on top of the wardrobe and see if this creates a more relaxing and clean looking environment. Do the same for things on top of bookshelves, under coffee tables and stuffed behind sofas.

And again, just think how easy tidying and cleaning is going to be...

It's time to start thinking about the negative space in your home as being just as important – if not more important – than the clutter that surrounds it.

CABLE MANAGEMENT

Another important tip is to think about your cable management. Right now, you probably have cables running under desks, across the floor and just about everywhere else.

Can you guess what these do? That's right: they create more visual clutter! And they make your home seem much more untidy and disorganized than it probably is. There are a great many different cable management solutions, which range from using boxes to store your cables, to attaching them to the underside of desks and the backs of monitors. Get creative and you can create a lot more space!

ONE IN, ONE OUT RULE

One of the best things you can do to maintain an uncluttered home, is to introduce rules that will help you to maintain a more minimalist décor.

One such rule is 'one in, one out'. This simply means that every time you buy a new item, you need to choose one to get rid of. This will help you to keep a sensible number of items in your home that never become overwhelming and it will help you to save money – especially seeing as you can sell the items that you don't need in order to get money

off of the new item. It creates a space for your new item immediately and it also forces you to think much harder about the things that you truly want.

This sounds like a harsh rule to make with yourself but once you start to see and feel the benefits of living a more minimalist lifestyle, you'll be happy to do it!

GETTING RID OF THINGS

If you follow all of these tips, then you're going to find that you're disposing of a lot of things. This can be a painful process but there is an art to getting it right.

To begin with, you are going to do a big 'de-clutter' and get rid of a lot of items quickly. This will help you to reset your life so that you have a good starting point to work from.

The first step is to throw out boxes of items that you've been keeping in storage that you never use. The rule that is often given here is to throw out any box that you haven't gone into in the last 3 months (you'd be surprised how many that includes!). Remove anything that is sentimental or worth a lot of money of course – but everything else can be replaced if you need to!

Likewise, remove clothes that you haven't worn in 3 months from your drawers.

Another tip is to get rid of these things swiftly. If you have items you think you can get a lot of money for, then these are worth selling on. But everything else you should give to charity shops or throw out.

It's a mistake to leave items in bags, to let friends and family go through them, or to try and sell every last item. This not only creates a lot more stress as you have to go through all the items you own (thus meaning a lot of people will put it off and not do it!) but it also creates the temptation to change your mind and take items back. This is not the aim of the game!

CHAPTER 3: ENJOY THE FREEDOM THAT A MINIMALIST LIFESTYLE CAN OFFER

Still not convince of the value of going minimal?

Then try "moving home"!

When you come to move home, having a huge amount of clutter and things you don't need will make life much more difficult! Conversely, if you can reduce your possessions and clutter down to just the essentials and some things that you really love, then you'll find that moving is a million times easier.

You know what that means? It means you can really entertain the idea of moving.

And it also means, that you can entertain the idea of putting all your things in storage for a while and going travelling for 3 months.

Or how about putting your possessions in the loft and letting your home out to tenants while you travel?

This is a very clear demonstration of how having less clutter is actually liberating. You are now free to travel the world and make more money because you have a lot less stuff! Having lots of possessions is like having a physical anchor keeping you in one place. When you reduce this unwanted mess, you will actually start to feel physically lighter!

CREATING A ZEN SPACE

Another example of how having less stuff can be freeing, is in the way it will allow you to reduce stress.

In many ways, our homes are an outward reflection on our mindsets. When life is too busy and you feel as though it's all getting on top of you, it can result in a situation where your home starts to look that way – you end up with clutter all over your home

that you haven't had time to tidy. You have washing strewn on the floor and you have washing up piling up by the sink. Papers are everywhere and the little time you get to relax, you can't enjoy because your home is such a mess. Apart from anything else, you have to constantly wrestle with the feeling that there are other things you should be doing (i.e. chores).

How can you get on top of things again if you can't properly relax and unwind?

Even with the best attempt at going minimal though, it is going to take a little time before you get everything just perfect and there will also always be times when life gets on top of you again and you feel stressed.

One tip then is to create a 'Zen space'. The idea of this space is that you are going to make just one space in your home that is going to be 'sacred'. That means that no matter what else happens, you are not going to make a mess in this particular room. That in turn means that you are going to use an even more minimalist design here and it means that you're going to make rules to keep the space clean – like no food and drink.

The aim is to have one place in your home that is always calm, tidy and organized and where you can come and sit with a cup of tea and a book when the world seems to be in chaos around you.

SPEND LESS TIME CLEANING!

The next way in which minimalism makes you freer, is by allowing you to spend a lot less time cleaning. You're then going to take this further once more by reducing the amount of work you need to do to keep it that way through the introduction of systems and processes.

Most of us spend an awful lot of time performing the same few tasks – which include things like ironing, washing clothes, washing dishes and vacuuming. These activities take precious hours out of our weeks that we could be spending being productive, relaxing or spending time with our family, friends and loved ones.

Going minimal will automatically reduce a lot of this work. Simply having fewer items means there is less to lean and you can apply the same logic to other items – having fewer clothes will mean you have less to put away and having less crockery will mean more space in your kitchen and time to spend washing up.

But you can go further still by introducing various different systems to automate the work you find yourself doing. Washing up is a particularly good example because you can automate this process with a simple dishwasher! Many people view dishwashers as unnecessary but it all really comes down to what you want to spend your time doing. If you can use a dishwasher to spend more time with your family or writing the next great novel, then surely that's a good choice!

Likewise, you can create elaborate systems for your paper trays in order to reduce the time you spend organizing papers. You can have a rotor for the clothes you wear so that you spend less time thinking about what you want

to wear on any given day and rummaging through your wardrobe. And you can spend less time still with vacuuming by using a robotic vacuum cleaner that will use sensors to clean your rooms on its own!

Minimalism isn't just about the look of your décor. It's also about creating a space that will require minimal upkeep and minimal work. That can also mean choosing plants that require less maintenance and watering and it can mean finding lots of ways to reduce your workload.

FINANCIAL FREEDOM

Finally, minimalism can also help you to buy yourself a lot of financial freedom. By having fewer items that you feel you absolutely 'must own', you can decrease your regular outgoings and the amount of money you rely on to be happy and fulfilled.

The result is quite powerful. All of a sudden, you'll find that you have less financial strain, less debt and much less stress as a result.

Because our 'wealth' is not determined by our profit alone. Rather, our wealth is determined by the difference between the amount we earn and the amount we spend. This means that you can become a lot 'better off' and drastically increase your disposable income, simply by reducing the amount you spend your money on.

You've seen now that you don't need to keep amassing more things in order to be happy and to have a great home, so hopefully, you'll see that you don't need to spend a future on things either.

As well as buying less, remembering to sell the things you no longer want can go a long way to saving you cash too. For example, you can do this by trading in phones – if you trade up to the next model each generation then you can actually keep the very best and latest phone without having to spend much money each time.

Similarly, you can also save a fair amount of money by reducing monthly outgoings. By thinking of the things you want to spend time doing instead of buying things or using your various belongings, you can enjoy free activities instead – like walks in the park or days reading books that you already own!

CONSIDER 'UNPLUGGING' AND SWITCHING TO WATCHING TV JUST ON YOUR LAPTOP!

Find ways to live more cheaply by simplifying your life. The result is that you'll be able to save large amounts of money, get out of debt and live comfortably instead of constantly feeling like you're right on the edge of what you can afford. At the end of the day, this will bring much more happiness than having huge amounts of 'stuff'.

And you can use this philosophy when designing the entire way you want to live your life. For example, you might choose to buy a house that is relatively smaller if that means that you can reduce your mortgage repayments and start spending more money on the things that really make you happy.

CHAPTER 4: BECOME MORE PRODUCTIVE WITH A MINIMALIST LIFESTYLE

Have a think about how much you own that you don't really use or you aren't really familiar with. Does it cause a slight amount of stress to bubble up?

Imagine the alternative: being fully aware of exactly what you own and being able to run through your mind and do a complete 'stock take'. Feels better doesn't it?

And, that feeling goes a long way to making you more energetic, less stressed and even less productivity. You might not realize it but right now, there is a good chance that your clutter and disorganization is making you less productive!

Of course, this comes down to creating a great home office space that you can work well in. But it also comes down to a lot of much simpler things. Having a nicer home for instance can make you more likely to shave, more likely to iron your clothes and more likely to generally stay on top of things.

Conversely, having to dig through drawers whenever you need to find something or having to dig through papers to answer that important post will only make you less effective in every area of your life.

It's time to look at how becoming more minimal can help you to create a much more productive work flow...

THE ULTIMATE HOME OFFICE

When it comes to productivity at home, most of us will think of a home office space where we are likely to keep a computer, our important documents and probably any utensils and other items of that nature.

This might be where you do your main job if you have the luxury of working from home, or it may just be where you do things like paper work. Perhaps you enjoy working on personal projects here.

But if you're like most people, then your office is going to be covered in documents and papers and look like a bomb has hit it. Then there will be the wires running across the room...

One way to fix all this is by getting a better filing system for your documents. This can start with a filing cabinet and if you aren't able to get one of those for lack of space, consider a brief case with a file system (they do exist!). Of course some documents are likely to be required at any given time and you can't just file everything away! The solution to this issue, is to use paper trays. A good way to organize these is by thinking in terms of how the human memory works – with a 'working', 'short term' and 'long term' system.

Your working system is the top tray and it's where you put everything you're working on right at this moment. You sort through this every day and you either throw things out or put them on the lower draw, which is 'short term memory'.

Then, at the end of each week on a Friday, you will sort through the short-term tray and put long term items into the filing cabinet, while throwing everything else away. This works well because it acknowledges the fact that some things will need to be immediately accessible but it also force you to do your sorting in small chunks rather than let a mountain of paper build up on your desk.

Better yet though is simply to reduce the amount of paper you work with in general. Having a notebook to keep handwritten notes in is a good start and from there, you should also look into switching to digital bills and statements wherever possible. This will make it much easier to stay organized, as well as getting a scanner with OCR (optical character recognition). This will let you scan letters and other hardcopy documents and turn them into searchable Word documents and PDFs. From there, simply shred and throw away!

With these things in hand, you'll be able to massively reduce the amount of paperwork in your office and around your house, which will make it much easier to keep your home tidy and to stay productive.

Cable management is also an important tip as we touched on earlier. This can also mean using wireless devices where possible, which will give you more ways that you can interact with your technology. You can even go as far as to use products like Amazon Echo, which will let you talk to your computer.

Likewise, try to simplify other processes and things you find yourself doing regularly. Think in terms of efficiency by removing the number of steps needed to accomplish any given task. This might mean ensuring that you have all the work surfaces you need nearby and easily accessible for example, or it might mean ensuring that the tools you need are easy to pull out of a drawer without digging first!

The key is to remove clutter but with the end of making it easier for you to get work done. Otherwise, keeping your office productive will once again mean removing items from your surfaces and removing busy furniture and patterns.

There's a particular type of clutter to remove from a home office too – and that is anything that could be considered a distraction. The aim is to make sure that you keep your office space and your personal life separate. Your office is not meant to be somewhere where you have fun, it is meant to be somewhere that you get work done. This is not a place for a second TV and nor is it a place for a bunch of books.

This isn't to say that your room should be bland – in fact it is generally considered that rooms with a bit of color and interest will be more conducive to productivity and creativity in particular. The aim isn't to make a stuffy corporate-looking room in your own house! But just make sure that you do keep your room free from things that are clearly distracting and that will make it harder for you not to procrastinate!

KEEPING YOUR TECH CLEAN AND FAST

Note that just as important here is to keep your technology running well. Just as a room can become an outward representation of your state of mind, the same is also often true of your computer. If your computer is covered in desktop icons and if it seems to be taking longer and longer to load, then there's a good chance that you have been stressed and bogged down and this is once again an outward demonstration of that busy schedule. Worse, it means you'll be more likely to lose important files and it means you'll feel more stressed every time you turn the computer on.

Solve this issue by keeping your computer as minimal as your room. Make a habit of deleting unnecessary icons and files, keep your virus checker up-to-date and try not to install things you don't need. The result will be that your computer boots faster and helps you to stay more productive!

CHAPTER 5: MAKE ROOM FOR THE IMPORTANT THINGS

The key to all of this is to have a long hard think about what it is you want from your home and your life and how you can best design your décor and your set-up to make that possible.

Too often, our homes get in the way of what we want to do and make it harder for us to be effective and productive. In fact, our homes should be enablers and facilitators that make what we want to achieve that much easier.

So where does this discrepancy come from? Why do so many of us fail to have congruence between what we want to achieve and the layout of our homes?

The answer is simple: too many of us just don't know what we want; not just from our décor but also from life in general. And again, marketing and media in general are largely responsible for this, as we are constantly being shown different ideals and different ways of living – and told that they are the very best way for us to enjoy our own lives.

We end up being pulled in absolutely every direction by a hundred different marketing messages and a hundred different desires. We never feel quite satisfied with anything meanwhile, because we're constantly being told that something else is the key to happiness.

AS THEY SAY: IF YOU DON'T STAND FOR SOMETHING, YOU'LL FALL FOR ANYTHING!

Instead, have a think about what it is you really want to achieve in life and how you want to get there. If you can do this, then you'll come away with a simple mission statement and you can then go about designing a house to help you accomplish that mission statement.

Of course, this might turn out to be more than one thing. But the idea is to know who you are, what's important to you and how you're going to serve that goal.

TURNING YOUR HOME INTO A MEANS TO AN END

For example, let's say that after a lot of reflection, you realize that the things that really matter to you are your family and your love of music.

This makes for a very simple and straightforward décor. You will probably want to create a space where you and your family can spend time together

– perhaps a media room where you can all chill out on a big sofa and watch TV or perhaps a big dining room where you can enjoy big meals together.

And you might also make a music room. Or just decorate your room with things that speak to your love of music.

Now, when making buying decisions or thinking about how to design your room, you should always stop and ask yourself if it will really help you to enjoy those things more, or if it will just get in the way of them. Will it really bring you happiness? Will it make more work for you, so you actually spend less time doing the things you love? Will it distract from what you already have, or diminish from it?

With this mentality, you'll no longer be swayed by marketing because no marketing will be directed at you precisely. You have your own vision of what your home should be and now nothing should be able to move you away from that.

HOW TO FIGHT THE URGE TO BUY UNNECESSARY CLUTTER

Run through these mental questions whenever you're considering a new purchase and think about how it is going to fit into your lifestyle on a daily basis. Where will it go? How will it look next to the last thing you purchased?

At the same time, try to be savvy to the tricks that advertisers and even store managers will use to try and get us to buy things we don't need. In particular, always make sure that you take some time out before choosing to buy something. The vast majority of purchases are made based on an emotional impulse and this is what can cause us to

become impulsive. If you go away and think logically about what you need and what you don't, you'll often find you are a lot smarter with your purchases as a result.

Never buy then and there. Always have at least one night to sleep on it. The offer will still be there in the morning, no matter what the marketing may claim!

A LIST OF THINGS TO DO

A powerful weapon in the fight against needing to keep buying new things and a good way to practice the concepts discussed in this chapter, is to make a list of things that you want to do – using items you already have, or without needing to buy anything new.

This might sound like something you shouldn't need... Surely you already know the things you want to do!

But the reality is that we often forget. Most of us have lots of books on our bookshelf that we have yet to read, games we never finished playing and even films that we haven't watched! And these days, you can download books for free, play games for free and more.

Then there are the activities we never seem to have time for that might be to do with our hobbies or just getting our lives straight. Maybe you've been meaning to go for a drive, maybe you've been meaning to build some flat pack furniture, maybe you like the idea of trying to learn another language.

And yet, when you get a free hour you forget all these things and end up just lying in front of the TV. And when you see something else advertised, you suddenly want to buy it.

Why are you buying a new book, game or DVD when there is so much that you already own that you have yet to use? Why are you saving money to buy a big swanky computer when you've never been out to your local park? Or checked out the free museum down the road?

Having a list of ideas for your evening's entertainment can really change this. The next time you're bored, you can simply check your list for ideas of things to do. The next time you are tempted to buy something new, check the list and realize that you have plenty to be excited about without spending more money or cluttering your home.

Stay focused and make a home that helps you achieve your mission!

CHAPTER 6: A MINIMALIST LIFESTYLE IS GOOD FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

The reasons to go minimal go far beyond just being able to create a better look room while spending less money! Just as important, if not more so, is the fact that a minimal lifestyle can also be great for the planet

There are many ways in which this is the case and many ways you can take the idea and run with it.

This starts of course with the number of different appliances and gadgets you have plugged in at any time. If you are living a more minimal life and spending a little less time in front of the TV for instance, then you should automatically have a lower energy bill because you'll be spending less on your gadgets and less on running your home.

BECOMING SELF-SUFFICIENT

A concept that will often seem to go hand-in-hand with being more minimal, is self-sufficiency. The less you need to be happy, the greater your chance of being able to meet those requirements yourself. As you live more simply, you can start to meet those demands on your own, thereby freeing yourself even more from the constant drive of having to work longer and earn more.

There are many ways you can achieve this. One is of course to start growing your own fruits and vegetables and eating simple meals that don't require anything more. This way, you can save yourself the time and the expense involved in buying so much from the supermarket, while at the same time helping you to give something back to the environment in terms of supporting the local ecosystem and even helping to combat some greenhouse gasses by growing your own.

Another example might be to power your home yourself. You can again do this in a number of ways but switching to a more minimal lifestyle will always help as it will mean you need less energy to power the lifestyle you are living. There are lots of options when it comes to powering your lifestyle yourself and reducing your carbon emissions. One popular option is to install solar panels on your roof but these can be incredibly

expensive, involve a lot of work to install and take a long time before they start paying for themselves.

Instead, consider using a solar generator. It is possible to buy portable generators for a few thousand dollars that can be carried with you and often these will even include solar panels built in to them (whereas in other cases they need to be purchased separately). These can often provide enough power to run a TV, computer or even bigger items like fridges indefinitely. It's a relatively affordable way to start powering your own lifestyle without needing to go through a huge amount of renovation and spend a fortune.

Other things you can do include collecting rain water, or even reusing items around the house in order to help them go further and to save money and waste rather than constantly buying new items.

SIMPLIFYING LIFESTYLE CHANGES THAT WILL HELP THE ENVIRONMENT

Some other methods of 'getting back to basics' and scaling back will also do a lot of good for the environment. These include:

- Using the car less – Spend more time in your local area to save money on fuel and to help reduce your carbon footprint. Likewise, spend more time walking and cycling when you do decide to head out.
- Eat less red meat – Not only is it expensive but it can also cause a lot of waste and a lot of gases like methane.
- Be a green consumer – This means that you favor items that are made in a green and energy efficient manner. By choosing to support these organizations, you can help to send a clear message that we want to see more sustainable methods used by our favorite brands.

What's more, is that this will help you to reduce clutter further (because you're creating a long list of items that you aren't going to buy) and it will help you to use simpler things without unnecessary bells and whistles.

CHAPTER 7: SAVE YOUR MONEY FOR BIGGER AND BETTER THINGS

We've discussed a lot of ways to scale back and live a slightly more minimal lifestyle at this point and hopefully you're starting to come up with more ideas of your own too.

But this book isn't about going without and the aim here is not to scale back so much that you can't do the things you love to do – far from it! Our aim is rather to give ourselves the means to create the kind of lifestyle we've always dreamed of... but using what we already have. It's about making that fulfillment closer, not further!

One way we're doing this, is by saving our cash for the things that we really want and not just spending it all on things that catch us off guard. Far from having less, we're now having more of what really matters to us and what can really make a difference in our lives.

We've already seen the power of removing items from our surfaces. Now if we replace those items with just a couple of things that we really love and we are really proud of and excited about, we'll be able to really see and feel the difference.

And this is how you can create a luxury home on a relatively small budget!

CREATE A STUNNING HOME WITH A FEW ITEMS

You don't have to spend a lot of money to have a truly stunning home that will stand out to people. Starting out by having a clear vision for what your home to be (as we've already discussed) is a good start that will help to give your belongings a cohesive look and feel.

But what really makes a home look amazing when you're visiting it and what will make people come away from your property thinking 'wow', is having just a few amazing stand out features.

When you head into a bathroom and see something like a waterfall walk-in-shower, it can actually elevate the entire feeling of that room.

Likewise, when you add a water feature, or perhaps a fireplace to your garden, this can also attract attention in an amazing way and really make the entire garden stand out as being amazing. It could be a smart fridge, it could be an indoor 'bubble wall', or it could be a really amazing computer set-up.

The key is to choose items that will fit in with the rest of your décor and that will be 'you'. These need to be things that enhance the lifestyle you have chosen for yourself.

When you manage all this, you'll be able to build a home that feels that much more amazing while still being authentic to you. People will come away feeling incredibly envious that you have your own office pod in the garden, your own recording studio, or such an amazing water feature... Maybe a glorious chandelier. Or what about a pool in the garden with a bar in the middle?

Again: this is only minimal because you're cutting back on everything else. But that's also why it's possible. And it works because it supports the lifestyle you want and the priorities you've set for yourself.

But what they won't realize is that you never spent more than them – in fact you spent less. That one key feature speaks volumes because there is less clutter around to detract from it. And you afforded it by spending less on the things you didn't need – and by selling off your other large items.

This is about having a vision once again. It's about knowing what that thing you want is and building toward it so that you can get there and make it a reality. Once you know that all you really want is a home spa, you can start cutting back everywhere else.

REMEMBER TO STAY YOU AND STAY CREATIVE!

And notice something else about these stunning examples: they are unique. Often it's not about spending the most money that you possibly can but by having a home that will be completely unique in some way and show guests something they haven't seen

before. Again, this comes from staying you and from knowing who you are and what you want to achieve.

I love working out. That's my thing. And one way I turned my relatively simple and small home gym into something incredible and unique was to buy gym flooring to give it that professional look and then to use LED light strips around the undersides of my gym equipment. When I walk in, I can press a button and the entire gym glows cyan. This cost me about \$50 to set up and it looks stunning because it's original. It's common to add colored lighting to a computer set-up but I do believe I'm fairly rare as someone who has done it for their gym. Because of that, it's something that sends all my friends home green with envy!

Another tip is to be creative in how you get the things you want. You do this by thinking about the 'root' of what you want, rather than the item itself. What is it about flat screen monitors that you love? Is it the modernity?

Case in point, if you have always wanted a walk-in wardrobe but haven't been able to afford one or don't have the space, then ask yourself what it is about that idea that you find so appealing. Of course it's your love of your shoes and outfits and the ability to show them off in a very desirable manner.

But you can do that without the walk-in wardrobe and if you get creative and inventive, then once again you can actually make this even more desirable than it might have been as a walk-in wardrobe.

For example, what about buying a bookshelf but using that as a cool way to display your shoes and your jewelry? Or how about choosing one wall in your home and getting small shelves to stand your shoes on? You can still display the things you love and get all the wow factor of that walk-in wardrobe for a fraction of the price while still impressing the heck out of guests.

But it's not just about saving money, so you can buy other awesome things...

Better yet is to move the focus onto your lifestyle, the people and the activities that make you truly happy.

CHAPTER 8: YOU DON'T NEED A HUGE HOME TO BE HAPPY

Of course, you'll need to draw the line somewhere and all of us will vary in regards to just how minimal we want to be. Do you want to cut back entirely and live in a hut in the wilderness with no TV? Or do you want to have a few luxury items to create an incredible lifestyle that looks much more expensive than it is while keeping your maintenance down?

And you also need to think about your other expenses and where they come in. A minimalist home and lifestyle might be used to support specific visions for your décor but it can also be used to support a lifestyle of travel, of financial security, or of being able to send your children to the very best colleges.

If you know you love travelling, then why bother buying a huge house? Why not buy a small one bedroom flat in an area that is affordable and then

dump all of that money into travelling? Having a smaller home can actually force you to live that more minimalist lifestyle and help you to really make the most of what you have instead of extended your reach.

This is not what the media wants us to believe. This is not what big corporations want us to discover.

It's not even what the politicians want us to know.

As we've alluded to already, modern culture is geared toward creating things that people want (but don't need) in order to give us a motivation to keep working harder and harder. The irony is that actually being healthy and warm can cost a tiny amount.

If you head to the right part of the country and buy a property that is small enough, you can potentially completely pay off a mortgage in a couple of years.

Combine that with a minimalist lifestyle, some self-sufficiency... and in a few years' time you'll have all the things you've ever wanted while spending barely a couple of hundred dollars a month on your living costs. You'll never face debt again and if you can find a way to make just a small amount of money online, then you can even quit the 9-5. Life really can be how you want it!

CREATING A BUDGET FOR YOUR MINIMAL LIFESTYLE

Again, it comes down to having that vision so you know what it is you want to do. But you don't just need a vision – you also need a plan so that you can go about enacting it and actually making it happen.

We do this by creating a budget. This budget should include all of your income and all of your outgoings and you'll want to put this into a spreadsheet. You should be able to use this information to create a visualization of your finances and even to use 'financial modeling' to see if you have an upward or downward trend.

Then what you're going to do is to look at how much money you have left over at the end of a given week or month and how much money you can save or opt to spend on other things you want.

And from here, you can then use your graph to see how long it will take for you to earn X amount of money.

Keep your vision clearly in mind. Whether that is travelling the world or building that home spa. Know exactly how much it is going to cost and using your projections; exactly how long it will take you to amass that much money.

And now start thinking about ways you can shorten that time frame. This might mean that you start cutting back on the things you don't really need. It might mean selling off a few unnecessary items. It might mean reducing your outgoings by buying fewer things you don't need.

Notice how you are naturally starting to create a more and more minimal lifestyle. But it will feel worth it now because you have that amazing vision in mind at the end of it.

And in the meantime remember, you should have that list of great activities to do in the evenings and at weekends to help you live that minimal lifestyle. You don't need to keep spending money on Netflix and on junk when you're spending your weekends exploring your area, learning languages, writing books or doing things that are just much more fulfilling.

Hopefully, you're also now spending more time with family and friends – which is also free – and seeing yourself move inexorably towards your goals.

CHAPTER 9: STOP COMPARING YOURSELF TO OTHERS

When discussing ways you can create an amazing home cheaply, we've mentioned a couple of times that this will probably make your friends and visitors pretty envious. This is something we've been focusing on somewhat for a good reason – because it's likely what will have been a big driving force for you when buying things in the past.

It is human nature to want what other people have and to be constantly looking over the fence at the neighbors' new car and wishing it was ours. This is actually a driving force that makes many of more productive and in the wild, it would have helped us to keep moving forward and making ourselves more desirable partners with higher status.

In today's world though – where we no longer need to become alpha male and female – all this does is make us a lot less happy.

And this isn't just something you read on car bumper stickers. This is a scientific fact based on real psychological studies. In case you need proof: it even has its own name! That name is 'social comparison theory' and it basically states that a lot of our happiness and sense of accomplishment comes from comparing ourselves to others.

In these studies, psychologists have assessed the happiness of people with different salaries. What they found was that it didn't matter so much how much the person was earning – but how much they were earning compared to their contemporaries.

In other words, if you were earning \$100,000 a week, you might still not be happy if your friends were all earning \$200,000 a week. This social comparison is what you use as your barometer and because you're earning less, you feel dissatisfied – even though you can afford all of the things you want and do all the things you want.

Conversely though, if you were earning \$100 a week and everyone else was earning \$5 a week, then you would likely be much happier!

Social comparison is thought to be one of the leading causes of civil unrest, of crime and of depression. And it is something that a lot of us wrestle with. The worst part of all this? Today we are no longer comparing ourselves to the people who we live next door to or who we work with. And we are no longer comparing ourselves to friends.

Instead, we're comparing ourselves to the people on Instagram, or those who seem to be able to afford the most beautiful homes imaginable. How can we possibly be happy when we're constantly being shown such amazing things?

Again, the answer is to stop comparing yourself and to stop wanting things for the sake of it. Stop wanting things because you don't have them and instead, start to feel appreciation and enjoyment for the things that you do have. Again, it means thinking about what you want from life, who you are and how you're going to get those things you want. It means having a vision.

When you do this, then you no longer need to compare yourself to those people because now you realize that what makes them happy isn't what makes you happy. That item might not actually enhance your life and help you to reach your goals – it might well create more work and get in the way of what makes you happiest!

This can require a cognitive shift but once you realize that it really doesn't matter what Jeff next door has, you'll find it leads not only to greater happiness but also to better fulfillment and smarter life choices. You'll spend your money more wisely and you'll generally be a superior and happier version of yourself!

PRACTICING PATIENCE

One other important cognitive shift to employ here, is to embrace patience. Very often, we end up getting ourselves into debt, spending more money than we have and filling our homes with clutter not because we want so much but because we want it now.

We'll make excuses for ourselves to buy things right away like: 'it might not be here if I don't buy it now' or 'I'll save the money back next week'. But the reality? If you buy the item before you have the money now, you'll be likely to do the very same thing next week.

This is about discipline and it's about knowing what you want and waiting to get it. That's what will allow you to get the things you want without stress and without debt and it's what will keep your home from filling with more and more unnecessary items. And this really rams home the importance of being selective.

CHAPTER 10: ENJOY A HAPPIER LIFE AS A MINIMALIST

We have seen how adopting a more minimalist lifestyle can help you to:

- Save money
- Be more productive
- Help the environment
- Create a MUCH more beautiful home
- Add the 'wow factor'
- Support the lifestyle that really makes you happy
- Escape the rat race

All those are pretty worthy causes. And no matter what kind of person you are, simply reducing the clutter in your home and changing the way you think about your purchases will help you to be a more fulfilled version of that person.

But none of that is the ultimate goal of this book or this lifestyle shift. The real goal instead is to make you happier. When you become more minimal, you become happier.

HOW MINIMALISM LEADS TO HAPPINESS

There are two ways that minimalism leads to happiness: direct and indirect.

We're going to look at how you can use minimalism to really transform your mindset and your approach to your belongings but we will come to that in a moment.

In the meantime, what we're interested in is some of the direct consequences of minimalism and how that makes you happier.

We've touched on these things already but to recap, going minimal will help you to...

SAVE TIME

You have far less clutter in your home now and that means you have less tidying to do. You've introduced simple systems to help you wash up and keep the house clean and you are less demanding on yourself.

All this means that you can now come home and actually relax in a calm and beautiful environment. It's impossible to overstate just what a positive impact this can have on your life or how much of a change this makes.

REDUCE STRESS

You live a less expensive lifestyle and thus you can actually work fewer hours. When you realize that you can achieve all those things you want to achieve without staying in work until 8pm and without taking on lots of extra responsibility and overtime, then you realize that you don't need to work a bigger job to be happier!

Now you're coming home earlier and not bringing that stress home with you. That makes you a better friend, a better partner and a better parent.

What about job satisfaction you ask? Well, perhaps you need to stop looking at your work as a way to achieve your satisfaction. What about gaining satisfaction from your own projects instead? How about writing an amazing novel, getting into incredible shape, or going on amazing travels?

What about setting up a highly rewarding side business? Or working online?

Meanwhile, you also have less work to do around the house and fewer financial strains. If the boiler breaks, you won't have a fit realizing that you can't afford it – you've got plenty of disposable income

There's no debt, no risk of not making your next mortgage repayment...

The less you realize you need, the more relaxed and fun life becomes again!

INCREASE FREEDOM

Less stress and fewer physical ties means more freedom. You don't need to worry about your house being robbed while you're away and you don't need to worry about bringing huge amounts of stuff with you if you choose to move to a new house. When you have more space in your home, you have more freedom even just to move around in that space!

Freedom is such a fundamental part of the human experience and essential to our happiness!

GOING DEEPER

But that happiness goes much deeper. Because what minimalism is about is knowing that you have everything you need to be happy right here, right now. Get off that hedonic treadmill and recognize that fact and you can start to really appreciate how lucky you are, and you can learn to be happy with anything.

On the other hand, if you always feel you want more and if you're always pushing toward that next thing, then you'll find you never really stop to enjoy the things you already have

Put a stop to this by developing a gratitude attitude.

A good way to do this is to spend every evening taking stock of everything you have and everything you're grateful for, for just five minutes. This might mean writing those things down in a notepad, or it can mean running through them mentally.

Try to think of different things each night. And there is so much to be grateful for. You can be grateful for the fact you are in good health. You can be grateful for the fact that you have people who love you. And you can be grateful for the fact that you have a roof over your head at all.

Another tip is to make sure you schedule time to enjoy the things you own and the space you have. Better yet, make sure that you are truly enjoying the things that you are

doing as well. We have our list of things that we can do for an evening and this can be an eclectic range of things from going stargazing in your own garden, to sleeping in the summer house, to building a robot with the kids.

Whatever the case, try to be creative when writing this list and to think about all the different ways that you can use the space you already have to have fun. Look at objects you have around you and try to think of the new and exciting ways you could have fun with them or do something worthwhile or fulfilling. Try to rediscover that child's sense of wonder in your own home.

But what's more, is that you then need to take the time to really reflect on what you're doing and how fortunate you are. This is called being 'present' or being 'mindful' and it is currently a very big topic in psychology. It essentially means that instead of letting your mind wander to work and to all the things you're stressed about right now, you're instead going to stop and reflect on what you're doing and how much fun you're having. When you're sitting in your conservatory or orangery, take a moment to think how great it is to be able to see the stars outside while you sit warm indoors.

When you eat your breakfast cereal tomorrow morning, stop to think about how much you're enjoying it. Tonight, think about how comfortable you are in your bed and about how much you're looking forward to eating that breakfast cereal tomorrow.

Learn that it really doesn't matter what you have. What matters is your perception of the things you have. What matters is your appreciation of those things. You create value in the way you engage with the world and your belongings and in doing this, you bring value into your own life. You can be rich without spending a penny...

CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

Hopefully this book has given you a comprehensive overview of the topic of minimalism and hopefully it has shown you how it can improve your life on a lot of different levels.

On the surface of it, this is a book about removing the clutter and removing the stress of your life so that you can start enjoying the things that matter to you more. It's about knowing exactly what you want in life and working toward it.

It's about home décor and creating the kind of amazing pad that you always wanted without spending a fortune and putting yourself in terrible debt.

Hopefully, it has inspired you to turn your home into something much more luxurious looking while cutting your clutter in half, reducing the amount of money you're spending and making less work for yourself. Maybe you have some innovative ideas for décor features that will be unique to you and that will look a lot more expensive than they are!

But it's also about making that cognitive shift. It's about recognizing that you don't need lots of stuff to be happy and that in fact, all that stuff is probably making you much less happy. It's probably making you stressed, it's probably preventing you from doing things you want to do and it's probably costing you a lot of money.

Moreover, you probably never really wanted it in the first place. You were probably tricked into feeling like you wanted it by clever marketing and our commercial culture.

Instead then, it's time to take back control. It's time to create a plan of action and a vision for what you want and then to only spend money and only fill your house when you can actually support the lifestyle you want to live.

And when you break out of that vicious cycle of wanting more and appreciating less, you'll find it can lead to a transformative cognitive shift that helps you to become much happier and more fulfilled.

It's an amazing journey and it begins with getting rid of a few things you don't need any more. Take that first step today!

IMPORTANT: To help you further take action, print out a copy of this Checklist:

Adopting a minimalistic lifestyle is a great way to reduce the amount of clutter, stress and financial strain that is currently plaguing you and your family. When you remember what's important and get back to basics, you rediscover how simple and how enjoyable life can really be.

We've looked at this in depth in the full eBook, now it's time to put it into practice. This checklist will help you get there...

REDUCE CLUTTER

- A good place to start is with your immediate surroundings. Reduce clutter in your home by:
- Cutting down on 60% of the ornaments you have on display in order to make your home look more spacious and in order to make tidying much easier.
- Removing boxes that are under beds and on top of wardrobes.
- Throwing boxes away if you haven't been in them in the last 3 months.
- Choosing minimal furniture and other items. Form is function.

SIMPLIFY PROCESSES

We've already seen how introducing a few simple systems into your life can save you time and help you to streamline your life. At the same time, you also need to think about how you can simplify processes like your journey to work and the way you work in the office.

- Very important is to clear your computer and get it to run smoothly and quickly as well!
- Use in trays to organize documents
- Go paperless where possible

MAKE LISTS

Lists can help you to simplify and enjoy life more.

- Write a list of all the things you're grateful for. Add 3 things every night.

- Write a list of all the things you want to do that are free or that you can do with items you already have. Use this the next time you think you need to spend money on something!

MAINTAIN THE REDUCTION

Maintaining the reduction in items means staying strong and keeping your home that is bit emptier. The key is to resist powerful and tempting marketing. You can do this by:

- Taking some time out to think on it before making any purchasing decision
- Making a 'one in, one out' rule. To buy anything new, you must first discard something old.

REDUCE COMMITMENTS

Going more minimal also means reducing the amount of rushing around you're doing. You do this by:

- Moving closer to family and friends
- Cancelling regular commitments, you don't get a lot of enjoyment out of
- Learning to say 'no' a bit more often.
- Create a calendar including some 'me time' and treat that as just as important as any other appointment.

MINIMIZE EXPENSES

Spending a fortune every month is going to increase your stress and make it harder to settle into that minimalistic calm. Find some ways then that you can minimize your expenses and start living on a smaller salary.

This might mean:

- Moving into a smaller home
- Reducing unnecessary expenses like Netflix or Spotify
- Enjoying more free activities
- Learning to be more self-sufficient – growing your own fruit and vegetables for example and using solar panels to power your home

- Writing out a budget and knowing just what you need precisely in order to have a very happy and fulfilled lifestyle

MINDSET SHIFT

The most important part of cultivating a minimalistic lifestyle is to change the way you think about success and about items.

- This means identifying a single goal for your life and learning what's important to you. For some, it will be spending time with friends and family. For others, it will be making music.
- Whatever your passion, this is what your life is about.
- The rest is just a distraction. So you don't need that new sound system, those fancy clothes or anything else. Instead, you need to place fewer demands on yourself, so that you have more time, energy and resources to enjoy the things you really love.
- Most importantly of all, it means developing a gratitude attitude. That means learning to appreciate and respect the things you have, instead of always feeling that need to keep adding more.
- Employ these changes and you'll be well on your way to creating a highly sustainable, minimalistic lifestyle. And the rewards will speak for themselves!